A BAPTIST THEOLOGY OF THE CHILD

by

GORDON GOLDSBURY MILLER

submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROMOTER: PROF A KÖNIG

NOVEMBER 1992
SUMMARY

Baptists, who have traditionally emphasised the authority of Scripture, agree strongly that New Testament teaching and practice allows them to baptize only believers upon profession of faith. There are, however, many remaining questions concerning the relation of children to God and the place of children in the church which are not as straightforwardly answered in Scripture; here Baptists often display little consensus.

Although the principles of corporate solidarity and of individual responsibility operate in both Testaments, the development of individual responsibility, already apparent within later Old Testament history, is carried further in the New Testament where there is evidence of some breakdown in family solidarity and of division on the basis of individual allegiance to Jesus. Discussion of the place of the child in the early church to the fourth century centres around questions of original sin, the 'innocence' of children, the rise of infant baptism and the catachumenate. The historical survey also investigates the development of Anabaptist, early Baptist and modern Baptist views of childhood from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries.
Baptist perspectives in relation to four current issues in the theology of the child are considered: original sin and the 'age of accountability', infant salvation, 'faith development' and child evangelism. The South African situation is analysed by identifying and interpreting areas of agreement and areas of uncertainty indicated by the results of a detailed questionnaire distributed amongst Baptists during 1990-1991.

Baptists need to recognize that children of believers, although not necessarily saved, are in a creative relationship with the church, somewhat similar to that of the catechumenate in the early church. Two particularly problematic areas are the question of the appropriate age for baptism, church membership and communion of children. This is partly because although linked with faith rather than with age, pastoral wisdom is needed to assess the evidence for true faith in particular cases. In spite of the difficulties to be faced, Baptist congregations and all Christians and churches have much to gain from a careful consideration of the theological issues related to the place of the child in the church.
# CONTENTS

Summary

Contents

Preface

Introduction

1. CHILDREN IN SCRIPTURE AND IN CHURCH HISTORY

1.1 CHILDREN IN SCRIPTURE

1.1.1 Introduction

1.1.2 The Old Testament Background

1.1.2.1 The Social Picture - the Family and Corporate Solidarity

1.1.2.2 The Religious Picture: Covenant and Circumcision

1.1.2.3 Sin, Guilt and Individual Responsibility

1.1.2.4 Some Key Old Testament Passages Concerning Children

1.1.2.5 The Old Testament Development of Individual Responsibility Against the Background of Corporate Solidarity

1.1.2.6 Summary

1.1.3 The New Testament Picture

1.1.3.1 The Childhood of Jesus

1.1.3.2 The Teaching of Jesus

1.1.3.3 Children and the Family in the Acts and the Epistles

Summary

Contents

Preface

Introduction

1. CHILDREN IN SCRIPTURE AND IN CHURCH HISTORY

1.1 CHILDREN IN SCRIPTURE

1.1.1 Introduction

1.1.2 The Old Testament Background

1.1.2.1 The Social Picture - the Family and Corporate Solidarity

1.1.2.2 The Religious Picture: Covenant and Circumcision

1.1.2.3 Sin, Guilt and Individual Responsibility

1.1.2.4 Some Key Old Testament Passages Concerning Children

1.1.2.5 The Old Testament Development of Individual Responsibility Against the Background of Corporate Solidarity

1.1.2.6 Summary

1.1.3 The New Testament Picture

1.1.3.1 The Childhood of Jesus

1.1.3.2 The Teaching of Jesus

1.1.3.3 Children and the Family in the Acts and the Epistles

Summary

Contents

Preface

Introduction

1. CHILDREN IN SCRIPTURE AND IN CHURCH HISTORY

1.1 CHILDREN IN SCRIPTURE

1.1.1 Introduction

1.1.2 The Old Testament Background

1.1.2.1 The Social Picture - the Family and Corporate Solidarity

1.1.2.2 The Religious Picture: Covenant and Circumcision

1.1.2.3 Sin, Guilt and Individual Responsibility

1.1.2.4 Some Key Old Testament Passages Concerning Children

1.1.2.5 The Old Testament Development of Individual Responsibility Against the Background of Corporate Solidarity

1.1.2.6 Summary

1.1.3 The New Testament Picture

1.1.3.1 The Childhood of Jesus

1.1.3.2 The Teaching of Jesus

1.1.3.3 Children and the Family in the Acts and the Epistles

Summary

Contents

Preface

Introduction

1. CHILDREN IN SCRIPTURE AND IN CHURCH HISTORY

1.1 CHILDREN IN SCRIPTURE

1.1.1 Introduction

1.1.2 The Old Testament Background

1.1.2.1 The Social Picture - the Family and Corporate Solidarity

1.1.2.2 The Religious Picture: Covenant and Circumcision

1.1.2.3 Sin, Guilt and Individual Responsibility

1.1.2.4 Some Key Old Testament Passages Concerning Children

1.1.2.5 The Old Testament Development of Individual Responsibility Against the Background of Corporate Solidarity

1.1.2.6 Summary

1.1.3 The New Testament Picture

1.1.3.1 The Childhood of Jesus

1.1.3.2 The Teaching of Jesus

1.1.3.3 Children and the Family in the Acts and the Epistles

Summary

Contents

Preface

Introduction

1. CHILDREN IN SCRIPTURE AND IN CHURCH HISTORY

1.1 CHILDREN IN SCRIPTURE

1.1.1 Introduction

1.1.2 The Old Testament Background

1.1.2.1 The Social Picture - the Family and Corporate Solidarity

1.1.2.2 The Religious Picture: Covenant and Circumcision

1.1.2.3 Sin, Guilt and Individual Responsibility

1.1.2.4 Some Key Old Testament Passages Concerning Children

1.1.2.5 The Old Testament Development of Individual Responsibility Against the Background of Corporate Solidarity

1.1.2.6 Summary

1.1.3 The New Testament Picture

1.1.3.1 The Childhood of Jesus

1.1.3.2 The Teaching of Jesus

1.1.3.3 Children and the Family in the Acts and the Epistles
1.1.3.4 The Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments: The Baptist Hermeneutical Approach

1.1.3.5 Summary

1.2 THE EARLY CHURCH TO THE CLOSE OF THE FOURTH CENTURY

1.2.1 General Review

1.2.2 Further Insights from the Early Church Fathers

1.2.3 The Development of the Catachumenate

1.3 ANABAPTIST AND EARLY BAPTIST VIEWS OF CHILDREN

1.3.1 The Anabaptists

1.3.2 Early Baptists

1.4 MODERN BAPTIST APPROACHES TO THE CHILD

1.4.1 Baptists Around the World

1.4.2 C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

1.4.3 Southern Baptists in the United States

2. CURRENT ISSUES IN THE THEOLOGY OF THE CHILD

2.1 ORIGINAL SIN, GUILT, INNOCENCE AND THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

2.1.1 Relevant Issues in the Development of the Doctrine of Original Sin

2.1.2 Principles Underlying the Baptist Approach to Original Sin

2.1.3 Exegetical Highlights in Romans 5:12-21

2.1.4 John Pridmore’s Interpretation of Romans 7:9

2.1.5 Innocence, Guilt and the Age of Accountability
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2.4</td>
<td>The Baptist View - 'Sola Scriptura' or Inconsistency?</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.5</td>
<td>The Present State of Those Dying in Infancy</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>CHILDREN AND FAITH DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1</td>
<td>Faith Development and the Theology of the Child</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2</td>
<td>Problems and Opportunities for Baptists in Relation to Faith Development Theories</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2.1</td>
<td>The Relation between Nature and Grace in a 'Conversionist' Theology</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2.2</td>
<td>Difficulties of Integrating Developmental Concepts into a Baptist Theology of the Child</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2.3</td>
<td>The Appropriate Age for Believers' Baptism and Church Membership</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2.4</td>
<td>Opportunities for Ministry to Children</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>THE EVANGELISM OF CHILDREN</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1</td>
<td>The Historical Development of Child Evangelism</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2</td>
<td>Children's Evangelism - the Ongoing Debate</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3</td>
<td>Basic Theologies in Relation to Children's Evangelism</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.4</td>
<td>Problems of Children's Evangelism</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.4.1</td>
<td>Problems Relating to Family Solidarity</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.4.4.2 Integrating Evangelism and a Baptist Theology of the Child.

3 CURRENT BAPTIST BELIEF AND PRACTICE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.2 SOME STATISTICS RELATED TO THE INTERPRETATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

3.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILDREN AND GOD

3.3.1 Areas of General Agreement

3.3.2 Areas of Uncertainty

3.4 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILDREN AND THE CHURCH

3.4.1 Areas of General Agreement

3.4.2 Areas of Uncertainty

3.5 GENERAL ASSESSMENT

4 BAPTIST PERSPECTIVES ON THE PLACE OF THE CHILD IN THE CHURCH

4.1 CHILDREN OF BELIEVERS - DO THEY HAVE ANY SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHURCH?

4.1.1 Baptists and the Catechumenate

4.2 THE DEDICATION OF CHRISTIAN PARENTS AND THE PRESENTATION OF THEIR INFANTS

4.2.1 The perceived need for the practice

4.2.2 The historical development of infant dedication amongst Baptists

(vi)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3</td>
<td>The Biblical and theological basis</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.4</td>
<td>Some Baptist variations</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.5</td>
<td>Evangelistic and Pastoral Ministry in relation to infant dedication</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>HOW DO CHILDREN OF BELIEVERS SHARE IN SALVATION?</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1</td>
<td>Problems related to the salvation of children of believers</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2</td>
<td>Baptist perspectives</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>BAPTISM AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP OF CHILDREN</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.1</td>
<td>Possible reasons for the trend to baptism at a younger age</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2</td>
<td>Objections to the baptism of preadolescent children</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.3</td>
<td>Arguments in favour of baptism at a younger age</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.4</td>
<td>Positive suggestions concerning the baptism of children</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.5</td>
<td>Children and church membership</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>CHILDREN AND COMMUNION</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1</td>
<td>Children and the Lord's Supper: a brief historical survey</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.2</td>
<td>Some current motivations for children's communion in Protestant churches today</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.3</td>
<td>Some exegetical highlights in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 with special emphasis on v. 27-29</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.4</td>
<td>Baptist responses to the admission of children to communion</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.5</td>
<td>Baptists and the possible criteria for admission to communion</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.6</td>
<td>Strengths and weaknesses of some current arguments for admitting young children to communion: A Baptist pastoral perspective</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.7</td>
<td>Summary and proposals</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>THE CHILD IN THE CHURCH : CONCLUSION</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>1924 Statement of Belief</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>1987 Statement of Baptist Principles</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>1990/1991 Questionnaire Results</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>United Nations Declaration of Children’s Rights (with T.E.A.R. Fund Addendum)</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Chart Indicating Ministry to Children in Relation to the Concepts of ‘Innocence’ and ‘Accountability’</td>
<td>428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Samples of Children’s Worksheets</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(viii)
This research has been a labour of love because it has become a subject of real personal interest. The theological questions involved have raised many questions in my personal, family and congregational life. Having first made a 'decision' to follow Christ before the age of six, I only seriously committed my life to Christ at age fourteen. What was happening during those early years and when did 'regeneration' actually take place? Our first child died at the age of nine days — what about the salvation of children dying in infancy? In my first pastorate I had to face questions such as 'may I baptize a young child upon profession of faith?' One of our children professed faith in Christ at age six and wanted to be allowed to participate in communion. This was postponed until age nine; believer's baptism was only requested at age eleven; church membership is still to follow. Theologically, it seemed an 'untidy' situation. Real questions such as these lead to the search for biblical guidelines and for Baptists, the sometimes conflicting answers given raises the question 'What is the Baptist theology of the child?'

My grateful thanks to my promoter Prof. Adrio Konig for his encouragement and thorough supervision of the project; his
penetrating knowledge of Scripture and his grasp of the key issues involved have developed my own understanding and challenged some of my perspectives on this complex topic.

Special thanks are also due to the University of Fort Hare for their research grant and one semester's study leave to enable me to undertake the project.

The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development of the Human Sciences Research Council towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed in this thesis and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development.

Finally, my appreciation to my wife, Annette, and children, Ryan and Amy, who have willingly sacrificed the family time due to them while this project was being completed. It is my prayer that this work will be of theological and practical value to parents, pastors, congregations and workers in their vital ministry to children, who were given a special place in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.
INTRODUCTION

The problem addressed
The Baptist emphasis on the need for conscious personal faith leads not only to the rejection of infant baptism but also raises the whole question of the place of children in a Baptist Church structure. As a result, Baptists sometimes display little consensus in relation to such issues as infant salvation, the 'dedication' or 'presentation' of infants and the admission of children to believers' baptism, the Lord's Supper and church membership. The traditional Baptist claim of following New Testament church practice therefore demands a careful consideration of Biblical teaching and theological issues relating to these questions with a view to the development of a more consistent theology of the child.

Research Methods
The thesis begins with a survey of Old Testament teaching concerning the place of the child in the social and religious life of Israel. This is then developed and compared theologically with the teaching of Jesus and the New Testament picture of the child in the home and in the church. The historical evidence for the place of the child in the early church up to the end of the fourth century, as well as Anabaptist, early Baptist and modern Baptist views of childhood from the sixteenth century to the present, are then
considered. Chapter 2 identifies four current issues in the theology of the child which are of concern to all Christian churches. These issues are then related in particular to the child in Baptist theology. Chapter 3 is a summary and interpretation of a detailed research questionnaire distributed amongst Baptists throughout Southern Africa during 1990 and 1991, reflecting a wide range of individual views and congregational practice concerning children in the church. The questionnaire results indicated areas of general agreement as well as areas of uncertainty where Baptists appear to have no clearly defined theology of the child. Chapter 4 takes up some of these questions in an attempt to clarify Baptist perspectives on the place of the child in the church, including issues such as the relationship of children of believers to the church, the dedication of Christian parents and the presentation of their infants, the baptism and church membership of children and the admission of children to the Lord's Supper.
1. CHILDREN IN SCRIPTURE AND IN CHURCH HISTORY

1.1 CHILDREN IN SCRIPTURE

1.1.1 Introduction

Our purpose here is to survey Scripture in search of material which may help us to arrive at a 'Baptist Theology of the Child' and therefore also the place of the child in a Baptist church structure.

It is generally recognized today that a totally 'objective' approach to Scripture is impossible - we do not have blank minds but already bring existing attitudes and convictions with us in the interpretation of its message. To have a perspective, therefore, is legitimate and necessary. We must however, attempt to avoid prejudice and bias, give a fair hearing to opposing viewpoints and consider the strengths and weaknesses of our own position.

The perspective adopted by the writer in this research is well expressed in paragraph ten of the 1924 Statement of Belief of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa:

'We believe that the one true Church is the whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit; that the local church on earth should take its character from this conception of the Church spiritual and therefore that the new birth and personal confession of Christ are essentials of
The whole question of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments is a complex one which will be considered later. Questions to be borne in mind at this stage include:

What is the general picture of the child and the family in the Old Testament? What is the relationship between the corporate and individual elements in the Old Testament? How are these themes developed within the Old Testament itself? What principles concerning the theology of the child emerge from the Old Testament? Are these principles confirmed, developed, revised, adapted and given final form in the New Testament or is there both continuity and discontinuity between the testaments so that some Old Testament principles fall away while other and different principles emerge in the New Testament?

1.1.2 The Old Testament background

The story is told of a missionary who handed a copy of the New Testament to a local tribesman who promised to read it. Sometime later the tribesman greeted the missionary with the response: "Thank you for the book - it has a wonderful message - but what happened to the first part?" Just as New Testament terms such as 'the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (Jn 1:29) cannot really be understood without an appreciation of the background of the Passover and the sacrificial system, so also we cannot arrive at a proper theology of the child by studying the New Testament in isolation from the Old Testament. What picture
emerges as we consider the child in the Old Testament?

1.1.2.1 The Social picture - the family and corporate solidarity

It is difficult for the modern Western mind, with its emphasis on the individual, to grasp the place of the child in Old Testament society, especially in the early period of Israel's history. Thus, while the Old Testament indicates the importance of children in various ways, it is not really concerned about a 'theology of childhood' in a psychological or philosophical sense.

In Israelite society, the individual was largely subordinate to the group, whether family, tribe or nation. This has generally become known as the concept of 'corporate solidarity'. In an article originally published in 1936, Baptist scholar H. Wheeler Robinson (1980:25) also spoke of the Hebrew concept of 'corporate personality'. These two parallel concepts have been widely recognized, modified and developed by other Old Testament scholars such as Vriezen (original Dutch edition 1949), Shedd (1958), Eichrodt (1964), Clements (1966), Honeycutt (1970) and De Vaux (1974).

The principle could operate in a Divine-human direction as in the case of Achan in Joshua 7, or amongst the various groups of people such as in Genesis 34:30 and Daniel 6:24. The result was that the entire family might suffer because of individual sin or crime. When Achan kept back for himself some of the spoil of Jericho which had been 'devoted' to the Lord, his act put the whole nation
in the wrong so that Israel’s army was defeated in battle. After God exposed the crime not only Achan but his whole family were put to death (Jos 7:1-26). This concept provides the background against which the ‘moral problems’ raised by the promise of punishment or blessing for later generations because of the ‘sins of the fathers’ (Ex 20:5, Dt 5:9) should be understood. Even in a much later period of Old Testament history, Daniel’s accusers with their wives and children are thrown into the lion’s den, which suggests that this principle also operated in some other Middle Eastern societies, such as the Babylonian (Dn 6:24).

On the positive side, the whole family participated in the advancement of the individual, e.g. in 1 Samuel 17:25 where Saul promised that the family of the person who killed Goliath would be privileged. Although much of this ‘corporate’ way of doing things is foreign to individualistic ‘Western’ thought today, there are clearly points of contact with other contemporary cultures e.g. some African tribal societies which still emphasize the group and family solidarity. This may explain why, as T. Witvliet (1985:93) has observed, ‘In their view African spirituality is much closer to the Bible, and especially to the Old Testament, than the Christianity which has been imposed on Africans from outside, corrupted by individualism, dualism and secularism.’

The corporate personality of the group does not imply, however, that the individual had no awareness of personal responsibility, since this is equally emphasized by the Old Testament. Although some scholars (e.g. J. Pedersen in Vriezen, 1970:419-420) have
maintained that individualism only came after the preaching of the prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the importance of the individual was recognized earlier than this in Israel's history and in other types of Old Testament literature. Exodus 20-23 or the 'Book of the Covenant' (according to Harrison 1970:583 dated by some critical scholars as emerging in its final form by the time of Samuel), shows that collective retribution as a principle of punishment ceased to play any part in the legal code; the death penalty was inflicted only upon the specific offender.

Eichrodt comments: 'in the code, the individual wrongdoer is consistently made responsible in his own person, while his family is not touched' (1957:10-11).

In the light of these corporate principles, the place of the child in the Old Testament must be understood in terms of the solidarity of the family. While solitude is considered unnatural (Jr 15:17; Ps 102:7-11; Hs 8:9), the individual found fulfillment in the family which was an organic whole and functioned as a unity. This social solidarity defended the family against disruption in what was often a hostile environment.

The Israelite family was patriarchal, and in earlier centuries the authority of the father was absolute, including even the power of life and death over his children as attested by Abraham's readiness to sacrifice Isaac and Jephthah's vow concerning his daughter (Gn 22; Jdg 11). Everything was centred around the
father because it was his life which was to be continued in the family. Thus A.R. Johnson describes the household as 'a physical whole representing the extended personality of the man at its head' (Johnson 1961:8). Family solidarity even extended in time, both forwards - bringing either blessing or punishment (Gn 17:7-14; Ex 20:5, 32:13; Am 3:1) and backwards - where at death a man was 'gathered to his people' or 'slept with his fathers' (Gn 25:8; Jdg 2:10; 1 Ki 14:31).

It is also clear that Israelite families were more inclusive than our modern Western families. A man's 'house' may include not only his wife and his own children, but all who acknowledge him as father and claim kinship with him. Noah's family included his wife, his sons and their wives (Gn 7:1,7) while the house of Jacob included three generations (Gn 46:6-27). In addition, the family may include servants and resident aliens, widows and orphans under the father's protection. Sometimes the nation could be called 'the house of Jacob'. The distinctions are not always clear as indicated in Judges 18:19: 'Is it better for you to be priest to the house of one man, or be priest to a tribe and family in Israel?' Thus B. Brown comments: 'it is often difficult to discover where the family ends and larger communities begin: the lines of demarcation are blurred' (1974:23). Brown notes, however, that social changes brought by the transition from rural to town life limited the number that could be accommodated under one roof, so that the average Hebrew family in these towns
become more comparable in character to our modern Western families - the parents would now normally only be surrounded by their unmarried children (1974:25-26).

The individual children, however, had no independent status but as members of their 'father's house' were possessions of the head of the family as were the wives and slaves, even though in practice the actual relationships were often more tender and affectionate than the legal status would suggest. Parents were somehow regarded as God-appointed authorities in the home. This is apparently one reason for the law commanding the death penalty for those who rebelled violently against their parents' authority (Ex 21:15,17; Dt 21:18-21) and why 'honour' for father and mother is demanded in the Decalogue immediately after commandments relating to God.

The father, as head of the family, was responsible for the moral and spiritual education of the child. This education was to take place, not at the earlier shrines or at the later temple but in the home. It is therefore significant that there is no Hebrew word for 'school' in the canonical Old Testament, since the home was the school. The first reference to the 'house of learning' or beit midrash is in the Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus 51:23; the first reference to the 'pupil', one receiving formal teaching, is in 1 Chronicles 25:8.
The intention of this home-based education was wide-ranging and the probable failure of many parents to fulfil it in practice no doubt contributed to the eventual emergence of the more formal rabbinic schools by New Testament times. The 'basics' were apparently taught by the mother from a tender age (Pr 1:8; 6:20) while the imparting of the great truths of God's character and saving acts was the father's responsibility (Is 38:19; Ex 10:2, 12:26, 13:8; Dt 4:9). Children were to be taught specific passages such as the Shema (Dt 6:4-9) and literary passages such as David's lament in 2 Samuel 1:18. They were, in fact, to be so well instructed in the faith of Israel that they would be more obedient to it than some of their forebears (Ps 78:2-8). Teaching was both intensive and informal, with opportunity for repetition and discussion (Dt 6:7, 20-25, 11:19, 32:46; Ex 13:8; Ps 78:3-8). Children were taught about religious festivals such as Passover and First-fruits, and sometimes attended them (Dt 16:13-14), especially the reading of the Torah every seventh year (Dt 31:9-13). Practical aids such as frontlets (headbands) were used and occasional visits to sacred sites such as the stonemarkers of the crossing of the Jordan seem implied in Joshua 4:6, 21. Educational responsibility towards children is especially emphasized in Deuteronomy. God's revelation was also to be taught to children of successive generations (Dt 29:29) so that they may also come to reverence God themselves (Dt 4:9-10), obey his law (Dt 32:46) and enjoy the blessings of this obedience (Dt 11:19-21; 12:25-28).
Proverbs also has much to say about parental education of children leading to the 'fear of the Lord' (Pr 1:7). The general picture of the child which emerges, however, is a somewhat negative one (e.g. Pr 15:20, 17:25) for which the answer is discipline as in Proverbs 22:6: 'Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it' and also v.15: 'Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.' The former text is particularly significant in the light of developmental psychology and the 'faith development' of children (See 2.3). The popular interpretation amongst Christians today suggests a mechanical approach, that all children should be trained in the same way. A more literal rendering of the text, however, would read 'train up a child according to his way'. C. Swindoll thus opposes the idea that 'children are born into their families like soft hunks of clay ... children come to us from the womb with a prescribed set of characteristics ... All babies have bents, including yours' (1989:9). This assertion may be illustrated by a comparative Old Testament study of the contrasting characteristics of children in the same family, such as Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, etc. Thus the Amplified Bible renders the text: 'Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent] and when he is old he will not depart from it.'

1.1.2.2  The religious picture - covenant and circumcision

The Hebrew child was also part of a community wider than the
immediate family - that of the nation which was also a religious or 'sacral' society. The relationship between God and Israel is described in the Old Testament as a covenant. Honeycutt explains 'the essence of the covenant relationship is summarized in the assertion that the Lord will be their God and Israel will be his people' and then adds 'thus the covenant community of the Old Testament is a direct parallel to the church in the New Testament' (1970:23).

An understanding of the covenant, together with the concept of corporate solidarity as previously outlined is vital in attempting to grasp the Old Testament teaching of the religious status of the child. Why is it that the legal sections of the Old Testament, which give full details about many other aspects of religious practice, say nothing about the admission of children to full religious status? The answer must surely be that our modern questions regarding conversion, personal faith, moral accountability and 'membership' would not have arisen in Old Testament thought, although, as noted in 1.1.2.5, the later prophets increasingly emphasised the concept of individual responsibility. Honeycutt notes 'the new-born infant was a member of the covenant community through his father's identification with that community. Consequently there was never a time of personal decision when the youth identified himself as a practicing member of the community of faith. Through corporate solidarity with his father he had been part of that community from the moment of
birth. It was for this reason that a male child could be circumcised as early as the eighth day, his circumcision signifying identification with the worshipping community of faith, or the "church" to use the New Testament terminology' (1970:26).

Although the New Testament also presupposes the concepts of corporate solidarity and incorporation in concepts like 'in Adam' and 'in Christ', especially in the Pauline letters, the difficulty of directly transferring these concepts to our modern situation is further seen in Koehler's observation: 'The individual stands within the covenant, which Yahweh has made, but he stands within this covenant not because he is an individual personality in his own right, for that means nothing for the Old Testament, but because he is a member of the people ... The individual can live before God only as a member of the community' (1957:65). It must therefore be remembered that Old Testament society was sacrāl, as were all pre-Christian societies, i.e. a society held together by a religion to which all the members of that society are committed. It was a largely monolithic rather than a composite society, and had no real room for full religious diversity, in the sense of religions totally different from traditional or 'official' Yahwism. This is not to deny that the prophets often spoke out strongly against foreign gods, idolatry, and other forms of worship, but this was rather a case of apostasy or backsliding than a question of a 'pluralistic' society. (For a more detailed description of the significance of all pre-Christian societies as
"sacral", see L. Verduin: The Reformers and Their Stepchildren, 21-62).

Scholars therefore differ not only on the larger question of how to interpret the significance of the Old Testament picture of the child in the light of the New Testament development, but also concerning the 'membership' of children in the covenant community and the specific significance of circumcision as a sign of this membership, within the Old Testament itself. Thus, while Baptist scholar R. Honeycutt (1970:20) regarded all circumcised male infants as full members of the covenant community, another Baptist scholar, R.E. Clements (1966:198), commenting on Numbers 14:28-31, suggests that Israelites under the age of twenty were 'only junior members of society and so only junior members of the people of God'. The difficulty of establishing precisely the place of children in the Old Testament in terms of modern 'church membership' thus becomes apparent!

Circumcision as a sign of entry into the people of God may be understood in at least two ways. It may in itself admit the uncircumcised Hebrew child into the covenant blessings, or it may be an outward public recognition of the 'existential' entry of a Jewish child into the covenant by birth, much like a graduation ceremony months after a thesis has already been accepted. The following examples illustrate the relationship between the 'existential' and 'formal' inclusion in the covenant.
1. Genesis 17:14 implies that male children were regarded as members of the covenant community even before the act of circumcision.

2. Ishmael, though circumcised, was excluded from the (outward) people of God (Gn 17:25-26;18:9-21).

3. 2 Samuel 12:14-23 indicates that in spite of the death of his child on the seventh day after birth (i.e. before the time of circumcision) David found comfort in the fact of an indissoluble bond with the child which would not have been the case had it died outside the covenant relationship.

Circumcision then was a sign or token of the covenant; the sign itself did not automatically bestow the benefits of the covenant relationship, not did its absence automatically exclude the bestowal of covenant blessings.

1.1.2.3 Sin, guilt and individual responsibility

The Old Testament references to the sin, responsibility and salvation of children are largely incidental and not a systematic treatment of the subject as is found for example in some of the apostle Paul’s great doctrinal expositions on various topics in the letter to the Romans. There are probably two main reasons for this: firstly, the corporate solidarity of the Hebrew family and nation as the covenant people of God as previously explained and secondly, most of the Old Testament approaches to life and death tended not to think in such sharply contrasting New Testament terms as whether children will be ‘saved’ or ‘lost’. The total
picture of life after death which can be gleaned from the various Old Testament books is neither as clear nor as frequent as is the case in the New Testament. The following should, however, be noted.

Although many scholars (e.g. Bosman 1983:270) rightly warn against taking Psalm 51:5 as a 'proof text' for the doctrine of Original Sin in its Augustinian sense of biologically transmitted guilt, the text does at least indicate the Psalmist's conviction that his nature has been sinful since conception; it may be implied that if this was true of even a relatively 'good' king such as David, it would probably apply to most, if not all, other human beings also. On the other hand, in Psalm 58:3 David appears to exclude himself and all the 'righteous' from this charge. Kidner, however, concludes: 'Yet the difference between such people and David himself, as he confessed in Psalm 51:5, was one of degree rather than kind. He too was a sinner from the womb' (1973:208).

The strongest Old Testament statements that the natural tendency of children is towards that which is wrong are found in the Wisdom literature.

eg. Proverbs 22:15 'Folly is bound up in the heart of a child'

Proverbs 29:15 'The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to itself disgraces its mother.'

Genesis 6:5 informs us that 'The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the
thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.'

This statement appears to be a universal statement concerning the nature of humankind as such; although not specifically referring to children, it cannot exclude them. Thus Genesis 8:21 goes on to confirm that 'the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth'. It may be assumed that there is no stage of human life when this is not true.

The Old Testament does not, however, go on to accuse children of actual guilt because of this tendency to sin, on the contrary, passages such as Deuteronomy 1:39 seem to distinguish between the adult generation who are held responsible for their rebelliousness during the exodus and wilderness wanderings and are to be punished for it, and the children who, in the light of their tender age cannot be held responsible. On the other hand, Numbers 14:12-18,31 indicate that it is not because of their 'innocence' that God permitted the children of the wilderness generation to enter the promised land, but rather for the honour of his name before the nations and for other related reasons.

Although in later Judaism the minimum age for marriage was fixed at twelve for girls and thirteen for boys (Brown 1974:57), there is no clear Old Testament evidence for a specific 'age of accountability' in a spiritual or moral sense although Numbers 14:29 refers to the age of twenty and Isaiah 7:15-16 suggests that such moral discernment may awaken comparatively early. The latter text, however, should not be pressed since the child 'Immanuel'
referred to in the text, is, to say the least, an unusual child of
great prophetic significance, rather than a typical case.
Further, an examination of thirteen passages which could be
understood to illustrate Exodus 34:7—'God who will by no means
clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the
children and the children's children, to the third and fourth
generation', reveals that in no case was the child morally
responsible for the action of the father. The passages only
describe the way in which children may bear the consequences of
the parent's sin, usually in the form of some calamity but never
including separation from God or the worshipping community

1.1.2.4 Some key Old Testament passages concerning children
It is beyond the scope of this present work to attempt an
exhaustive analysis of every Old Testament text dealing with
children. The following, however, are grouped under some basic
headings to assist us in arriving at a clearer picture of the
place of children in the Old Testament. The writer believes that
the following conclusions may be legitimately made on the basis of
the following passages.

a) Children may have a real experience of God
Psalm 8:2 reads 'From the lips of children and infants you have
ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and
the avenger.' Foremost in the psalmist's mind here is God's
strength rather than any hypothetical quality in children. Hans Joachim Kraus (1988:181-182) interprets this verse as the praise of children being seen as a hidden prelude of the final conquest of God's enemies. Although the text has some difficulties of translation (R.S.V. with emendation renders it 'Thou whose glory above the heavens is chanted by the mouths of babes and infants'), Jesus evidently understood the passage as applying also to children's capacity to praise God (Matthew 21:15-16). Nineteenth-century Baptist preacher C.H. Spurgeon deduced from the passage the need to 'teach children the word of the Lord' (1989:108), while South African children's specialist and former National Director of Scripture Union, Eddie Prest, also understood it in terms of children's spiritual capacity (1989:14).

Psalm 22:9-10, 71:5-6 and 139:13-16 similarly express the conviction that God has actively cared for the psalmist from conception to birth and from infancy to youth right up to the present. Since these psalms arose out of more mature reflection of God's care throughout life (Psalm 71:9 seems to refer to the psalmist's old age), no indication is given of the particular age when the psalmist first became consciously aware of God's dealings with him in this way. The same is probably true of the 'call' of the prophets Isaiah (Is 49:1,5) and Jeremiah (Jr 1:5), i.e. this was revealed to them at a later stage.

The childhood and call of Samuel (1Sm 1-3) warrants special
attention for at least the following six reasons.

1. Although unusual and even exceptional, there is no hint that the acceptability of a child's participation in the sanctuary at Shiloh was questioned (1 Sm 2:11, 18-21, 26, 3:19).

2. The emphasis (1 Sm 2:21,26; 3:19) on Samuel's physical and spiritual growth seems parallel to that of Samson in Judges 13:24-25 and especially to that of Jesus in Luke 2:40,52 and indicates that the Old Testament can conceive of children's physical and social growth being accompanied by an equivalent growth in their relationship with God.

3. It is the only Old Testament account of a theophany to a child and thus sets a child alongside Moses and the prophets as one God has used to achieve his saving purpose. As a sovereign self-disclosure of God, it shows that a theophany is not a sort of spiritual reward for growth in personal holiness but can come directly to a child as to an adult.

4. Children may be prayed for even before their conception and birth (1 Sm 1:11, 19-28).

5. It is possible for a child to have been given in direct answer to prayer, given back to God in dedication, raised in a God-fearing 'covenant' home, actively involved in some kind of religious service or ministry, yet all without actually 'knowing the Lord' (1 Sm 2:12;3:7). The vital question is, however, what did the term mean at that time? J. Baldwin (1988:63) understands this as 'he had not had a personal experience by which to recognise the Lord's call' and P. McCarter refers to 'the special
relationship with Yahweh that Samuel was to enjoy' (1980:98).

There appear to be two possible basic interpretations:

a. Samuel could not identify the voice as the Lord's since the Lord had not previously spoken to him in an audible voice. Thus in terms of 'Hebrew parallelism', the second half of v.7 could be clarifying the meaning of the first half and would fit in with the explanatory comment of v.1 (b). Botterweck (1986:469) classifies the use of yada (know) here as 'an expression of religious inexperience due to the absence of previous revelation or encounter.'

b. Samuel did not yet 'know the Lord' in a personal way. Botterweck also notes that yada (which has many different shades of meaning) can also mean 'to know Yahweh' in a 'practical religio-ethical relationship'. Against this interpretation would be the contextual explanations of v.1 and 7 as noted above and the uncertainty of whether this view may involve reading a New Testament sense of 'salvation' into an Old Testament context. On the other hand, the same Hebrew root yada is used in 2:12 where the corrupt sons of Eli are described as 'not knowing the Lord'. It is also only after this experience that it is said that the Lord was' with' Samuel (1 Sm 3:19). The meaning of 'they will all know me' in Jeremiah 31:34, in the context of the coming New Covenant, may also be relevant here.

On balance, the first interpretation seems more likely although the second is still possible.

6. Although we cannot be sure of Samuel's age at the time of his
call, A Theron suggests, on the basis of the usual age of weaning of two or three years and of the reference to his three brothers and two sisters in 1 Samuel 2:21,26, that he was possibly between twelve and sixteen years old at the time (1988:107).

b) Children dying in infancy

R.A. Webb believes that he finds fourteen cases of children in the Old Testament 'all of them probably and some of them certainly' (1907:28) who were 'elect children', saved in infancy. In particular, Webb(1907:21) suggests that the account of the death of David's child from Bathsheba (2 Sm 12:14-23) is almost a 'dogmatic proof text for the assertion that all infants dying in infancy are finally saved'. Again, as mentioned previously in the case of Samuel, scholars differs on the legitimacy of drawing New Testament conclusions concerning 'salvation' from Old Testament passages. Thus some other commentators restrict the possible meaning of this passage to refer to the certainty of death, while Honeycutt, in noting the divergent views concerning Israelite beliefs in life after death, proceeds cautiously and concludes only that 'David's comfort rested in the indissoluble union of himself and his child. The father and the child shared in a union, a "oneness", which could not be broken. Once one enters into the family circle that bond is never shattered; not even by death' (1970:22). This passage and some others on the theme will be considered more fully later in 2.2.
c) The participation of children in feasting, fasting and worship

Children are specifically mentioned as either participating in or receiving instruction concerning the meaning of various feasts and festivals at which they were to be present. These included the Passover Feast (or Feast of Unleavened Bread), the Feast of Weeks (or Ingathering, later Pentecost) and the Feast of Booths (Ex 12:26,27;Dt 16:1-14;31:9-13). On several other religious occasions, children were present in the 'assembly of Israel', including gathering for covenant renewal (Jos 8:35), crisis (Jl 2:16; 2 Chr 20:13), confession (Ezr 10:1) and celebration (Neh 12:43). It is difficult to come to any decisive conclusions regarding the age and level of understanding of the children involved. Nehemiah 12:43 notes that the women and children also rejoiced and this may indicate that this particular group of children were of sufficient age to understand some of the issues involved. On the other hand Ezra 10:1 refers to children in general while Joshua 8:35, Joel 2:16 and 2 Chronicles 20:13 also specifies 'little ones' and 'nursing infants' apart from 'children'. In the case of what appears to be a covenant renewal in Nehemiah's time, the law was read to all who could hear with understanding (Neh 8:2-3), who understood what was read to them (Neh 8:13). Further, the prohibition against marriage with unbelievers in Nehemiah 10:30 suggests that 'their sons and daughters' referred to as having knowledge and understanding in Nehemiah 10:28, were old enough to marry. According to the later
Jewish rabbis, the minimum age for marriage was twelve for girls and thirteen for boys, although the 'ideal' age was eighteen (Brown 1974:57). Together with the fact that this referred to a written agreement to obey the terms of the covenant, the children referred to would probably have been at least 'teenagers' in modern terms. This would imply that the obligations of the covenant could only really be fulfilled by those who could respond to its demands with a certain level of understanding and commitment.

1.1.2.5 The Old Testament development of individual responsibility against the background of corporate solidarity

We will be unable to assess how the New Testament regards the place of the child in the Old Testament until after we have surveyed the New Testament teaching on these related themes. There are, however, noticeable developments within the Old Testament itself, especially in the period after the Exile in Babylon in the sixth century B.C. In the same way as we can observe God's 'progressive revelation' in Scripture, so we may discern a progressive development in the understanding of individual responsibility against the background of corporate solidarity. This is significant because in discussions on baptism and the theology of the child, the conclusions reached are often influenced not only by explicit Scripture teaching but also by particular understandings of how the corporate and the individual
elements in Scripture are related. Thus, De Vaux, for example, comments: 'So, as the feeling of solidarity grew weaker, the individual person began to emerge from the family group. The principle of individual responsibility is stated in Deuteronomy 24:16 and applied in 2 Kings 14:6, it is confirmed in Jeremiah 31:29-30 and developed in Ezekiel 14:12-20; 18:10-20. At the same time, however, the duty of mutual assistance was neglected by relatives, and the prophets had to plead the case of the widow and orphan (Is 1:17; Jr 7:6; 22:3)' (De Vaux 1974:23).

It should be remembered, of course, that the important role of the family, tribe and nation in the earlier ages did not mean that the individual was swamped by a sense of corporate solidarity. There are many examples of individuals throughout both the earlier and later periods of Old Testament history who made a significant impact on the welfare of the nation. One may note, on the one hand, the positive contributions of children such as Samuel, the young David and Josiah, and on the other hand, the negative influence of Eli and his sons, and also of Saul and Absalom. This development of individual responsibility (rather than irresponsible individualism) may be seen in different ways: In the field of legal trials, there was a move away from the custom of extending the punishment of the guilty party to the children, to that of individual responsibility, as in Deuteronomy 24:16.

The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who had themselves been
directly called by God, warned against the abuse of depending on the corporate aspects of the covenant to the neglect of personal responsibility. The classic expressions of 'individualism' are found in Ezekiel 18:1-32 which closes with an appeal for conversion ('a new heart and a new spirit') and Jeremiah 31:29-34, which concerns the new covenant. Both refer to the sayings concerning the fathers who have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth thereby being set on edge. J A Thompson comments: 'That is not to deny that the wrongdoing of one man may have repercussions in his own family for many years to come so that sons suffered for the wrongdoing of their fathers. But the principle of individual responsibility was far more fundamental than a principle of collective responsibility' (1981:579). Thompson (1981:581) further notes that 'know' (yada) in Jeremiah 31:34 probably carries its most profound connotation, pointing to an intimate personal knowledge touching mind, emotion and will which was already hinted at in Deuteronomy 30:5,6.

Circumcision developed progressively from a premarital ritual, to the covenant sign of a nation and its descendants and eventually to the more important matter of the circumcision of the heart which again emphasises the greater emphasis on the personal involvement of the individual in the covenant (Theron 1988:29).

Eichrodt refers to an example from the times of the prophets where faith, the covenant and circumcision are simultaneously at issue:
'For the great covenant promises, on which the real content of the covenant rests, and which receives no more than reinforcement through the covenant sign of circumcision, can only be accepted and appropriated by faith in the hidden God who is revealed in his word...there is an emphatic indication that the content of the covenant cannot be actualised except by the complete self-commitment of man to God in personal trust' (1967:288).

Following the reading of the Law and the people's confession of guilt in Nehemiah 8 and 9, Burden and Deist (1986:204) describe the events of Nehemiah 9:38-10:39 as a 'renewal' of the covenant (verbondsvernuwing). In these three chapters there appears to be a strong link between the law and the covenant, with an emphasis on Abraham's faith and the need for obedience to the law, without any specific reference to circumcision. The reason for this is apparently to be found in the greater emphasis given to personal responsibility and commitment to God over the centuries, especially after the traumatic experience of the Exile. This is no doubt part of the significance of the listing of specific people (Neh 10:1-27) who committed themselves to the covenant - the Israelites had realised that the essence of the covenant demanded that every individual needed to establish a personal relationship with God and live accordingly, for the covenant to be acceptable to God and meaningful to them.

The Exile experience also had its impact on other aspects of
Jewish worship, tending to make worship less centred on the temple in Jerusalem and less nationalistic—Jeremiah 29:7 is the one place in the Old Testament where intercession for enemies and unbelievers is commanded. This bridging of the gulf between Jew and Gentile was 'something which under the dominance of collectivism was impossible' (Eichrodt 1967:248). Eichrodt also notes Ezekiel's role in this development of a more responsible religion: 'We may therefore assume an awakening, under Ezekiel's influence, of readiness and responsibility and education for religious adulthood in a worship based essentially on the presentation and exposition of the Word' (1967:252). This is also the thrust of Isaiah 66:1-2: 'Thus says the Lord: Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool: what is the house which you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things are mine, says the Lord. But this is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.'

It should be noted that, in spite of the strength of 'corporate solidarity', this did not guarantee even outward conformity to the faith of Israel in a person's immediate or extended family. Genesis 35:1-7 indicates that some members of Jacob's household worshipped foreign gods. On the positive side, a wife might make a vow to God independently of her husband (1 Sm 1:11). The appeal to a son to accept his father's instruction (Pr 1:8; 4:1; 6:20 etc.) suggests that older youth especially would not in practice
always be bound by their father's decision, as is seen in Absalom's rebellion against his father David (2 Sm 13-18).

A development in the awareness of children's rights is also discernable. Judah's ordering of Tamar to be burnt (Gn 38:24), gave way by the time of the legislation of Deuteronomy 21:18-21, to a situation where this absolute jurisdiction over the life of his children is removed from the father and placed in the hands of the city elders, so far as the carrying out of the death sentence is concerned. Clements explains: 'We can see here the beginning of a recognition of social responsibility towards children, and an awareness of their needs as individual beings irrespective of their family' (1966:196).

Zechariah 12:10-14, which refers several times to families, indicates which group within the family is intended - the men separately and the wives separately. These families must have included at least some children. The context is one of mourning - something which a child can easily and genuinely share. The fact that they are not also directly mentioned suggests that by this post-exilic period at least, the mere use of the term 'family' does not automatically include young, unmarried children. Thus Baldwin (1972:194) comments: 'The effect of the repetition, "every family by itself and their wives by themselves" is to lay stress on the genuineness of the repentance. None is being influenced by the tears of others, nor acting hypocritically, as the
professional mourners did. True repentance remains a gift of God's Spirit (verse ten).

These and other developments in the Old Testament appear to be at least a partial realisation of the effects of the 'new covenant' of Jeremiah 31:31-34 which Jesus saw as fully and finally fulfilled in Himself (Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20). The land, descendants, the royal dynasty and moral-ethical conviction appear completely differently in the early history as in the post-exilic period (Theron 1988:65). The evidence thus points to an increasing emphasis on individual responsibility, even while the principle of corporate solidarity was maintained in Israel.

1.1.2.6 Summary

The place of the child in the Old Testament cannot be fully understood in terms of modern 'individual' thinking but only in terms of the 'corporate solidarity' of the Hebrew family, group and nation. The children had no independent religious status; their religion was mediated to them through their parents, especially the father. Religious education was the particular responsibility of the father and so, for the child, worship was essentially centred on the home and family, rather than on shrine and temple. Although the term 'membership' may be misleading, the child was incorporated into the covenant community. While the Old Testament recognised the universal presence of sin from conception to infancy and on to youth and maturity, it does not seem to teach 'original sin' in the Augustinian sense of biologically
transmitted guilt. Although no 'age of accountability' is specified, children were only required to assume adult responsibilities such as the 'head tax' (Ex 30:14) and military service (Nm 1:3; 2 Chr 25:5) from the age of twenty. Any personal decision concerned whether or not the child would repudiate the faith into which he was born and raised, not whether he would 'accept' that faith in the modern evangelistic sense.

Children were capable of having a real experience of God and participating in many aspects of Israel's religious worship; however, most of the religious attention was focussed on the male children, while comparatively little interest was shown in the girls.

Over the centuries of Old Testament history, although the concept of corporate solidarity was retained, there was also an increasing emphasis on the concept of individual responsibility. This was especially seen in the writing of the prophets and heightened by the experience of the Exile. It was stressed that the content of the covenant could not be realised without personal commitment to God, obedience to the law and responsible worship; although this was still understood in terms of covenant 'renewal' rather than a first-time response of faith. The warnings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, especially, would mean for children that they could not merely depend on the faith of parents, group or nation but had to establish or deepen their own first-hand relationship with God and would, by the stage of adulthood at least, be held responsible for their own actions and responses.
1.1.3 THE NEW TESTAMENT PICTURE.

What lines of continuity and discontinuity do we discover in the overall picture of the child as we move from the Old Testament to the New Testament? B. Brown (1974:132) goes as far as to say:

'To open the pages of the gospels is to breathe a different atmosphere. There is a changed attitude towards the child, a new kind of interest in him. The general setting of his life continues much the same as in the Old Testament period, but there are factors that have completely altered.' The distinctive New Testament picture of the child is gleaned from at least three major strands - the childhood of Jesus, the teaching and attitude of Jesus as revealed in the Gospels and the place of the child in the early church as indicated in the Acts and in the Epistles.

1.1.3.1. The childhood of Jesus

There are striking parallels between the accounts of the infancy and childhood of Jesus in Luke 2:22-52 and that of Samuel in 1 Samuel 1:21-2:26. These include the following: Mary's 'Magnificat' closely follows the Song of Hannah (Lk 1:46-55; 1 Sm 2:1-10); the presentation of the infant Jesus at the Temple parallels the dedication of the young Samuel to service at the sanctuary in Shiloh (Lk 2:22-39; 1 Sm 1:24-28); the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem and to Shiloh (Lk 2:41; 1 Sm 1:3); both boys grew in physical stature and in favour with God and people (Lk 2:52; 1 Sm 2:26).
a) The infant Jesus in the temple.

E. Burrows (1940:18) suggests that the presentation of Jesus in the temple in Luke 2:22-39 is transformed from a redemption from service into a dedication to service, in line with the general principle of the consecration of the first-born in Numbers 8 and because the early church would have found the redemption of Jesus meaningless, while dedication to his Father's service would have been profoundly meaningful. Burrows thus asserts 'Ritually the infant Christ was redeemed, but in idea and spirit he was offered to the Lord like the Levites'.

b) The boy Jesus in the temple

It is generally recognized that the gospel writers had a particular theological purpose in mind in the final editing of their work from the written and oral sources available to them. This process is generally known as 'composition criticism' which examines the arrangement of this material as e.g. suggested by John 20:30-31, while 'redaction criticism' may go further to study the observable changes introduced by the gospel writers into the traditional material they received and used (Smalley 1977:181).

What may have been the main purposes for Luke's inclusion of this particular pericope concerning the childhood of Jesus? There are probably two main purposes:

1. It seems clear that the first Christians saw the childhood of Jesus as the perfect pattern for human childhood in relation to physical, intellectual and social growth. Pridmore (1977:206)
notes that the childhood of Jesus was normal 'in striking contrast to the excesses and absurdities of the Apochryphal Infancy Gospels'. This is the thought expressed in the verses of the well-known Christmas carol:

'For He is our childhood's pattern;
Day by day like us He grew;
He was little, weak, and helpless;
Tears and smiles like us He knew;
And He feeleth for our sadness,
And He shareth in our gladness.'

This is a key passage for understanding the Christological themes of the true humanity and yet sinlessness of Christ. Some therefore see Hebrews 5:8 :'Although he was a Son he learned obedience through what he suffered' as a 'problem passage' contradicting the earlier assertion in Hebrews 4:15 :'yet without sinning'.

Westcott's (1984:128) explanation is helpful here: 'The Lord's manhood was (negatively) sinless and (positively) perfect, that is perfect relatively at every stage; and therefore He truly advanced by 'learning' (Luke 2:52,40 pleroumenon) while the powers of His human nature grew step by step in a perfect union with the divine in one person.' This is important to avoid imposing adult expectations on a child's religious experience. Just as Jesus had not yet reached the static and absolute perfection attributed to the manhood of Christ in the Creed of Chalcedon, so we may see that the moral and spiritual perfection of children is entirely relative to their age, i.e. the 'perfection' of a five year old
child will differ from that of a three or a ten year old. From a practical point of view, however, another line of the above-mentioned hymn which urges 'Christian children all must be, mild, obedient, good as he' should not be pressed unrealistically since only Christ himself was 'without sin'. Our own children will surely take after their natural parents! A number of other observations may be made.

Luke 2:51 seems to be a conflation of 1 Samuel 2:26 and Proverbs 3:4, possibly suggesting that the development of Jesus was comparable to that of Samuel and in line with the righteous life portrayed by the Wisdom literature. Luke 2:51 sees Jesus as fulfilling the Old Testament law of honoring of parents (Ex 20:12). This is all the more striking in one with such a strong sense of a unique relationship with God ie Jesus did not take his 'sonship by nature' as the 'only-begotten' (Jn 1:18,3:16;Lk 2:49) to imply that he was therefore not required to honour his parents as were other children. The whole extended passage of Luke 2:21-52 conveys a sense of growing up in a God-fearing home and environment; Luke 4:16 also implies that regular worship at the synagogue was part of this environment.

The impression of Jesus given in the passage is one of a contented, well-integrated personality. He was not precocious in the unseemly sense of showing off (as is implied in the later Apocryphal Infancy narratives such as the Syriac Gospel of Thomas). On Sabbath and Feast days, members of the Sanhedrin used
to teach in the Temple Court and ample opportunity was given for questioning (Edersheim:1906:247).

Jesus' behaviour in Luke 2:46-51 may rather be interpreted as an admirable thirst for the things of God. His parents clearly had great trust and confidence in him and allowed him a reasonable amount of freedom of action.

2. If the passage is related to the later teachings of Jesus, a new attitude to children is indicated. The place of the child within the early Christian church marked a significant development from that given to the child in Judaism and in pagan society. 'The pericope doubtless circulated in the primitive tradition because appeal was made to it in justification of this new attitude to children by the Church' (Brown 1974:164).

1.1.3.2. The Teaching of Jesus
a) The General Attitude of Jesus to Children

We have already noted Brown's comment about the changed attitude to children evident in the New Testament. The response of Jesus in an age when the status of women and children was decidedly inferior is significant. Tasker (1969:175) notes 'Jesus had an affectionate regard for children which is unique among teachers and writers of the ancient world; and He regarded service rendered to them by His disciples as service rendered to Himself.' This is reflected in the various recorded words and actions of Jesus towards children, while the general outlook of the day is
sometimes unconsciously reflected by the disciples, e.g. Matthew 14:21 'about five thousand men, besides women and children'. His concern for their needs is seen in the healing of the epileptic boy (Lk 9:37-43). His tenderness and patience is seen in the healing of Jairus' daughter. Such concern for a female child is significant; his compassion for the little daughter of a Gentile woman (Mk 7:24-50) is even more striking. In his general teaching, Jesus uses several illustrations taken from a sensitive appreciation of family life and the world of children (Jn 16:21; Lk 11:7; Mt 7:11,11:16-17,18:25). Jesus defended the enthusiastic children who praised him in the temple court as 'Son of David', seeing this as a fulfillment of Psalm 8:2. Verhey (1984:20) speaks of the 'Great Reversal' of Jesus' ethical teaching (i.e. that it ran counter to the general outlook of the day on many issues) and suggests that this welcoming of children indicated in Mark 10:13-16 is, for Christians, part of the 'concrete shape' of repentance. Pridmore (1977:119-120) notes that there is no Old Testament precedent or rabbinic parallel to this remarkable action with an actual child. He goes on to suggest that a proper hermeneutical principle or key for a theology of the child should be in the correspondence between what Jesus says and what he does. He goes too far, in this writer's opinion, however, when he concludes 'we shall be reluctant to admit any interpretation of the works of Jesus that does not relate to his startling action with the child.' Nevertheless the actions and attitudes of Jesus should be borne in mind when
interpreting specific passages. Thus V. Taylor (1952:424) observes 'The action of Jesus is as significant as his words'.

b) The teaching of specific passages

For the purpose of our study, the teachings of Jesus may be grouped together in four main blocks of teaching on specific themes, taken from the Synoptic Gospels.

i) The Child in the Midst: The Importance of Children in Themselves and as an Illustration to the Disciples (Mt 18:1-5, 10-14; Mk 9:36-37, 42; Lk 9:47-48)

These three Synoptic passages noted above are parallel in that they repeat several related ideas; Matthew 18:10-14 adds the teaching concerning angels and the will of God in the salvation of the 'little ones'. The teaching may be summarized as follows. The disciples were concerned about their future status in the kingdom of heaven; Jesus shows that in the kingdom of heaven there is often a reversal of popular values and illustrates this by calling or placing a child in their midst. He explained that it is not the child who must become like an adult, but the adult who must become like a child. A drastic change in their outlook was necessary; He said in fact, that 'unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 18:3-4). A large group of commentators (e.g. Beare 1981:375-376, Danker 1988:205, Filson 1960:199, H.B. Green 1975:161) understand the passage in terms of certain qualities of children such as humility and trustfulness. This interpretation seems unlikely because
1. It is not our own personal qualities that make us acceptable to God. We are accepted by grace through faith - the qualities come afterwards according to the pattern in Ephesians 2:8-10.

2. The desirable qualities such as those listed in the beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-10 are not 'natural' qualities or abilities of people but are rather the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in those who have responded or are in the process of responding to the gospel (see Lloyd-Jones 1959:35, 47). This interpretation thus seems to be that the kingdom is given because of our works, a view which would contradict the general thrust of the rest of the New Testament.

Other commentators (e.g. France 1985:270; Hudson-Reed 1987:13; Pridmore 1977:150-152; Tasker 1969:175) explain that what is intended here is not any supposedly characteristic quality of children such as humility, innocence, receptiveness or trustfulness, but rather the status of the child, i.e. being unimpressive, insignificant (as little children were in the ancient world), personally helpless and totally dependent on someone else. The 'humility' of children is that they have no idea that they are great and so accept an inferior position. Children provide the pattern for the adult believer because whatever they receive, they can only receive as a gift. Thus the kingdom cannot be earned, but only received as a gift.

The importance and infinite value of children in themselves is reflected in Matthew 18:5-6,10-14; Mark 9:36-37,42 and Luke 9:48;
service (including acceptance and welcome) rendered to them is regarded by Jesus as rendered to himself. Failure to grasp the value of children (and all of Jesus' disciples) is to part company with the Father, since they enjoy constant personal access to God. Gundry (1982:364) notes that the phrase 'see the face of' here denotes access to a sovereign and adds 'how greatly the heavenly Father must value the little people, then, to allow their angels an unrestricted access into his presence that other angels do not enjoy!'. Hendriksen (1974:693), however, rejects the idea that this verse actually teaches that each believer has his own 'guardian angel'; the ministry of angels towards God's people as mentioned in Hebrews 1:14 is rather a more general one.

On the popular level Matthew 18:1-5,10-14 is interpreted as a mandate for the evangelism of children. J.I. Overholtzer, the founder of Child Evangelism Fellowship, understood it in this way. A photograph of Matthew 18 in Overholtzer's Bible appears in his biography, showing how worn these particular pages were from constantly preaching to show Christians their responsibility to evangelize children. 'Christ talked about the "little ones which believe in me " (Matthew 18:6). What else could he have meant except that a child can savingly believe? And Mr Overholtzer had his own experiences to prove it' (Rohrer 1970:82).

It is generally agreed that verse 5 marks a transition between the actual child presented as a pattern to the disciple and the
child or 'little one' as a symbol of the disciple. Various commentators (e.g. Fenton 1973:292, Green 1975:159-162, Nineham 1969:252-253, Patte 1987:249, Schweizer 1971:192-193, Taylor 1952:406) note that the tendency of the early church was to transfer sayings concerning children or 'little ones' to the disciples, because of the small value attached by the society of the time to the child as such, and because of the inclusion of children in the Catachumenate in the New Testament period. Thus the most satisfactory interpretation of the use of the 'little ones' (mikroi) in the gospels (e.g. Mt 18:6 etc) is that it was originally a designation of actual children that at a very early stage in the tradition was applied to the disciples and to believers generally. 1 Clement 46:7,8 (Lake 1985:89) refers to 'my elect' instead of 'little ones' when alluding to Matthew 18:6 or Mark 9:42 and shows that this tendency continued after the New Testament period. Beare (1981:393) suggests that Matthew 19:13-15 has been retained 'because the early church was divided over the place of children in the community'. It seems possible therefore that the early church as a whole did not always maintain quite the same interest in the child that Jesus displayed.

ii) Jesus blesses the Children : The Place of Children in the Kingdom (Mt 19:13-15; Mk 10:13-16; Lk 18:15-17)

Jesus is only rarely recorded as being indignant or angry. The response of Jesus to the action of the well-meaning disciples in Mark 10:14 is therefore highly instructive. Far from regarding them as irrelevant to his main mission and purpose, Jesus strongly
desired children to come to Him; He then not only uses the children as a model for teaching adults, but also makes the startling assertion that 'of such is the kingdom' or 'to such belongs the kingdom of God'. What did Jesus mean, and what light does this incident throw on the New Testament theology of the child?

Many older and some modern commentators saw the child in these passages as merely symbolic of certain qualities or characteristics that entrance into the kingdom of God demands of all people. More recent commentators such as Cranfield (1984:323-324), Brown (1974:254), Lane (1974:360) and Marshall (1978:682) include the children themselves as possessing the kingdom. Pridmore (1977:130-133) in particular makes much of this and shows by comparison with eight other New Testament instances of ho toiooutos (such), that not only all such individuals are intended but more especially the particular individual or individuals the passage has directly in mind. Thus Acts 22:23 'away with such a fellow from the earth' clearly requires us to understand that the crowd's demand was for the death of all like Paul, but reading the passage in context, it is obvious that it is against Paul himself that they are crying.

On what grounds are children promised the kingdom? At least four views appear ruled out on the basis of this passage and related New Testament teaching:

1. The children are not promised the kingdom because of their

2. Children are not promised the kingdom because of the subjective qualities thought to belong to childhood. Nowhere else does Jesus demand the cultivation of particular human qualities in order to enter the kingdom. We also know that children are not always humble, natural, unspoiled, loving, unselfish and trusting.

3. Children are not even promised the kingdom because of their receptiveness, i.e. their willingness to accept the kingdom as a gift. Although this is no doubt in Jesus' mind in Mark 10:15 and Matthew 18:3, and is a more characteristic quality of children than some of the sentimental features mentioned above, this is still not the heart of the matter and could amount to earning the kingdom as a reward.

4. Children are not promised the kingdom because they have believing parents. None of the evangelists even specify who brought the children to Jesus.

Probably the best explanation of the term Τὸν γὰρ τὸιούτον εστῖν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ is that of Cranfield (1974:323-324) 'The Kingdom of God belongs to little children - and to other weak and insignificant ones - not because of any merit of theirs, but because God has willed to give it to them (cf Lk 12:32). To find the reason why the kingdom of God belongs to children in any subjective qualities of children is surely to misunderstand; the reason is rather to be found in their objective humbleness, the
fact that they are weak and helpless and unimportant, and in the fact that God has chosen "the weak things of this world" (1 Cor 1:26 ff; cf Mt 11:25; Lk 10:21). Pridmore (1977:136-140) basically adopts Cranfield's explanation but then goes further to a conclusion of his own which produced some controversy amongst the various groups concerned with children's evangelism. Beasley-Murray (1976:328) had suggested that in Mark 10:13-16 the grounds on which the kingdom is to be given to children is 'in virtue of their coming to Jesus (v.14) and receiving the word of the kingdom (v.15)'. Pridmore then objects: 'But this is not what Jesus says. The kingdom of God is given to them not because they came to Jesus. They are to come to Jesus because the kingdom of God is given to them. "Theirs is the Kingdom" is the ground of their coming, not the converse... But in the youngest children, in infants, a conscious response of this order is not conceivable. The danger of the view expressed by Beasley-Murray is that it suggests that the promise of the kingdom is conditional upon a child's response, whereas Jesus teaches precisely the opposite. The child is invited to Jesus because the kingdom is already granted to him.' This view seems to suggest that children are in the kingdom anyway regardless of their response to Jesus as the King of the kingdom. This clearly raises many related questions which will be considered later in 2.2 and 2.4. In line with his 'hermeneutical key' as mentioned above, Pridmore (1977:141) thus concludes that Jesus' action in taking the children into his arms and blessing them 'expresses both fact.
Jesus' self-identification with children and his unconditional acceptance of them. Brown (1974:274), however warns against a negative approach, since 'the children are not here set forth as models of passivity' and sees the words of Jesus not as 'a pronouncement on the status of children in general, but rather the recognition that a child may have a religious life of his own.'

Does the passage give any indication of the age of the children concerned or provide evidence for the practice of infant baptism in the early church? J. Jeremias (1960:54), for example, suggests that this was the motivation for Luke inserting the phrase ta brephe (infants) at this point in his gospel (Lk 15:15) while O. Cullman has suggested that the appearance of the verb koluein (hinder, prevent) in Luke 18:16 indicates a fixed baptismal formula (quoted by Jeremias 1960:53-54). This is rejected by K. Aland (1963:96) and Beasley-Murray (1976:324-325) who explains 'its employment in non-baptismal contexts is so frequent as to make it hazardous to draw any inferences concerning narratives not plainly baptismal'.

Concerning the age of the children, the term paidion used by Matthew and Mark is a general word used for children from early infancy up until at least twelve years of age (e.g. Mk 5:39-42). The Lucan brephe (Lk 18:15) refers more specifically to infants or babies and even a foetus in the womb, and is a favorite word of this evangelist (Lk 1:41,44;2:12,16;18:15;Acts 7:19; see also 2 Tim 3:15). The interesting fact is that Luke again reverts to the
term paidion in v.16. This saying could imply that the children were old enough to come to Jesus, rather than those who needed to be carried to him, but this is uncertain. The most that can be said with certainty is that the whole range from earliest infancy to at least age twelve is included but that the emphasis seems to be on children actually coming to Christ. Lane (1974:359) notes that in Mark 10:13, the verb may mean 'bring' without implying the idea of carrying; the masculine gender of the pronouns in the statement that the disciples rebuked them suggests the fathers rather than the mothers or may even refer to the children themselves, the older ones bringing the younger ones to Jesus.

Two secondary observations concerning the teaching of these passages may be made:

1. Apart from the child as a model of 'objective humbleness' (Lane 1974:360), Tasker (1969:185) suggests that Jesus believed that children, though not 'innocent', were more sensitive than adults tend to be to the supernatural world. Spurgeon (1989:24-25) adds that children, though not 'innocent', are less hardened in unbelief than adults: 'capacity for believing lies more in the child than in the man. We grow less rather than more capable of faith: every year brings the unregenerate mind further away from God, and makes it less capable of receiving the things of God.'

2. G. Campbell Morgan (1927:227) saw in the attitude of the disciples a warning of the danger of the organized church neglecting children by relegating 'work among children in our
corporate thinking within the Church, to some secondary place'.

3. E.E. Ellis (1966:217) sees the faith of the coming children as not primarily an attitude or obedience towards something but rather a relationship 'with someone.' Faith is never present for people in their solitariness but always presupposes, creates, and exists in relationship - personal relationship with God in Christ.

iii) Individual allegiance to Jesus against the background of corporate solidarity (Mt 10:21,34-37; Lk 12:51-53; 14:26).

These passages, which appear to refer back to Micah 7:6, teach, amongst other things, that the gospel of Christ is potentially divisive. It is not essentially divisive to families since Luke 1:17 sees the preparatory ministry of John the Baptist in connection with the Messiah as a fulfilment of Malachi 4:5 'and he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers.' Thus many examples may be given of broken or disintegrating homes where reconciliation and restoration of whole families has resulted following the initial turning to Christ of one or more members of such families. The significant point for us theologically, however, is that the general Old Testament picture of corporate solidarity can no longer be taken to apply to the child's religious standing in any mechanical sense. Jesus is teaching that commitment to himself is individual before being corporate; a child's commitment to him may lead to division in a family and even persecution where parents do not share that commitment. While no reference is made to the specific age of the children intended here (v.35 suggests married
children are included), the New Testament picture is that the household unit as such may be religiously divided because of Jesus' call for the highest loyalty of individuals.

iv) The spiritual capacity of children (Mt 11:25, 21:14-16; Lk 10:21).

We have already noted the implication of Psalm 8:1-2 in our study of Old Testament passages. By linking Matthew 11:25 where Jesus uses 'babes' or little children as a paradigm of those whom the world would regard as insignificant, France (1985:302) sees the children's praise in Matthew 21:14-16 as an example of 'the ability of children to perceive spiritual truth which the learned failed to grasp'. (Some commentators e.g. Beare 1981:265-266, 416 do not see Matthew 11:25 as referring to children at all, but only to the disciples. He also, however, questions the historicity of the temple-cleansing incident in Matthew 21:14-16 and seems to support Origen's suggestion that the incident should be interpreted symbolically). Tasker (1969:200) comments 'Jesus miraculously healed the blind and the lame that came to him in the Temple. That this is the true religion was instantly recognized by the children present' and notes that Jesus regarded this as a fulfilment of Psalm 8:1-2 in that the praises sounded by the children were in the nature of a rebuke to their religious 'superiors'. However undeveloped their theological understanding, young children nevertheless have a spiritual capacity which, when God chooses to 'reveal' things to them as in Matthew 11:25, will lead to a true experience of God.
v) Other 'incidental' passages in the gospels (Lk 1:15-17,41-44). Several passages indicating the general attitude of Jesus to children have already been referred to. Luke 1:15-17,41-44 have sometimes been used in the contemporary abortion debate to indicate, firstly, God's involvement in pre-natal life, since a child may be filled with the Holy Spirit even from it's mother's womb, and secondly, to assert that each individual life begins at conception - the foetus does not become a 'person' only at some later stage when it becomes 'viable' just before birth. The use of the Greek word brephos by Luke to mean either embryo, child in the womb, newborn baby or infant (Lk 1:41,44;2:12,16;18:15;Acts 7:19) suggests some sort of continuity linking these stages; if not 'human life', the foetus has at least 'God-given life'.

Our purpose here, however, is not with the ethics of the abortion issue, but to indicate God's concern with human life from its earliest beginnings and to show that it is not impossible for the Holy Spirit to be active in a child even before birth. Thus I. H. Marshall (1978:58,80) comments: 'The language expresses divine choice and care of a person from his very birth, but here in connection with 1:41-44, a pre-natal sanctification of John is implied; even before he was born, the hand of God was on him to prepare him for his work... Although it is said that an emotional experience of the mother can cause a movement of the foetus (Ellis,76) it is more likely that a miraculous expression of the emotion of the child is meant than that Elizabeth simply saw her
own joy reflected in the unconscious movement of her child.'

1.1.3.3. Children and the family in the Acts and the Epistles.

Only three passages in Acts seem to refer directly to children in a sense that may be relevant to our study. There are, however, several related themes in Acts and the Epistles which provide important background information for arriving at the general New Testament picture of the place of children in the church.

a) Specific passages in Acts

Acts 2:38-39 is an important passage, especially in connection with the arguments for or against infant baptism. Although the Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism of the Church of Scotland (1955:20) correctly describes this promise to the children in this verse as 'a Biblical way of speaking which includes children within the covenanting event', Methodist scholar I. H. Marshall (1983:81) comments 'This phrase has sometimes been taken as a justification of infant baptism, but this is to press it unduly. If we are to link it with the context, we note that the prophecy in verse 17 thinks of children who are old enough to prophesy, and that verse 38 speaks of receiving forgiveness and the Spirit; in neither case are infants obviously involved'. Advocates of infant baptism usually allude to this promise to the children and build up their case on the grounds of covenant and family solidarity and a suggested parallel between circumcision in the Old Testament and baptism in the New Testament, together with reference to the household baptisms in
Acts and the Epistles. A. König (1987:41-42) has also noted that in Acts 2:38-39 the promise is directed to three groups - you, your children, and all who are far off, rather than only to the usual two groups of Jews and Gentiles; and that Peter's Jewish audience would have naturally understood this re-emphasis of a promise to their children in terms of the Abrahamic covenant.

The promise is certainly extended to children, but this does not imply that they may be baptized without fulfilling the requirements of a response to the gospel message as preached in Acts. In particular, v.41 explicitly states that those who received his word were baptized; verse 38 also describes baptism as demanding repentance.

One cannot, on the basis of this passage alone, conclude anything about the age at which children may be expected to repent and be baptized, nor whether such children were regarded as 'members' of the church in any formal sense, since in Judaism, religion was mediated to the child through the parents. The context of verses 41-42 indicates that the 'members' who were added to the church were those who received the message, were baptized and 'devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers'; verse 47 repeats this essential content by describing those added to the church as 'those who were being saved'. The fact that some of their meetings, e.g. verse 46 'breaking of bread', were held in their homes, indicates that the children of believers would be
profoundly affected by the religious faith of their parents so that in due time many of them would also consciously and personally commit themselves to Christ.

The account of the raising to life of Eutychus in Acts 20:7-12 at first sight seems to offer insight into the possible age of children participating in the Lord's Supper ("breaking of bread". v.7). The evidence, however, is inconclusive since in verse 12 Eutychus is called *pais* (boy, lad) usually describing a person of eight to fourteen years of age, while in verse 9 he is called a *neanias* (young man, youth), usually describing a man of twenty-three to twenty-eight years of age (Newman and Nida 1972:384). It seems that some early readers of the book may have understood him in fact to be a 'young man'; B. Metzger (1971:474-475) suggests that the alternative reading of Codex Bezae, which substitutes Eutychus for Tychicus, one of the delegates accompanying Paul in Acts 20:4, may be an emendation based on this reference in verse 9. Thus the passage does not really clarify the position of smaller children.

Acts 21:4-5 is significant in that it specifically marks off 'the disciples' (v. 4) from 'wives and children' in verse 5. It is possible, however, for Baptists to attempt to find too much in this distinction. W. Coble (1970:50) for example, overstates the case when he asserts that 'this passage does not give any support to the idea that when a man becomes a believer, his family becomes
'Christian' in the sense that we use the term'. A. König (1987: 216) describes this conclusion as peculiar ('eienaardige') and questions whether in fact it follows from the text itself. There are two other possible explanations for this distinction which yield a far more likely interpretation:

1. Luke is to be understood against the background of contemporary culture when he speaks of a congregation in terms of its male members only. This does not in itself exclude wives and children from membership of the congregation in Tyre. A parallel example would be in Matthew 14:21 'And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides woman and children'.

2. This passage may be significant in the same sense as Zechariah 12:10-14, already discussed previously, as a further indication to show that, when 'households' are mentioned in Scripture, this does not necessarily indicate that the entire family was intended or were believers; i.e. it may be an indication of a development away from the rigid understanding of corporate solidarity towards a responsible individualism.

All we may definitely conclude is that children participated in the church's worship - even 'informal' worship, in some way, but no specific indication is given of the way in which children were related to the church. On the practical side, the warm affection in which Paul and all his companions were held by all after only one week's visit shows the value and impact that Christian ministry, hospitality and fellowship may have on the children of believers.
b) Primitive missionary strategy, household conversions and family solidarity

J. Jeremias (1960:20-22) has asserted that by New Testament times the term οἰκος (household) had become a constant Biblical formula which not only referred to adults but specifically included children, and that Paul and Luke would not have used the term if they had intended to say that only adults had been baptized. South African Baptist pastor and lecturer K.B. Roy (1987:35-36) has recently made an examination of the historical investigations of Jeremias and K. Aland into the baptismal practices of the early church. He shows how Jeremias' theory constantly ignores the context and specific references of the actual New Testament accounts of household baptisms, and challenges the tendency to elevate the 'οἰκος formula' to a fixed theological status. Brown (1974:378-400) similarly concludes that 'the οἰκος-phrase does not provide the evidence within it that Stauffer and Jeremias have sought. At the most, the passages examined reveal that the idiom can include children along with others. Among the reasons offered for his conclusion are the following.

1. Jeremias assumes that in the Old Testament passages he cites, וַיִּבָּאת (house) is the equivalent of a normal family. The term is in fact used with at least six different meanings.

2. Jeremias has narrowed this restricted Old Testament sense of 'house' further, to make it into a normal modern kind of family upon which his thesis largely depends.

3. The Old Testament Hebrew word תַּפְּחָ is not only translated
'small child' but according to Koehler and Baumgartner (1985:355) denotes in general 'those of a nomadic tribe not (or in small extent) able to march' and clearly includes old people; it is used in this sense as late as Ezra 8:21. Brown (1974:378) thus concludes 'there may well be no real bridge from the Old Testament conception to the linguistic usage of the New Testament.'

It is also possible that the New Testament household baptisms were a result of the mission strategy of the early church and are not essentially related to the character of baptism itself. Acts 2:46,5:42,12:12-17 and references in the epistles to 'house churches' indicates that the home and temple were the two main centres where people gathered and that the household was not only the place where the 'breaking of bread' took place, but also a centre of Christian teaching and evangelism. This explains why Saul's persecution was directed against Christian homes (Acts 8:3).

One conclusion from this is that the early church was sensitive to the social structures of the day, whether Jewish or Gentile, and so related its evangelistic mission to the basic institution of the family. Examples of this approach are seen in the ministry of Jesus himself, e.g. Luke 19:1-10 where Jesus told Zaccheus 'today salvation has come to this house' (oikos), and John 4:53 'the father himself believed and so did all the household.'

What may we conclude from all this? When a family or the head of a family turned to Christ, the children must have been deeply
affected by what happened. The question is, however, how was this interpreted within the New Testament church itself? Was the conversion of the responsible members of the family regarded as effective for all the children, so that they were included in the event, or was it considered something that affected them only indirectly or mediately through the parents, so that the family's new-found faith became the context within which the child was prepared in the expectation of a personal response to the message in future? Children could obviously not be ignored in the context of any 'house church' that was established. They would necessarily be present at services including the 'breaking of bread'. Did they participate in the 'breaking of bread'? (Whether 1 Corinthians 11:28 'Let a man examine himself' has any relevance to the participation of children in the Lord's Supper or not, will be considered in 4.5). Were they regarded as church members, or as potential church members? Once again we need to remember that questions such as these, though relevant today, would probably not have arisen in the ancient world where the sense of family solidarity was still strong. What must be remembered is that even in the New Testament context, an event such as a Christian conversion will be understood and will affect the dependant members of the family in a different way from that of the responsible member who caused it. We therefore need to examine briefly the passages in the Acts and the Epistles which refer to the household conversions and baptisms, before making tentative suggestions of how family solidarity may have affected
Five general observations need first to be made:

1. The approach which finds infant baptism in a passage merely because the baptism of a household is mentioned, goes against the generally accepted hermeneutical principle of interpreting verses and passages in context. Thus Brown (1974:402) remarks 'Surely the phrase itself is not the measure of what took place; what happened on this occasion determines what the phrase means'. Beasley-Murray (1976:315) explains 'It is by no means clear that Luke the Hellenist understood so technical a Hebraic use of the Greek term'.

2. A. König (1987:43-44) acknowledges the difficulty of establishing with any certainty whether these households included any small children or not. Language is not always intended to function with mathematical precision and so phrases such as 'They were all filled with joy' would not necessarily be understood as obviously including or excluding infants unless we already know in advance whether infants were in fact baptized at that time or not. When a passage records that someone 'believed, together with all his household', this does not necessarily imply that all the members of the household necessarily came to believe and be baptized at one and the same time, unless this is specified e.g. Acts 16:33 ('at once'). In other cases, such as Acts 18:8 (the household of Crispus), it is quite possible that a decisive act by one member (especially the head) of a family will prepare the way for others to take a similar step in due course, whether days,
weeks, months or years after personally believing. Again, the likelihood of this depends on whether the Old Testament principle of family solidarity can be simply transferred to the New Testament or whether it operated differently in the New Testament.

4. Some have interpreted *pisteuein* (believe, trust in, cling to, rely on) in these and other passages in Acts and elsewhere in a weak, formal sense of merely adopting the Christian faith outwardly, rather than in terms of a vital, personal faith in Christ. Although it is true that there are different levels of commitment and no two people respond in exactly the same way, this approach to translation would contradict the essential *kerygma* (message) with its demand for repentance and faith, as preached throughout Acts and the whole of the New Testament.

5. The majority of the 'household conversions' (other than that of Crispus who was a 'ruler of the synagogue') recorded in Acts seem to be of the more Gentile and Hellenistic type of families, rather than of Jewish households. Acts 10:45;16:14;18:7 indicates that some were 'God-fearers' or Gentiles that followed some aspects of Jewish worship. Bruce (1968:314) suggests that the Philippian jailer was probably a retired Roman soldier. While some sort of corporate solidarity also operated in other societies, one can therefore not simply assume that the families functioned according to the Old Testament pattern.

i) The household of Cornelius (Ac 10:24-48;11:14-17).

There is no reference to any wives or children; however the *oikos* 56
of a military officer would be complete without them. It is possible that there may have been children but the overall thrust of the passage does not seem relevant to very young children—the 'all' of verse 33 heard the word and the Holy Spirit fell on them all (v.44); they 'spoke in tongues' and praised God (v.46). Their faith was akin to that of Peter and the first Jewish believers on the Day of Pentecost (10:47; 11:17). A similar faith was confessed when the Gentiles were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (v.48). The larger group shared with Cornelius and his household in hearing the word, believing, receiving the Spirit and praising God in 'tongues'. Some would point out, however, that these statements could still have been made even if there were infants in the household, because the normal use of language allows for this possibility to be taken for granted without specifying their presence or absence in particular cases. It is true that the 'household' passages in Acts do not reflect any polemical evidence of our modern controversy over infant baptism. Baptists would, however, feel that although linguistic usage alone may technically allow for the presence of infants and young children and the possibility of their baptism, the contextual details of the household baptisms and the theological significance of baptism (including repentance, faith, and, in some of these cases in Acts, 'receiving the Holy Spirit' in some identifiable way) convince them that this is an unlikely assumption; only believers' baptisms are specifically mentioned.
ii) The conversion of Lydia (Ac 16:11-15).

There is no mention of any children or even a husband. Lydia may have been unmarried, separated or a widow; there may have been a husband or children or both, but no doctrine of childhood can be built upon such uncertainties.

iii) The Philippian jailer (Ac 16:25-34).

Some versions translate v.34 to imply that only the jailer himself believed (e.g. R.S.V., Amplified), while others (e.g. K.J.V, G.N.B, N.I.V.) make the verb apply to the whole family. On the whole, the latter seems more likely as we are told that they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. (v. 32) and that all his household rejoiced (v.34). Again, no ages are specified but Dean Alfords' exegetical comment is relevant here: 'kai ho oikos sou ("and your house") does not mean that his faith would save his household but that the same way was open to them as to him '(quoted by Beasley-Murray 1976:319).

iv) The household of Crispus (Ac 18:5-8).

This is the only passage where it is specifically stated that a household itself believed with the head of the house (although it is strongly implied in Acts 16:34 as explained above). This strongly suggests that any children present were old enough to believe in the Lord, although again, some would argue that the statement would still be true even if infants and little children were present.
v) Family solidarity then and now

The importance of family solidarity in both testaments is an important factor when attempting to understand the place of children in Scripture. Some of the assumptions made in connection with this social phenomenon, however, do not necessarily follow. To assume that all members of a household were in practice bound by the religious decision of the father is to reveal ignorance of human nature, of group psychology and of the reactions of people in cultures where family solidarity is still strong. Even at a time when a father's authority and influence was much stronger than today, it was normal for the family to arrive at decisions by consensus and interaction. The father would take precedence and his decisions would generally be accepted without questioning in ordinary matters. The more important the decision, however, the greater the possibility of dissent. New Testament examples of such dissent include:

i) youthful rebellion against parental authority (1 Tm 3:4; 2 Tim 3:2; Tt 1:6); ii) a wife unwilling to follow her husband in his Christian commitment (1 Cor 7:12); iii) a wife turning to Christ independently of her husband's will in the matter (1 Cor 7:13; 1 Peter 3:1); iv) families torn apart by conflicting religious loyalties (Mt 10:34-38).

vi) Biblical incorporation.

We have already seen how the concept of 'incorporation' operated in connection with corporate solidarity and corporate personality
in the Old Testament. Once again this concept reappears in the New Testament e.g. in Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:22, where God is seen to act not only with individuals but also with large groups such as those 'in Adam' and 'in Christ'. What was done by two individuals, Adam and Christ, affected and continue to effect many others across time and space, and is important in connection with the theology of the child. This concept has, however, been applied differently by Paedobaptists and Baptists and will be considered later in 2.4 and 4.3 where the concept of 'three solidarities' in relation to the spiritual standing of children is developed.

c) Children in the Pauline Epistles.

Children are referred to figuratively in these epistles in at least three ways:

1. The 'child of God' is an image, in a good sense, of relationship to God as Father, through the Son, indicating the work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth (e.g. Rm 8:16-21, 9:8; Phlp 2:15). This is similar in meaning to 'children of the promise'.

2. 'Children' sometimes refers in a neutral sense to a relationship of spiritual dependance, e.g. the relationship between Paul and his converts (1 Cor 4:14-17; Phlp 2:22; Phlm 10; Gl 4:19; 1 Tm 1:2; Tt 1:4 etc.)

3. 'Children' or 'babes' can sometimes be used in a negative sense to refer to a state of spiritual immaturity and
irresponsibility (e.g. 1 Cor 3:1,13:11,14:20)

Some have seen a contradiction between the positive image of the child used by Jesus as a model to adults and this 'negative' Pauline usage, which seems to be more in line with the somewhat negative picture of the child in the book of Proverbs. This view, however, stems from an overly mechanical or wooden approach to Scripture, which fails to discern the nuances and flexibility with which these terms are used. Paul is primarily concerned with Christian maturity; Jesus had another purpose in mind. In any case, this figurative usage does not give us any further light on the place of the child as such.

i) Romans 7:9.

Romans 7 continues to be an interpreter's battleground; the issue mainly concerns 'the man of Romans 7', i.e. whether Paul is speaking of himself before or after his conversion to Christ. When in verse 9 Paul says 'I was alive without the law once', the majority of modern interpreters take this to refer to the time before his conversion to Christ, before he saw the spiritual character of the law, as seen in verse 7. J.Pridmore (1977:195) together with J.Stott (1966:68) and D.Guthrie (s a,8) maintain, however, that Paul is talking of his own childhood, when he was 'alive' without the law. In a detailed nine-page study, Pridmore (1977:193-201) goes on to conclude that children are apart from the law and therefore fully alive or that they have spiritual life or are alive in relation to God. This interpretation raises several related questions which are considered later in 2.1.4

61
ii) 1 Corinthians 7:14.

Beasley-Murray (1970:130) comments on 1 Corinthians 7:14: 'This saying had more or less fallen out of the Baptist Bible, but of late we have had to try to come to terms with it through the use made of it by proponents of Infant Baptism, and we find it difficult.' This text has been interpreted in the following ways.

i) Children, where at least one parent is a believer, are 'holy' and may therefore be baptized (e.g. Grosheide 1954:165);

ii) Children of Christian parents come into their position of 'holiness' through being baptized as infants (e.g. J. Baillie quoted in Ingle 1970:133).

iii) The passage does not necessarily have baptism in mind but teaches either that the young children of believing parents are to be regarded as Christian until old enough to take personal responsibility (Morris 1966:110), or that by the parents' belief children are brought into a new relationship with God, which is different to that of the children of unbelievers, although we cannot yet refer to them as 'saved' or 'unsaved' (Pridmore 1977:190-191). It should be noted, however, that the primary purpose of the whole passage (1 Cor 7:10-16) concerns the acceptability or 'holiness' of religiously mixed marriages between believing and unbelieving partners, rather than the status of the child. The passage does, however, seem to teach at least something about the status of the child within the family, and by extension, to the church. This passage will therefore be considered more fully later in 4.1.
iii) Parent-child relationships in the Christian family (Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:20-21)

These two parallel passages, examples of what is sometimes called the 'House Tables', provide evidence for an increased feeling for the nature of childhood, especially against the background of the emphasis on discipline in Proverbs. The command to obey parents repeats what was unquestioned throughout the ancient world – the principle of subordination to authority. What was distinctive of the Christian household was that in each case throughout Ephesians 5:21-6:9 and Colossians 3:18-4:1 there follows a corresponding statement of the obligations of those in authority. Paul's command not to provoke a child to anger takes into consideration that 'if a child is treated unfairly, he is helpless to defend himself and can only express his sense of injury by an outburst of infantile rage' (Pridmore 1977:182). This would apply especially to younger children but, no doubt, to older children also, since 'anger' here may be described as 'an angry outburst which threatens to become lasting bitterness' (Stählin 1970:419).

The passages indicate that children attended worship together with their parents where the letters would be read aloud; some words are addressed directly to the children and some directly to the parents. Some commentators take the addition of the phrase 'in the Lord' in Ephesians 6:1 to be a limitation on their obedience in the sense of 'as far as your loyalty to Christ allows'. Although this is possible in the light of Matthew 10:34
already considered previously, it is unlikely since i) this would contradict the general New Testament understanding of social and family relationships, especially where younger children are concerned and ii) *en kurio* (in the Lord) indicates that Paul has the believing household in mind. Rather, 'in the Lord' suggests the whole spirit in which obedience should be offered. The term may also imply that the children addressed are themselves 'in the Lord' i.e. believers. The fact that children are directly addressed would indicate that they were able to understand at least some parts of Paul's letters although this need not in itself exclude the application and teaching of the passage to even younger children. The highest duty of Christian parents is to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (v.4), the aim of which is 'not just the harmonious relationships of the home, or the happiness of the children but their regard for the Lord' (Foulkes 1974:166). Space does not permit a detailed analysis of the full range of meaning and application of the term translated 'discipline and instruction of the Lord'; this may be found in the five expository sermons preached on Ephesians 6:1-4 by Dr D. M. Lloyd-Jones (1973: 237-302) totalling 65 printed pages!

The Colossians passage adds two significant reasons for the exhortation given which do not occur in Ephesians 6:1-4.

Children, especially Christian children, are to obey their parents in everything because this pleases the Lord.
The reason for the exhortation to fathers not to 'provoke' their children is so that they may not be discouraged. H.C.G. Moule (1900:232) understands 'provoke' to mean 'challenge their resistance by unwise and exacting interferences' so that they are 'discouraged under the chilling feeling that it is impossible to please'. The need for discipline that does not discourage is well expressed in the title of one of Dr. James Dobson's Focus on the Family film series - Shaping the Will Without Breaking the Spirit. Wright (1986:148-149) explains further 'Children treated like this become "discouraged" or "dispirited" : hearing continually, both verbally and non-verbally, that they are of little value, they come to believe it, and either sink down in obedient self-hatred or over-react with boastful but anxious self-assertion. The parent's duty is, in effect, to live out the gospel to the child : that is to assure their children that they are loved and accepted and valued for who they are, not for who they ought to be, should have been, or might (if only they would try a little harder) become. Obedience must never be made the condition of parental "love".

What may we conclude about the status of children from these passages? Both Brown (1974:501) and Pridmore (1977:185) concur that en kurio points to their 'church membership'. Although their age is not specified, they were expected to have some knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures (as confirmed also in 2 Timothy 3:15-16), and the children addressed here must have been old enough to
profit from the apostle's teaching, so that younger children and infants are not primarily in view. Some scholars see the passage as evidence of a 'catachumenate' in the early church, and that 'some children were instructed in the implications of Christian faith for everyday living, at least in preparation for membership of the church'. (Brown 1974:500). The fact that these tekna (children) may be 'provoked' or irritated by their father suggests that they were possibly at least 'teenagers' or adolescents, possibly similar to the neanias in Acts 20:9.

d) Children in the pastoral letters.
Some scholars regard the Pastoral letters (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) as either non-Pauline or post-Pauline, reading back a second-century ecclesiastical situation. We are unable to discuss such questions of critical scholarship here but will simply point out that most Baptists would accept them as genuinely Pauline. The letters clearly reflect, however, a situation when there were already 'second generation Christians' and may therefore be seen as a bridge to the sub-apostolic age.

1 Timothy 3:4-5,12; 5:10 may be grouped together because they mainly emphasize one point: the Christian home is a testing ground for potential church leaders. One of the requirements for holding church office, whether elder, deacon or the special ministry of widows mentioned in 1 Timothy 5:10, was that the men and women concerned had to have had a measure of success in
bringing up children, either their own or possibly (in the case of some widows) the children of others. 'Success' would be measured in terms of having a well-managed home and children, and in the case of Titus 1:6, of having 'believing' children. The principle, according to 1 Timothy 3:5, seems to be that if the dependent members of the family have responded positively to religious education, members of a church congregation were also likely to respond to such leadership. Once again the importance of the religious education of children is emphasized, and also the vital place of the home in the spiritual life of a congregation. Titus 1:6 and 2 Timothy 3:2 may also be grouped together because they reflect a developing situation from which certain conclusions may be made.

1. Although the corporate solidarity of a family is still the desired social pattern of the church, this cannot be taken to mean that all children have necessarily adopted the parent's faith or have become believers. 2 Timothy 3:2 indicates that disobedience to parents was part of a general breakdown of morality evident in the 'last days', which according to Acts 2:17-18 had already begun at Pentecost, if not earlier from the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus (Mt 3:1-2; Mk 1:14-15). This breakdown of the family also affected the church, and occurred often enough for the church to be disturbed by it. It was also happening in church families, for the religious unity of the family was sometimes broken through young people who rejected or neglected the faith of their parents. (Titus 1:6
seems to indicate children who are at least adolescents). Thus the elder/bishop should be in effective control of the children.

2. More specifically, the elder/bishop was expected to have 'believing' (pista) children. Thus E.P. Groenewald (1977:162) explains 'Ook moet die egtheid van sy geloof daaruit blyk dat hy sy kinders tot die geloof geleë het en daarin opgevoed het'. Some suggest that the meaning of 'believing' here should be restricted to 'loyal' or 'trustworthy'. If this is correct it may only mean that if the children are not yet believers, they must at least exhibit a reasonably ethical standard of behaviour, as suggested by the second half of verse 6. Care should be taken, of course, not to apply this 'qualification for leadership' in a mechanical way e.g. the unmarried bishops/elders are obviously not excluded. It also does not decide the position of single bishops/elders who then later marry and whose children may become 'unruly'. There are also further practical questions e.g. who decides what is 'acceptable' behaviour for these children? Is it possible to determine a set age by which the elders' children should become believers or would this deny the sovereignty of God in salvation? Whatever approach may be taken on such questions, the principle remains valid. How may we 'reconstruct' the likely situation?

There are two possibilities - either this refers to children regarded as part of the church since infancy through birth into a Christian family who do not in later years renounce their faith but continue in their father's footsteps, or those who under the spiritual instruction of Christian parents since childhood in the
expectation of their future conversion and church membership, have now voluntarily taken this step and do not discredit their parents by a rebellious lifestyle. The second view seems more likely since according to 2 Timothy 3:15, in the Pastorals the intention of religious education in the home is to lead on to salvation through faith in Christ, rather than to grow out from it.

2 Timothy 3:15-16, therefore, has a bearing on our 'philosophy of Christian education'. Pridmore (1977:187), while acknowledging that 'believing' in Titus 1:6 means that 'the overseer's children must themselves be Christians' then adds 'This does not contemplate the possibility of a Christian family being anything else'. This view would seem to contradict the explicit teaching of 2 Timothy 3:15, that the sacred writings or Scriptures (here presumably the Old Testament) 'are able to instruct you for or into (eis) salvation through faith in Jesus Christ'. In commenting on Ephesians 6:1-4 and Colossians 3:20-21, Pridmore (1977:185) asserts: 'Christian education from a child's earliest days progresses from the conviction that the child already belongs to Christ. In the Christian family the upbringing of children is education within the family of the Church, not the evangelism of those outside it'. Our text, however, seems to indicate the opposite sequence, so that Theron (1988:152) concludes (more correctly I believe) that even though his grandmother and mother were both Christians (2 Tm 1:5) and in spite of what Paul says about unbelieving partners and the children of religiously mixed marriages in 1 Corinthians 7:14, the child must still be made wise
unto salvation. 'Hierdie saligheid of verlossing kom nie vanself nie, maar moet nog steeds deur die geloof in die Here Jesus Christus tot verwerkliking kom. Dit moet die oogmerk wees van elke Christen met die onderrig en opvoeding van sy eie kinders'. Thus C.H. Spurgeon (1989:63), commenting on 2 Timothy 3:15, maintains 'Many dear children are called of God so early, that they cannot precisely tell when they were converted; but they were converted: they must at some time or another have passed from life to death. You could not have told this morning, by observation, the moment when the sun rose, but it did rise; and there was a time when it was below the horizon, and another time when it had risen above it. The moment, whether we see it or not, in which a child is really saved, is when he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ'. According to 2 Timothy 1:5, Timothy was already a believer by the time Second Timothy was addressed to him. When he became a Christian is not specifically stated but 'it is a reasonable inference that he was a convert of Paul's first missionary journey' (Guthrie 1970:1279). On the other hand, it should be remembered that the believing children referred to in the Pastorals are at least old enough to assert their independence of their parents and discredit their Christian profession (Tt 1:6). The term 'from childhood' (apo brephous) in 2 Timothy 3:15 refers to the age from which Timothy had known the Scriptures and does not necessarily indicate the point at which he personally came to 'salvation through faith in Jesus Christ'.

References to children in the rest of the New Testament do not seem to have any direct bearing on our study since the terms are used metaphorically to describe all believers, such as the 'little children' in 1 John and 'obedient children' in 1 Peter 1:14. The references to the care of orphans in James 1:27 is significant because it shows that in a day when there was virtually no organized social welfare, and children were regarded as having little value in themselves, the church by contrast responded to their needs because it highly valued them, no doubt stimulated by the example of the ministry of Jesus himself.

1.1.3.4 The relationship between the Old and the New Testaments:

A Baptist hermeneutical approach

The question of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments is a complex one, which is a thesis in itself! D.L. Baker has in fact written such a thesis of over four hundred pages entitled Two Testaments, One Bible - a study of some modern solutions to the theological problem of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Baker (1976:8-13) classifies the various approaches as 'Old Testament solutions', 'New Testament solutions' and 'the search for a Biblical solution'. While totally rejecting a 'Marcionite' approach to the canon of Scripture, it is true to say that Baptists generally would reject the 'Old Testament solutions' of Van Ruler and Miskotte (Baker 1976:93-146), and that their hermeneutical approach to the Bible
is dominated by a view of the New Testament as determinative, especially in matters of doctrine and church order (Miller 1987:21). Cook (1961:99), for example, explains: 'the only guide we recognize as authoritative for faith and life is the New Testament. We seek to shape our church activities by New Testament models...'

This does not mean that Baptists simplistically discard the Old Testament because it sometimes contains only the 'shadow' which becomes 'reality' in the New Testament (as suggested in the letter to the Hebrews). It is clearly inadequate, for example, merely to describe the relationship between the Old and New Testaments in terms of promise and fulfilment. Some prophecies (e.g. concerning the exile and return) are already fulfilled within the Old Testament itself; some are fulfilled in the ministry of Christ while some New Testament prophecies are still unfulfilled. A more helpful concept is that of continuity and discontinuity. Discontinuity would then refer to certain Old Testament teachings which seem to have only had relevance and applicability within its own context and circumstances. Continuity would apply to themes which continue in the New Testament and are developed with a richer, fuller or new meaning, sometimes to a point of completion or climax from which they are not developed any further. One may also speak of 'bridges' within and between the testaments. The relationship between the testaments is especially significant for a theology of the child. In the past it has seemed that those supporting infant baptism have tended to emphasize the positive
continuity between the testaments while those opposing infant baptism have tended to emphasize the sharp break or discontinuity. These approaches tend to lose sight of the richness of the relationship between the testaments and also oversimplify it. There are clearly relationships between themes such as the Old Testament Passover and the New Testament Lord's Supper, in salvation history, typology, the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sunday, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, the nation of Israel and the church which cannot be adequately described in any simple scheme (for a discussion of some of these topics, see König 1987:64-96). The reason for the Baptist preference for a 'New Testament hermeneutic' as determinative is the recognition of the progressive nature of revelation, which develops both within the Old Testament as noted by Kingdon (1975:76) as well as between the Old Testament and New Testament. Baptists therefore believe that to derive a theology of the child mainly from the Old Testament in a way that appears to overrule the explicit teaching of the New Testament, is to be retrogressive in our approach to God's unfolding revelation in Scripture. The New Testament must interpret the Old Testament and not vice-versa. This will be reflected in the summary which follows.

1.1.3.5 Summary

Although the social setting of the child in the New Testament was similar to that of the Old Testament, there is a change of attitude towards children and a new kind of interest in them. The
early Christians came to see the childhood of Jesus, especially the reference to his growth in Luke 2:52, as the ideal pattern for childhood. It is, however, the welcoming attitude of Jesus to actual children encountered in his ministry and his specific teaching which indicates this change. At a time when children still had a decidedly inferior social status, Jesus used a child as a teaching model for adults. It was not the children who had to become like adults, but adults who had to become like children. Jesus taught that children were the objects of God's special care and declared that 'of such is the kingdom'. The precise meaning of this term is still a storm centre of interpretation.

There is evidence that some breakdown of family solidarity was already taking place. There were examples of husbands with unbelieving wives and wives with unbelieving husbands, of older children who would sometimes reject their parents' faith. Jesus also warned that the gospel itself had the potential to divide families on the basis of individual allegiance to himself. Thus the development of individual responsibility, as already noted within later Old Testament history, is carried further in the New Testament. The practice of 'household' baptisms and the establishment of 'house churches' in the Acts and Epistles indicates that the gospel would make a major impact on the lives of children, but this in itself cannot provide conclusive evidence for either infant baptism or the 'church membership' of young children.
On the one hand, passages such as Ephesians 6:1-4 and Colossians 3:20-21 suggest that these children may not only have attended worship, but were regarded as 'in Christ'; these passages also limit the absolute authority of parents over their children and highlight their mutual responsibilities. Passages such as 1 Corinthians 7:14 also indicate that the children of even one believing parent in a religiously divided marriage, though not 'saved', were regarded as standing in some creative or pastoral relationship to the church. On the other hand, passages in the Pastoral Epistles suggest that even the children of believing parents had to come to personal faith in Christ and were not regarded as Christians because of their parents' faith. Little children, however, were regarded as part of the Christian community in a broad sense only, because the gospel affected them mediately (i.e. indirectly) through their parents. A measure of success in raising up believing and well-managed children, was regarded as an essential requirement for appointment to the office of elder/bishop and deacon in the church. The parents' greatest challenge was to bring up their children 'in the nurture and discipline of the Lord'.

75
1.2 THE EARLY CHURCH TO THE CLOSE OF THE FOURTH CENTURY

1.2.1 General Review

Brown (1974:575-811) has made a detailed 236 page study of the place of children during the second and third centuries after Christ. His findings may be summarised as follows.

1. In the earlier stages of the second century, the situation was similar to that of the Pastoral epistles: the child's place was in the home and family, not in the church as such. There was, however, a gradual progression away from a strong sense of family solidarity towards individualism. The Shepherd of Hermas (written between 140 and 155 AD) notes that God's dealings with the father were also intended to lead children into their own personal faith, 'that they also may repent and purify themselves from every lust of this world' (Similitude vii.2 in Lake 1965:185). The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus (probably 217) for example, suggests that the days of household baptisms were long since past: some of the detailed requirements for baptismal candidates do not suggest that a man brought his wife and household to faith with him at his conversion.

2. While the Apostolic Fathers, who wrote before the middle of the second Century generally confirm the picture of the Pastoral epistles, there is a change of emphasis in the later Apologists, who are far less interested in the oikos as a family unit. This is in line with social trends, since in their day the original patriarchal organisation of the Greek and Roman family was disintegrating.

3. Throughout the entire period, the church attached a great value to the child. Abortion and infanticide were strongly denounced in the instruction given to catachumens, and the care of orphans was also undertaken by the churches.
4 The innocence (though not sinlessness) of infants and children is asserted, together with their salvation through Christ. A change becomes apparent by the time of Origen (185-254) who eventually taught that infants and children were infected by the guilt and pollution of Adam's sin. This was linked with the need for the 'cleansing' of infant baptism. Thus infant baptism began to be linked to a developing doctrine of original sin which by the time of Augustine (354-430) was systematised to teach a form of biologically inherited original guilt.

5 There is clear evidence that during the third century, children of all ages were baptised. This was, however, usually linked with an extended period of instruction as catechumens which climaxed in baptism and the Eucharist (Lord's Supper). While Tertullian (160-220) opposed the tendency to 'rush' children into baptism, often because of a fear for their spiritual destiny if dying unbaptised, infant baptism appears to have become an accepted (though not general or universal) practise in many parts of the church by the later years of Origen (185-254) and Cyprian (200/210-257), by which time baptismal regeneration was becoming a common view.

6 By the time of Cyprian, the North African church admitted baptised children of tender age to the Lord's Table. The child 'regenerated' by baptism, was thus now received into the full membership of the church. Brown (1974:811) asks 'One wonders whether it is mere coincidence that the writer who passes on this information (ie Cyprian) has nothing to say about the Christian education of the child. It would appear that little attention needs to be paid to the child who now in his own right is safe within the fold of the Church'.

7
1.2.2 Further insights from the early church fathers

1.2.2.1 IRENAEUS (140/160-200)

Brown (1974:633-653) finds the beginnings of a theology of the child in the writings of Irenaeus. As long as the child was viewed within the totality of the believing family, its salvation was no real problem; however, once considered as an independent entity, the child’s salvation becomes a question of paramount importance. Irenaeus held an unusual interpretation of the 'Massacre of the Innocents' in Matthew 2:16: Jesus 'since he was himself an infant' arranged that they 'shall be martyrs' for His sake, 'that he might send them on before into his Kingdom' (quoted by Brown 1974:636). This probably reflects the early church's deep respect for the martyr since there is evidence that at least some children died as martyrs or at least suffered with their parents during the persecutions of that period. Irenaeus taught the innocence of little children who had not yet reached the age of accountability. However, their salvation does not result directly from their innocence but because of the person and work of Christ. Irenaeus (Adversus Haereses ii.xxii.4 in Bettenson 1963:110) developed a theory of 'recapitulation' based on Ephesians 1:10. What was lost by the Fall into sin, the divine likeness, is restored by Christ. Christ sanctified childhood by passing through it in his incarnation (Irenaeus went too far in developing his theory of Christ identifying with every stage of human life: there is no evidence that Jesus lived to the age of ninety!). Although Irenaeus in some way linked regeneration with baptism, this salvation did not come to infants through baptism itself, but rather through the incarnation of Christ, to those who 'through him are born again to God'. If
this is an allusion to infant baptism, it is the first reference to the practice in Christian literature. Stander and Louw (1988:39), however, think this is highly unlikely.

1.2.2.2 CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (150-215)

All Clement's references to children appear not in the context of the church but of the Christian family. Clement (Brown 1974:670-677) refers to the innocence and 'unspoiled years' of children, not in a sense of positive righteousness, but rather of inexperience; here is no doctrine of original sin. Youth is a crisis period in which vital choices are made. Clement seemed to advocate a three to four year course of study for catachumens, 'for instruction leads to faith and faith with baptism is trained by the Holy spirit' (Brown 1974:678).

1.2.2.3 ORIGEN (185-214)

A tendency to spiritualise Jesus' references to children and apply them to his disciples is apparent. However, the church of Origen's day did not neglect children as far as its missionary strategy was concerned. Brown (1974:690) notes that 'an approach to the whole household is no longer as effective as in Apostolic and early post-Apostolic times', and so, together with the general evangelistic outreach to all people, there was a special effort directed towards children reaching the age of puberty.

Origen's writings also contain what appears to be the first unambiguous reference to infant baptism, although Stander & Louw (1988:68-69) suggest it would be more accurate to translate the term used as 'children' or 'young children' (Greek paidia: Latin
Origen's own convictions on the question of infant baptism are uncertain since although he is clearly referring to an existing practice in parts of the church, it does not seem to fit well into the rest of his teaching, especially the necessity of the inward and ethical preparation of catechumens before baptism (Bettenson 1963:341-343), and the fact that up to this time, members of the catechumenate went through a lengthy and intensive period of instruction and study before baptism (Homily on Luke xxii, 5-6 quoted in Stander and Louw 1988:71). It therefore seems to be an innovation which had appeared by that time (Stander and Louw 1988:69-70,75-76). Origen found the need for the practice in the cleansing of infants from the pollution of Adam's sin. There is thus a development away from the early Fathers' notion of the innocence of children towards a theology of original sin and guilt, influenced by current notions of the impurity of the sexual act, which, together with the idea of baptismal regeneration, would become explicit later in the teachings of Augustine (see 2.1.1).

1.2.2.4 TERTULLIAN (160-220)

Offerings were taken during worship services for the care of orphans, based on Psalm 72:4 and Isaiah 1:17 (adversus Marcion iv. xiv in Brown 1974:721). Infants were innocent; childhood was marked by a measure of discretion but full responsibility has not yet been reached. Commenting on the incident in 2 Kings 2:23-24 concerning the children (RSV 'small boys') who ridiculed Elisha, Tertullian notes that at this stage of childhood it is possible to mock at holy things, though not yet blaspheme. Infants, being innocent, did not need baptism for the remission of sins. Baptism should be postponed
until the age of responsibility is reached. Young people should come to Christ 'when they grow up' and when they have become competent to know Christ (Bettenson 1963:201). In commenting on 1 Corinthians 7:14, Tertullian distinguished between children from Christian homes as those 'marked out' for holiness and for salvation (candidate fidei) and members of the church, who are holy. 'Their holiness is only potential - they are only designati sanctatis for the apostle [Paul] had not forgotten the Lord's words "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God", in other words, he cannot be holy' (de Anima xl quoted in Brown 1974:741) 'Every soul then, by reason of its birth, has its nature in Adam until it is born again in Christ' (de Anima xxxix-xl in Bettenson 1963:160). Thus children, even of Christian parents, are not sinless; 'innocence' here means only that they are not held morally accountable for wrongdoing (adversus Marcion ii.15 in Bettenson 1963:158, suggests that Tertullian denies the idea of 'inherited guilt').

Two distinct features of Tertullian's teaching (Brown 1974:717-719) concerning children are:

1) The danger of 'secular education' for children because it involved instruction about pagan gods. It could not be totally avoided, however, since secular studies were necessary before going into 'divine studies'. This concession, however, is dangerous since a child's belief is thereby prepared for the devil from the beginning of its education. Parents, however, are to impart the divine studies - at this point Tertullian associates Ephesians 6:4 with Exodus 10:2.

2) On the basis of 1 Corinthians 7:29 and the extremity of the times, Tertullian suggested that the divine command in Genesis 1:28
'be fruitful and multiply' is now cancelled. Marriage is good but celibacy is better. This attitude no doubt contributed to an eventual minimising of the importance of children.

1.2.2.5 CYPRIAN (200/210-257)
The first explicit appearance of the idea of Original Guilt as the theoretical justification for infant baptism is found in an explanation given by Cyprian at Carthage in 253. An infant ought not to be refused baptism - 'who being newly born has committed no sin, save that of being carnally born according to Adam he has by his first birth contracted the infection of the ancient death. And indeed an infant approaches to receive the remission of sins more easily through this very fact, that the sins which are remitted unto him (in baptism) are not his own but another's'. (quoted by Grant 1976:36). N.P. Williams (1927:296) suggests that Cyprian’s thought in this passage is confused since it 'oscillates illogically between what we have called the medical and the forensic ways of regarding sin; it '... falls into the absurdity of alluding to the "remission" of an "infection"' (see also 2.1.1).

1.2.3 The development of the Catachumenate
The term 'catachumenate' has an unfamiliar ring in most Baptist ears. It is not, however, an invention of the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches; its existence and function is well attested in the early church in the first few centuries and its origin is suggested, though not formalised, in the New Testament itself. P. Toon (1974:201) defines 'catachumens' as: 'converts to Christianity being prepared for baptism'. Toon adds 'In the early church there was a very thorough preparation before entrance into the privileges
of church membership'. R.M.Grant (1976:39) suggests that 'the catachumenate represents the formalisation of something that existed informally from a very early time in the history of the church'. It is suggested that there are traces of a simple catechism, Jewish-Christian in origin, in the New Testament epistles, for example in 1 Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 5:14; Colossians 1:15-20; Philippians 2:5-11, etc. The more fully developed form of catechism is found in the Didache and in the Epistle of Barnabas and refer to the idea of 'two ways'; the 'way of life' which includes extracts from the Decalogue and Sermon on the Mount and the 'way of death' which includes long lists of sins and sinners similar to those found in the Pauline epistles.

The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus is a document of uncertain date but is generally thought to reflect the situation in Rome in the late second and early third centuries. According to Stander and Louw (1988:59) it was composed in 217. T.M.Finn (1989:72-79) indicates that the catachumenate was in two parts: a preliminary and extended training in doctrine (which usually included daily instruction before going to work, for a period of three years), followed by an intensive spiritual preparation including prayer, fasting and exorcism, immediately before baptism at Easter. It was also preceded by a rigorous inquiry into the motives, status and occupation of potential candidates. Certain applicants were automatically excluded, for example, prostitutes and astrologers, while even schoolteachers who had to teach about pagan Roman gods, were only accepted if they had no other means of support. Finn (1989:73) comments: 'The catachumens stood in a class apart, between Roman society and Christian church - in both but of neither'.
In most catechetical schools, the instruction was graded. Eusebius, the historian of the early church, notes that at Alexandria, Heracles taught the basic introductory course for beginners, while Origen himself taught the more advanced students. Beginners were to read the 'clear' books of Scripture such as the gospels, Pauline epistles and Psalms, and avoid the 'obscure' ones such as Leviticus, the vision of Ezekiel and the poetry of the Song of Songs. In later times, catachesis took the form of lectures on all the Scriptures, beginning with Genesis. At Jerusalem and Alexandria, catechetical theology tended to develop into higher Christian education (Grant 1976:44-45).

It may be expected that any children in the catachumenate would fit into the beginners course until ready for promotion. There appears, however, to have been a wide variety of baptismal and catechetical practices in different places and different times from the second to fifth centuries. While the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus (probably 217) definitely seems to refer to young children amongst the catachumens to be baptised, J.A. Berntsen (1978:194-210), in a study of the catechetical lectures of the fourth to fifth century church fathers Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia has shown that this instruction was largely directed at the Christian affections of catachumens in a sense that seems beyond the scope of infants and very young children since it seems to require a certain level of understanding. Cyril was concerned with the motives and inclinations of his hearers, the purity of their intentions; Chrysostom was convinced that coming to faith demanded reason and understanding, together with religious fervour and emotion, for Theodore the purpose of the catachumenate was to verse
believers in the rights and requisites of their new citizenship. 

Toon (1974:201) comments on the decline of the catachumenate: 'After the time of Constantine the Great, the number of converts was too great to continue this lengthy preparation... The more widespread infant baptism became, the less was heard of the catachumenate.'

Although no such distinct class of persons exists in Baptist churches, in an informal sense catachumens may be compared to 'adherents' attending worship services who have professed faith in Christ but have not yet been received into church membership. The Greek word catachumenos ('anyone who received instruction in the word') appears in Galatians 6:6 but here it would appear to refer to baptised Christians who are still on the road to maturity (as are all believers!), rather than to those who are not yet full church members. Baptists would generally not be happy, however, with such an extended catachumenate as that which developed in the post-New Testament early church. The pattern in Acts seems to suggest a much more rapid incorporation into the church, such as in Acts 2:41-42 and similarly repeated in Acts 2:47, 4:4, 8:35-38, 10:44-48, etc.

In practice, however, modern Baptists need to recognise that this New Testament pattern of baptism immediately after faith, followed by rapid incorporation into the church, is far from being the general practice in Baptist churches. There are often many 'delayed' or 'retarded' baptisms long after the initial profession of faith (see Appendix 3 question 3.4).

Although Baptists would therefore not accept the idea of a catachumenate for those who have already responded by faith to Christ as Saviour and Lord, S.Hudson-Reed has suggested that some
informal concept of this kind would be biblical and practical, in the case of the children of believers who have not yet come to personal faith but are under instruction at home and in Sunday School. 'He cannot be regarded as a full member of the Church, but why not regard him as a modern catachumen, waiting in the wings for the time of his initiation through baptism' (Hudson-Reed 1987:73-74).
1.3 ANABAPTIST AND EARLY BAPTIST VIEWS OF CHILDREN

1.3.1 The Anabaptists

The Sixteenth century Anabaptists and their successors were a diverse group; not all modern Baptists would necessarily see them as their forebears. It was their rejection of infant baptism and their insistence on believers' baptism only that led to the later nickname of Ana Baptists or 'twice baptisers'. This factor, together with such characteristics as the emphasis on a gathered church of believers in contrast to a broad 'state church', liberty of conscience, the priesthood of all believers and the sole authority of Scripture in all matters of faith and life, are what constitutes the link between the Anabaptist movement and today's Baptists. Modern Baptists generally have more in common with the Independent and Congregational stream of the 'mainline' Reformation, while the true descendants of the Anabaptists would be the 'closed communities' of Mennonites, Hutterites and the Amish which still continue today.

One of the earliest available Anabaptist Confessions of Faith, the Schleitheim Confession of 1527 states:

'Baptism shall be given to all those who have learned repentance and amendment of life, and who walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and wish to be buried with Him in death, so that they may be resurrected with Him, and to all those who with this significance request it (baptism) of us and demand it for themselves. This excludes all infant baptism...' (Lumpkin 1974:25).

The later 'Account of Our Religion, Teaching and Faith'
specifies: 'The right and necessary' sequence is preaching, faith, rebirth, and baptism. Children cannot be baptised in the right way because they are not reborn through preaching, faith and the Spirit (Lumpkin 1974:40); the Waterland Confession of 1580 specifically excluded 'infants' from baptism (Lumpkin 1974:60). Balthasar Hubmeier's *Christian Catechism* of 1526 is subtitled 'which every person should know before he is baptised in water', and likewise denied the charge of 'rebaptism' since 'infant baptism is no baptism' because according to Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:16, it was only for the 'faithful' (Janz 1982:148-151). In addition, Anabaptist children did not share in the communion service (Tennant July 1985:125).

Not only did the rejection of infant baptism have serious theological, ecclesiastical and even political implications in sixteenth century society, but it also meant abandoning a practice which answered many important questions about sin, the status of children and their relation to the gospel and to the church, and the fate of infants who died in infancy. Anabaptists were therefore accused of neglecting children and even denying salvation to them, and of Pelagianism because many of the established churches believed that baptism removed the stain of original sin. In today's theological climate, such issues are often regarded as irrelevant or of minor importance because of the preoccupation with contemporary social issues. This was not the case in the sixteenth century when the high infant mortality rate made such questions a very relevant social issue. Anabaptists did not in fact neglect childhood but rather gave special attention to it because:
i) Their virtual withdrawal from society forced them to define goals for child rearing and education and establish their own schools; and

ii) They had to attempt to answer some of the theological questions relating to the view of childhood implied in their rejection of infant baptism.

D.F. Tennant (July 1982:295-296) notes these questions as follows.

1 Whether baptism confers grace *ex opere operato* (as with the medieval doctrine of the Roman church) and whether it is therefore to be administered (to all) irrespective of faith or personal commitment.

2 Whether the *ex opere operato* action is the only antidote for original sin and must therefore be administered to infants soon after birth lest they die in infancy and be lost.

3 The place of man's response to the action of God in Christ - is the atonement by Christ on the cross an objective act with automatic effect, *appropriated* by a person's response in faith, or is its effect *dependent* upon that personal response? The Anabaptists were accused of Pelagianism precisely on this account, because they held the latter view.

4 The issue of the fate and destiny of infants who die in infancy. The officially constituted practices of the Roman Church had provided a security and a consolation to sad and despairing parents whose infants had died.

5 The distinction between original sin and actual sin and whether infants were capable of sinning.

6 The Anabaptist stress on personal responsibility and their view of the innocence of children raised the issue: at what point does a person move from a solidarity of grace as an
innocent child to responsibility in and for faith, to baptism and so to adulthood? (ie the so-called 'age of accountability').

7 What is baptism and how ought it be administered?

8 The pattern of child-rearing that followed, especially in the closed communities of the Hutterites, Mennonites and Amish consequent upon their separation from the state.

Concerning the first two of these above questions, all Anabaptists insisted on the faith and personal commitment of candidates for baptism. In addition, they also rejected any view of the 'ex opere operato' conferral of grace in baptism (Michael Servetus, a Socinian or Unitarian type of Anabaptist, who was later executed in Geneva as a heretic, appeared to hold a view approaching baptismal regeneration, but he is an exception [Tennant July 1982:299]). Similarly, all Anabaptists rejected the idea that baptism was in any sense an antidote for original sin, and insisted that the administration or withholding of infant baptism made no difference whatsoever to the salvation or eternal destiny of those dying in infancy. R.S. Armour notes that the majority view was that all infants who died unbaptised were saved while a small minority displayed a reverent agnosticism on the question (quoted by Schwartz 1973:103).

On what basis did the Anabaptists believe in the salvation of infants? Conrad Grebel asserted 'they are surely saved by the suffering of Christ, the new Adam' (Williams and Mergal 1957:81) ie they received grace passively. This assertion leads on naturally to questions 3 and 5 as noted above. The Anabaptists asserted that since infants could neither believe nor disbelieve, they are innocent until they developed powers of judgement and
will. Through Christ's atonement they were guaranteed salvation should they die unbaptised and therefore infant baptism was unnecessary (Schwartz 1973:103).

'Children were to grow until they reached the stage in life when they could distinguish between good and evil, be responsible for their own actions, and, on hearing the gospel for themselves from the Word, accept and on profession of repentance and faith be baptised as believers. Coming of age was important as the time when innocence ended and all the potential of original sin could be actual and, therefore, personal relationship with God and response to the invitation of Christ became significant' (Hudson-Reed 1987:27).

'Innocence' for the Anabaptists, however, was not the same as 'sinlessness'; they were not influenced by romantic, idealistic or sentimental views of the nature of the child. Although the Anabaptists had to develop their own doctrine to counter the Augustinian teaching that infant baptism was necessary because of original sin, this was not motivated by Pelagianism, because the reality and universality of sin was taken seriously. Anabaptists generally agreed that from the very beginning, an infant was disposed to evil (Schwartz 1973:103). This was also reflected in the general pattern of Anabaptist child rearing and schooling, which was designed to control sin and promote humility and obedience, leading eventually to voluntary Christian commitment. A distinction between original sin and original guilt emerged (Tennant October 1982:359). Dirk Phillips based this acceptance by God of children in their innocence on Deuteronomy 1:39 and Christ's promising the Kingdom to them (quoted by Tennant, October 1982:359), while Pilgrim Marpeck explained that it is not
so much the removal of original sin that Christ makes effective in the atonement but rather that original sin does not actually become inherited in children before they can distinguish between good and evil. Marpeck concluded that infants and young children were outside the realm of sin (Tennant, October 1982:354). Tennant (July 1984:309) explains: 'The Anabaptists had a distinctive view of childhood innocence. As it was later in life that Adam and Eve fell from grace, at the stage in their growth when the capacity for good and evil was at its height, when conscience was active and when the ability to choose between alternatives was developed, so the young child is a copy of Adam before the Fall. His natural growth from childhood through to adulthood corresponds with Adam. Sin does not begin to be active until he realises the point of the choice between good and evil. At first sight this appears to be Pelagian, yet the Anabaptists were so strong on sin and grace and the need for repentance and faith that to condemn them for Pelagianism was unfair'. There are obviously weaknesses and difficulties with the 'Adam before the Fall' analogy, but it should be remembered that some other 'orthodox' theologians, who were not Anabaptists, have also attempted to explain how Christ could have been fully human, yet sinless, along the same lines, by comparison with the humanity of Adam before the Fall. The main difference would be that, whereas the unique Son of God was in no way tainted by sin, whether 'original' or 'actual' (eg 1 Peter 1:19, Hebrews 4:15), the Anabaptists did recognise that the sinful nature, with its tendency to sin, was inherited by all children other than Jesus. They rejected, however, a theory of biologically transmitted original guilt in the Augustinian sense as going beyond the
Scriptural evidence (See 2.1.1).

In spite of the Anabaptist emphasis on spiritual independence, i.e. that no-one could believe for another, they did recognise to some extent the responsibility of the community for the spiritual welfare of its children. S. Hudson-Reed (1987:27) notes: 'That the practice of infant baptism had certain social and educational advantages and gave an opportunity for stressing the need for careful Christian nurture cannot be denied. It became evident to the Anabaptists that although Scripture does not demand it, it was expedient to have some sort of ceremony for the consecration of the child and the recognition of the role of the community in his upbringing'. Schwartz (1973:105) suggests that 'Balthasar Hubmeier and others felt the need for some social initiation to replace infant baptism, and inaugurated the ceremony of consecration'. The ceremony was based on Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16, Luke 18:15-17 and was first mentioned in one of Hubmeiers' letters written in 1525: 'Instead of baptism I have the congregation assemble, introduce the child and in German explain Matthew 19:13-15. The child is named, the entire church prays with bent knees for it and commends it to Christ that he may be gracious to it and intercede for it' (quoted in Tennant July 1984:306).

The reference to the 'whole' congregation indicates that the ceremony was for the church as much as for the child, while the reference to the German language suggests the importance of community identity and social cohesion, especially for the 'closed communities' of later Anabaptists. Significant also is that Christ is seen as intercessor and mediator for the child.
being consecrated, probably with a view to the day when the child will personally declare faith in Christ as Saviour. The ceremony indicates that Anabaptists saw some status to infancy both in terms of the infant's own personhood and its potential for future active participation in the community. The dual principles of corporate solidarity and individual responsibility thus come to expression in the ceremony. It should also be noted that child consecration was not universally required, ie. it was 'optional'. Where congregations felt it smacked of infant baptism, it was not observed. (This is similar to the practice of the dedication or presentation of Christian parents and their infants in Baptist churches today; it is not demanded or expected, but only observed where requested by particular parents). In addition, in some churches children were blessed frequently on several occasions throughout the year, during normal services and not as a special ceremony. Where this was the case, the significance of the 'one-time' consecration service at birth would probably have been diminished in the minds of these congregations.

The Anabaptist emphasis on spiritual independence and 'childhood innocence' therefore meant that 'coming of age' or the 'age of accountability' was of more concern to them than to paedobaptists. When did innocence end? When would punishment for sin begin? When did religious education begin? Anabaptists therefore established various criteria by which to recognise the change from 'child' to 'youth'. Some of these still seem valid in terms of developmental psychology today; others, to the modern mind, seem unlikely or unproven such as J.A. Hostetler's suggestion that 'a child is innocent until he begins
to hit back or tries to comb his hair'! (quoted by Tennant July 1984:310).

Three stages were significant - childhood, youth and adulthood. Childhood was a stage of innocency because it was a state of unselfwilled development. Innocence did not mean a tendency to good but inability to discern right from wrong. Thus the first indication of a move from childhood to youth was the development of the will. This was the point at which youth became actual and so also the point at which discipline, instruction and education began in earnest. The aim of this education and discipline was to implant knowledge of the fear of God and the will of God; for Anabaptists this also meant submission to the authority and will of the community. This led to the second criterion - the development of the conscience indicated by obedience to parental authority. The third criterion was similar - the ability to choose between good and evil alternatives. Menno Simons emphasised the need of discipline from this stage onwards since 'a child unrestrained becomes headstrong as an untamed horse' (quoted in Wenger 1956:251-252). This is in line with the 'two natures' of the human race as taught in Reformed Theology; people are in a fallen state because after their period of innocency, Adam and Eve fell from grace. It would not be correct however, to suggest that such views of the characteristics of childhood were invented by the Anabaptists. Schwartz (1973:108) shows that their perception of the nature of childhood had been influenced by the earlier humanistic tradition of Erasmus and also the work of a fifteenth century Dominican monk. Luther, Zwingli and Melanchthon were also heirs to this tradition, but
the Anabaptists developed this understanding in greater detail and application.

In spite of these three criteria, Anabaptists did not set a definite age for the transition from childhood to youth, although some of their leaders suggested this normally took place sometime around the ages of five to seven (Tennant July 1984:314). Grebel does not mention any specific age for baptism but seems to indicate that a child could be baptised if there was evidence of repentance and faith and the resolve to lead a new life (Hudson-Reed 1987:24). Michael Servetus was unusual and more radical than most Anabaptists, ruling out not only the baptism of infants but also of adolescents and young adults. He suggested that baptism should only be administered from the age of thirty because Jesus himself set the pattern in being baptised at this age. The modern-day Hutterites have suggested that the proper age for baptism is about twenty years (Tennant July 1984:314). The renowned nineteenth century Baptist preacher C.H. Spurgeon would certainly have disagreed with Servetus since Spurgeon himself was baptised at the age of fifteen (Ray 1903:493) and would not reject a child of five or six being received into church membership, provided he was convinced of the genuineness of the conversion (Spurgeon 1989:101,145).

1.3.1.1 Anabaptist child rearing and schooling
Early Anabaptist child-rearing practices were generally more humane than those of society as a whole. Unweaned children were not given over to 'wet-nurses' but cared for by their own parents. Child-rearing was not so much family centred but
school-centred. This was possible because of the 'closed' nature of their communities and the exalted position and personal commitment of schoolteachers appointed to these schools. We have already noted the three criteria for recognising the shift from childhood to youth, when the more intensive educational process would begin. The criterion by which Anabaptists measured development in these schools was obedience. Implicit in their understanding of obedience was the notion of a divinely ordered world, with a clear order of relationships - man to God, wife to husband, children to parents, the young to the old, and, in the case of groups like the Hutterites, obedience to the community of believers. In contrast to the well-known statement of the Westminster Shorter Catechism 'The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever', Guy Hershberger suggested that for Anabaptists, any thought of the 'enjoyment' of salvation is completely foreign - obedience stands here in opposition to enjoyment' (quoted in Tennant October 1984:349). Obedience led to the concept of brotherhood, since salvation was never so individualistic as it was amongst other Pietist groups.

A very particular kind of inward obedience, however, was intended, as described by Michael Sattler. Perfect or 'filial' obedience 'included rejoicing in punishment, whether or not conscious of transgressions, fulfilling commands with love and doing cheerfully the will of God. It produced "peaceable and mild-natured persons". Servile obedience indicated a wish to escape punishment, negligence of all duties not expressly commanded and concern only for the external commands of the Lord. It produced "self-willed and vindictive people" '(quoted by
Schoolteachers were not merely teachers, but rather guardians and caretakers of the children entrusted to them. They were to teach primarily by example, by spending time with the children and creating a helpful atmosphere and environment for them. 'Worldly' education was to be avoided because it might lead to pride and because the highly educated people of the day were the priests and clergy of the established churches who would be expected to oppose Anabaptist teachings. Peter Scherer, better known as Peter Walpot, was a Hutterite bishop and schoolmaster. His document A Hutterite School Discipline of 1578 and address of 1568 to the Schoolmasters is significant because it shows that these schools were not just academic institutions but rather children's homes, where they spent most of their time and in which they were trained and prepared for adult life in the community. Detailed descriptions of the various stages of youth and the appropriate disciplinary responses are outlined. Some of these, eg when to punish a child for bedwetting, seem too regimented and legalistic, yet on the other hand the general approach was positive in that the teaching and approach had to be adapted to the child's level of understanding and balanced according to the teaching of Ephesians 6:4 where parents are told 'do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord'. The primary purpose of the schools was not our modern academic or 'all-round' education but was intended to wean children away from things 'carnal' to things eternal. Work and the learning of a trade was important, however, and baptism was seen as the goal of this educational
process and the sign of adulthood, maturity and marriage (Tennant October 1984:351-357).

1.3.1.2 Parenthood

Parenthood is a spiritual matter because parents would be accountable to God at the judgement for the proper upbringing of their children. They would also be judged in this life by the quality of their children's lives and whether the children themselves were brought to faith, maturity and baptism. Menno Simons had much to say about Christian parenting. The salvation of their children should be the greatest desire of Christian parents; they should rather see them face martyrdom for Christ than live in luxury without God. In his tract The Nurture of Children, Menno enlarged on Ephesians 6:4 and argued that parents should not withhold discipline and spoil their children through a false sense of natural love. Menno would also be more in line with modern Baptists in that by contrast with his Hutterite counterparts who seemed to suggest that handing children over to the school was as least as important for child rearing as parental control, he emphasised the greater role of parental responsibility (Wenger 1956:386, 389, 950-952).

1.3.1.3 Some comparisons with sixteenth-century Reformed Theology

Anabaptists held much in common doctrinally with the 'magisterial Reformers' Luther, Zwingli and Calvin. They also adopted the 'sola Scriptura' emphasis of the Reformation, but were led to certain distinctive doctrines that distinguished them as the 'Radical Reformation'. What were some of the differences concerning the theology of the child other than the rejection of
infant baptism?

1. No doctrine of the invisible church: The covenant was a very important concept in Reformed theology, especially in Calvin's doctrine of the church. Calvin distinguished (as did the later Baptists) between the visible church and the invisible church. The invisible church was made up of all true children of God and is known to God alone. Children enter this church by covenant solidarity with their parents and are thus 'presumptive Christians', with new life as a latent seed to be nurtured to mature faith as they grow up. All children dying in infancy are elect and saved on the grounds of the covenant, since they are heirs of his promise (the position of children of unbelievers is not directly considered), and may well have been called by God in divine election, to serve in the invisible church. It seems, however, that because of the emphasis on the church as a gathered community of committed disciples, the Anabaptists had virtually no doctrine of the invisible church (Tennant July 1982:301; October 1982:364-365,369).

2. Approach to the education of children: Luther seemed to feel that parents were unable to raise their children properly and so the state and social institutions were to assume much of this responsibility (Schwartz 1973:112). Both Luther and Melanchthon valued scholarship and saw education as a state business to serve the purposes of both church and state. Luther even saw education in terms of spiritual warfare against the devil. Ironically, for the Anabaptists, the spiritual war against the devil was within the very institutions of the state and church, hence their great suspicion of state schools. Tennant notes (July 1985:128) 'In contrast to Luther, Melanchthon elevated the intellect, omitted
the vernacular and rather put the need for a personal faith in second place. Thus a high culture, embodied in the classics, was seen to be of more importance than a personal religion based on experience. For Luther and Melanchthon, the principle seemed to be that formal schooling was to be equated with child rearing.

The great contrast between Reformers and Anabaptists is that to the Anabaptists, child rearing was not the same as schooling. Child rearing continues even though schooling has finished, until adulthood is reached with voluntary believer’s baptism.

3 Christian Nurture or Conversion? Calvin’s doctrine of the child was based on a covenantal understanding of the unity within the family of believing parents with their own children. This eventually led to a pattern of child rearing known as nurturing, as in H. Bushnell’s (1880:4) famous phrase later in the nineteenth century, ‘The child is to grow up as a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise’. The child was viewed as a presumptive Christian, the latent seed must be nurtured so that it grows as the child grows. The Anabaptist view of child rearing is that children in their innocence are to be instructed in a knowledge of good and evil, and in the gospel, so that they might respond to it and so be ‘born again’. Children were not in the church and received no special merit because they were the offspring of believers (Tennant October 1982:369). Although the Anabaptists were in due time themselves faced with the reality of ‘second generation Christians’, ‘the answer of the Anabaptists seemed to be to present each generation with the gospel afresh and to place all in the same category as each other, children of believers and children of non-believers, those brought up under Christian influence to the point of decision and those converted
from completely outside the Christian community. Conversion is the goal of preaching the gospel to all men, and also the goal of childrearing, education and socialisation in the believing communities themselves' (Tennant October 1982:370). The difference could perhaps be summed up in modern terms as saying that in the 'Covenant' view of the church, children are 'in' the church unless they later specifically opt out, while in the Anabaptist view, children are 'out until they specifically opt in'.

1.3.1.4 Strengths and weaknesses of the Anabaptist approach to children

a) Strengths

1. The Anabaptists sought a true conversion for each child, leading to a 'gathered' church of committed disciples, rather than being satisfied with children growing up with only a nominal, outward connection with the church.

2. They distinguished between schooling or education and childrearing. This distinction is also implied in the title and content of the book by Andrew Murray of the Dutch Reformed Church, How to Raise Your Children for Christ (Bethany Fellowship 1975, previously published in 1952 under the title: The Children for Christ).

3. They made a major contribution to the recognition of the understanding of child development in its various stages, rather than treating children only as 'little adults'.

4. They stimulated a more thorough and proper exegesis of biblical teaching relating to children. Hans Reudi-Weber (1979:20) maintains that it was the Anabaptists who first
challenged the use of Mark 10:13-16 in relation to infant baptism, a position largely followed by most Biblical scholars today including paedobaptists. In addition, leaders such as Menno Simons worked out detailed practical and pastoral application of passages such as Ephesians 6:1-4, in a manner and spirit similar to that of the English Puritans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

5 Their teaching of the separation of church and state was a plea for the recognition of a pluralistic society rather than a Constantinian model of church/state alliance. This will have increasing relevance today for the education of children in state and private schools as the 'new South Africa' moves in the direction of a more pluralistic society. Although some private education today is racially and politically motivated, Anabaptist schooling was based on religious grounds. The parallel today would be the various Christian schools which are non-racial but are based on a more specifically Christian curriculum than is possible in the average state school because although 77% of the population claim some degree of Christian allegiance this percentage includes a large 'nominal' element which would not really claim the same degree of personal commitment or discipleship usually required in specifically Christian schools. (For other perspectives on Christian education in the 'new South Africa', see F. Swanepoel: Being a Christian in all Spheres in the New South Africa, 15-19)

b) Weaknesses

The following comments would not apply equally to all Anabaptists, but more especially to the 'closed communities' such
as the Hutterites, Mennonites and the Amish.

1 Although limited individualism was permitted, the pattern of schooling seemed ultimately to amount to indoctrination and conformity rather than education and was designed to lead the individual to voluntarily accept the teaching and authority of the community leadership. While recognising that Christian education will include a real commitment to basic Christian beliefs and values rather than some directionless, open-ended 'secular' education, the suppression of independent thinking, evaluation and dissent may have detrimental consequences for a child's education as a person. 'Secular education fails if a person becomes a bigot but not if he becomes an atheist; Christian nurture fails both if he becomes a bigot and if he becomes an atheist' (British Council of Churches 1976:24). The 'closed community' Anabaptist education could perhaps more accurately be described as socialisation in the interests of their particular culture.

2 The emphasis on obedience easily tended, with the succeeding generations, to become formalised and external, a legalism of the very kind Sattler warned against, i.e. servile obedience, since no private interpretation of the Scriptures was allowed.

3 Separation of church and state need not lead to a total withdrawal of Christians from the broader society. While many Christians today have reservations about 'secular education' at some of the educational institutions of the state, it is impossible for Christians to be 'salt' and 'light' in society (Mt 5:13-16) if they do not penetrate and influence society. This is the thought of Philippians 2:15 'that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God in the midst of a crooked
and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.'

4. The 'community' virtually takes over the role of the Holy Spirit in that instead of the convicting work of the Spirit in true repentance of sin and faith in Christ, confessed in baptism, there was a very real social pressure to profess adult membership and marriage within the community; i.e., such a 'conditioned response' will be less than Jesus intended when he said 'If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed' (Jn 8:36).

1.3.2 Early Baptists

It is generally agreed that the first Baptist Church was an English congregation established in Amsterdam in 1609 under the leadership of John Smyth. Some members returned to England in 1612 and founded a congregation under Thomas Helwys. Apart from rejecting infant baptism on the basis of Romans 6:2-4, Smyth associated baptism with conversion and initiation into the church. He accepted the truth of original sin but saw no necessary link between it and baptism (Lumpkin 1974:101,103,120). On returning to England, many of Smyth's followers had adopted Arminian views of the atonement and concluded that children dying in infancy died in the salvation won by Christ for all. Those who live and do not repent in later life die a spiritual death. This became known as the 'Second Adam doctrine' which played an important part in later General Baptist attempts to explain the status of infants. Baptists adopting a Calvinistic theology became known as 'Particular Baptists', because of their belief in a limited or particular atonement, while the 'General Baptists'
largely held Arminian views in the matter. (Tennant 1978:7-10).

1.3.2.1 General Baptists

A concern for the status of children is reflected in Helwys' work, *A Short and Plain Proof that no Infants are Condemned*. This was mainly directed against Calvinistic views of a limited atonement. For Helwys 'Christ's death is as far-reaching in its effect as Adam's sin. An infant outside the sphere of moral responsibility and therefore outside the sphere of consenting sin is within the salvation won by the Second Adam' (Walker 1966:247). This shows that Baptists were not unaware of the problems raised by the rejection of infant baptism, especially in the light of the high infant mortality rate in those days.

In the *Standard Confession* (Lumpkin 1974:228) and Henry Hagger's 1653 work *The Foundation of the Font Discovered*, the distinction between original sin and actual sin was carried further. It seems that the General Baptists held a doctrine of two deaths. Children dying in infancy are saved by the salvation won by Christ; their dying is the result of mortality, the first death which in Adam is shared by the whole human race. Because there is no actual sin, ie sin of consent or responsibility, infants are not subject to the second death of condemnation, spiritual separation from God in hell. Hagger also argued that there is no distinction between the children of believers and those of non-believers in the effect of Christ's atonement (Walker 1966:247-248). The *Orthodox Creed* (Lumpkin 1974:318,330-331) likewise asserts the salvation of all little children with or without baptism, dying in infancy, 'whether born of believing parents or
unbelieving parents, by the grace of God, and merit of Christ their redeemer, and work of the holy ghost, and so being made members of the invisible church, shall enjoy life everlasting'. The following texts were cited in support: Isaiah 7:16, 8:4; 2 Samuel 12:15-23; 1 Kings 14:13; Ezekiel 18; Matthew 18:2-4; Jeremiah 31:29-30; Deuteronomy 1:39; Matthew 19:13-14; Mark 10:13-16. In addition, the Creed specifically rejects the teaching that infants dying in infancy without baptism go to purgatory or limbus infantum or are damned.

Thomas Grantham brings together several of these seventeenth century Baptist teachings to produce a more consistent theology of infancy (Walker 1966:248-250). His teaching included the following points:

1. Infants, who have no personal guilt of their own, belong to the wider sphere of the invisible church; they are unable to bear the responsibility of membership in the visible church.

2. Infants are saved, not by any ritual but they are sanctified by the work of Christ and his prevenient grace in a manner unknown to us.

3. Infants dying in infancy have already suffered the punishment of original sin.

4. Grantham seems to follow Irenaeus' 'recapitulation' theory of the incarnation and atonement of Christ by making great use of the representative figures of Adam and Christ. Christ fulfilled the covenant with Adam of Genesis 3:15. All infants are thereby members of the invisible church through this covenant. The whole of mankind is involved in the work of Christ. 'Mankind does not stand outside the body of Christ waiting to be gathered in. It
is the Body of Christ out of which men can sin themselves in the years of responsibility' (Walker 1966:249). The most obvious difficulty of this last statement is the apparent contradiction of biblical statements relating to the 'Final Perseverance of the Saints' or eternal security of the believer eg. John 10:27-29; this will be considered further in 2.2

5 There is no distinction between the children of believers and those of non-believers in the effectiveness of the atonement of Christ on their behalf.

6 The relationship between the visible church and the children of believers is one of prayer and pastoral concern.

7 There appears to have been some sort of dedication or presentation service for infants in General Baptist churches.

1.3.2.2 The Particular Baptists

The first Particular Baptist Confession was published in 1644; it is, however, the 1689 'London' confession largely adapted from the Westminster Confession, which became the most widely accepted and influential confession amongst Calvinistic Baptists worldwide, and which is the basic doctrinal statement of 'Reformed Baptists' in Southern Africa today. There are many points at which they share the same outlook concerning the status of children as the General Baptists. Their distinctives, however include the following (Walker 1966:252-260).

1 Whereas for the General Baptists, baptism was an initiating ordinance signifying admission to church membership, the Particular Baptists also specified the mode of baptism as immersion, to symbolise the death-burial-resurrection motif in
Romans 6:2-4. The only reference to baptism as an initiating ordinance in the 1689 Confession appears to be that baptism is a sign of being 'engrafted into' Christ (Lumpkin 1974:290-291).

2 The place of children was worked out in terms of a Calvinistic Baptist view of the Covenant; the New Testament must expound the Old, not the Old the New. Particular Baptists therefore explained not only the continuity between the two covenants but especially the points of discontinuity; an example is Thomas Collier's 1659 work *A discourse of true Gospel blessedness in the New Covenant*. According to Acts 2:41-42, there is a unity between the two ordinances of baptism and communion - to grant baptism was in itself to grant the right to communion, since the church could not demand certain requirements for one and something different for the second. Children were therefore excluded from the visible church but 'elect' children were included in the invisible church known only to God. The ground of hope for a child's salvation lay not in baptism but in election. This could extend to include the infants of believers and unbelievers, Turks and Indians, etc.

3 While some Particular Baptists claimed that one could be no more certain of the election of infants of believers than those of unbelievers, others were more optimistic. The 1689 Confession seems at least to assert the salvation of all infants dying in infancy: 'Infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit; who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth; so also are all elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word' (Evangelical Press 1974:24). A recent article alleges however, that the word 'elect' has been dropped from most later editions of the
Confession, possibly under the influence of C.H. Spurgeon (Scott 1990:9-11). This would imply that, according to the original wording of the Confession, only 'elect' infants dying in infancy would be saved, rather than all infants.

4 The Particular Baptists had a similar understanding of the relation between children and the church as did the General Baptists - it was a relation not of status but of influence and responsibility on the part of the church. In addition, 1 Corinthians 7:14 was understood in terms of God's providence - children where only one parent was a believer, as well as the unbelieving partner, were destined for or being prepared for regeneration in future. Baptism was inappropriate until this 'passive relationship' had been transformed into an active participation marked by the awakening of their own faith.

5 The distinction is also made between original and actual sin; moral responsibility is stressed, including repentance for actual sin, and personal faith, a condition which infants could not meet. The Baptist emphasis on personal response may be regarded as, to an extent, a departure from strict Calvinism; they still believed, however, that this response was made possible solely by the grace of God.

The early Baptists were thus preoccupied with soteriological and theological questions such as infant salvation and the status of children in relation to the church in the light of the rejection of infant baptism. This is understandable in view of the high infant mortality rate of those times. Other questions began to emerge in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
1.4 MODERN BAPTIST APPROACHES TO THE CHILD

1.4.1 Baptists around the world

The belief and practices of various Baptist groups may be gleaned from their written confessions of faith, some of which refer to the place of children. Most of the confessions referred to here are still in general use. The 1888 Doctrinal Basis of the Baptist Union of Victoria, Australia, rejects infant baptism but approves the 'presentation' of children by parents:

a) 'Baptists believe that infants are God's little ones, whether children of Christian or non-Christian parents, and accept without modification the word of the Lord, 'Of such is the kingdom of Heaven'. This Christian view of the child makes the external act of 'Infant Baptism' unnecessary.

b) Baptists approve of the presentation of children to God by parents, if thereby they solemnly undertake to train them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, in the home and in the Church' (Lumpkin 1974:417-418).

I. S. Prokhanov's Russian Confession recognises the value of children and specifies some of the parents' responsibilities towards them. Baptism of children before the age of responsibility 'has no meaning, the more so because they inherit the Kingdom of God independently of faith or repentance (Matthew 18:1-4)' (Lumpkin 1974:432,426). It also refers to the church in its universal, local and family sense and defines the family church as a 'gathering of redeemed souls belonging to one household or family (1 Corinthians 16:19, Romans 16:4, Colossians 4:15)' (Lumpkin 1974:427). One of the Central European Baptist Confessions specifies that it is the parents' responsibility to
lead their children to faith in Christ (Parker 1982:71), while the Finnish Confession does not allow baptism or communion of children until the age of understanding, after repentance and faith. They may only partake in communion after baptism (Parker 1982:107-108). A Southern European Confession refers to 'those who make up the larger congregation' i.e. children and adherents who attend the services but who are not on the official 'membership list' of the church. Privileges of members include the right to present or consecrate their children to God and to religious instruction for the children (Parker 1982:132-133). One Eastern European Confession also emphasises 'that on the Lord's day every Christian should spend more time reading the Holy Scriptures for himself and teaching his children from the Book' (Parker 1982:182).

1.4.2 C H Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Spurgeon was a popular preacher in London, England, rather than a theologian, but his ministry continues to have worldwide impact through his printed sermons which have been published in several languages including Afrikaans. His influence concerning the theology of the child is considerable. Many of the Baptist preachers coming to South Africa in the late nineteenth century were trained by Spurgeon himself or in his 'Pastors College'. Apart from his specific teaching, his own childhood experience was significant. He was, from early childhood, an omnivorous reader especially of theological works, and was even used by God before his own conversion when, at the age of six, he publicly rebuked a 'backslider' from his grandfather's congregation whom he found drinking in the local tavern. The man was restored and
came back to God, serving the Lord in the church (Ray 1903:16-18). From the age of fifteen he came under intense spiritual conviction of his own sinful condition and was converted early in 1850. He was baptised shortly before his sixteenth birthday and was called to serve a small Baptist congregation as full-time pastor before his seventeenth birthday. By age nineteen, he became the pastor of the large New Park Street Baptist congregation (later the 'Metropolitan Tabernacle') in London (Ray 1903:493). His concern for children is reflected in his establishment and maintenance of two large orphanages for boys and girls which still continue today. The orphans were raised in smaller family units similar to normal homes and not in impersonal military-style barracks. References to his views concerning children are scattered throughout his thousands of printed sermons and the various biographies. The most comprehensive single volume on the subject appears to be the book *Come Ye Children - On the Training of Children* published in 1989. Scripture passages expounded in relation to children include 1 Samuel 1-3; 1 Kings 14:13, 18:12; Psalm 8:2; Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17; Ephesians 2:1-5 and others. His views may be summarised as follows.

1. He believed in the salvation of all infants whether of believing or unbelieving parents. This is not because of their supposed innocency, however, but because of the redeeming righteousness of Christ. The fact that infants and little children suffer and die is thus evidence of the imputed sin of Adam's fall. In the case of Abijah (1 Kings 14:13) his early death was a proof of grace. Infants have not yet committed actual sin. Thus although they have 'original sin' they are not
guilty of sin. They will in due time, however, reach years of responsibility (Ray 1903:384; Spurgeon 1989:37,38,44,72,145).

2 Children, even of Christian parents, are not automatically in the kingdom. They also have a sinful nature and are spiritually dead. They can only enter the kingdom by repentance and the new birth (Spurgeon 1989:21,36,71,90,148-149,151,156).

3 Children have a true spiritual capacity and where the Holy Spirit is pleased to move, they are given the ability to grasp spiritual truth which may be difficult for unaided adults to grasp (Spurgeon 1989:24-25,47-49,63-65,99-101,108,132-136). Spurgeon's assertion 'A child of five, if properly instructed, can as readily believe and be regenerated as anyone' (Rohrer 1970:67-70) convinced J.I. Overholtzer, founder of Child Evangelism Fellowship in 1937, that child evangelism was Biblical, necessary and could produce lasting results in the children's lives.

4 We must expect children to be converted and be willing to admit them to baptism and church membership if their conversion appears genuine (even at age five!). However, adults must not impose unreasonable expectations or demands on children, as if conversion added twenty years to their age! (Spurgeon 1989:13, 14,20,51-52,101-102).

5 When children enquire as to the meaning of services such as the Lord's Supper, parents should explain the significance of the atonement, but children should not be encouraged to participate at the Lord's Table until the parents are satisfied that a work of grace has taken place in the lives (Spurgeon 1989:70-73,80).

6 While it seems that Spurgeon did not hold formal services of infant dedication or consecration in the church building, believing parents were encouraged to do so informally in their
own homes (Spurgeon 1989:77).

7 Although living before the days of developmental psychology or 'faith development' theories, Spurgeon urged preachers and teachers to relate their message to children's experiences and always include something in the service and sermon for them. Unpalatable or 'hard' truths such as sin and judgement should not, however, be avoided for the sake of being pleasant (Spurgeon 1989:9,11,12,87,89).

1.4.3 Southern Baptists in the United States

a) Differing attitudes towards children in the congregation.

All Baptists, whether 'Arminian' or 'Calvinistic', have attempted to maintain the early insistence on a regenerate church membership. We have already considered Anabaptist and early Baptist approaches to the position of children in relation to the church. T. Halbrooks (1983:179-188) has traced four distinct attitudes adopted by Baptists towards children who have some connection with the church, whether through their parents or through Sunday School attendance. Although there is some historical successiveness in these views as they developed over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they are not strictly successive since adherents of all four views will be found amongst Baptists today, even within the same congregation.

1 Children as Non-Members: Baptists in America followed their English forebears and so during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the great majority of those received into church membership were probably twenty years of age or older. The first Baptist church in the South began a Sunday School for children in 1816 and in 1878 J.P. Boyce's simplified catechism for children
was published, intended for children from the age of ten upwards. By the close of the nineteenth century, only a few children had professed their faith and become members of the church.

2 Children as Prospects: Under the influence of nineteenth-century 'revivalist' style evangelists such as Charles G. Finney, Baptists began to view children as prospects for conversion and church membership. This was directly opposed to Congregational scholar Horace Bushnell's approach in his book 'Christian Nurture' whereby any 'conversion' of children would be only gradual and non-traumatic (see 2.4). Thus in 1937 W.T. Connor wrote 'for a child to be reared in the church ... without regeneration is a perilous thing' (quoted by Halbrooks 1983:182). Thus the 'age of accountability' became a controversial issue, although most Baptists recognised that a child's conversion need not necessarily be 'traumatic'. The Sunday School then became the 'nursery of the church' and its main purpose was seen as evangelism. Special children's meetings were held during evangelistic campaigns. Considerable pressure would sometimes be put on children to make a profession of faith. By the 1920s, some as young as four or five were responding. Halbrooks (1983:183) comments: 'Sensitive to such criticisms and aware of the findings of developmental psychology, many Southern Baptists in the last two decades increasingly resisted such early professions of faith. The Sunday School guidelines were revised to delay active evangelism until at least age twelve.'

3 Children as Potential Disciples: This view resulted from a blend of developmental psychology and the Baptist emphasis on regenerate church membership. Since conversion was a commitment to discipleship, children were capable of making a genuine
profession of faith only when they were capable of making such a commitment. This was the main theme of L. Craig Ratliff's 1963 ThD thesis *Discipleship, Church Membership and the Place of Children Among Southern Baptists in View of Christ's Teachings on Discipleship and the Baptist Doctrine of the Church*, where he suggested that on the average, a child would come to disciple-ability between the ages of thirteen and fifteen (Ratliff 1963:181).

4 Children as Maturing Participants: This approach asserts that 'Christian nurture' and Baptist concepts of conversion are quite compatible. Children were related to the church in a way similar to that of catachumens in the early church. This position was advocated by W.E. Hull at the 1980 Baptist World Alliance meetings where he suggested that it met the need of Baptists to recognise both the Old Testament insight of nurture within the community and the New Testament insight of the necessity of conversion. Hull also suggested that the child's relation to the church could be officially recognised in some sort of dedication, together with various opportunities for reaffirmation by the children themselves at different stages. Baptism and church membership would come in the middle of childhood, between ages nine and twelve (Hull 1980:161-167).

Halbrooks notes that all four views affirm the necessity of conversion but differ on the age of accountability and the relationship of children to the church throughout the process. The latter two views have only minority support while the great majority of Southern Baptists still hold to the children-as-prospects approach, possibly because it remains more in line with
traditional views on evangelism and conversion (Halbrooks 1983: 186).

b) Children's ministries and participation in the church

The twentieth century has seen a dramatic shift from the Victorian age of tolerating children to a situation where children are the object of a multitude of special programmes and ministries, and themselves make a significant contribution to the churches. Early ministries included children's literacy classes and orphans' homes, missionary training and support groups and children's organisations such as the Royal Ambassadors for Boys and the Girls Auxiliary. By 1954 the Girls' Auxiliary had over 206,000 members making it the largest evangelical denominational organisation for girls in the world. This resulted in growth in the number of children's professions of faith so that by 1923 the average age for church membership was fourteen years, with some children joining between the ages of ten and thirteen. Another particularly effective ministry is that of Vacation Bible School, a sort of extension of the Sunday School, giving about sixty additional hours of Biblical instruction each year. Statistics for 1975 indicated a total attendance for that year in the Southern Baptist Convention of almost three and a half million children with about fifty thousand conversions. A recent survey indicated that although children rarely vote in church business meetings, they gave substantial amounts of money to missions, participated with their parents in annual mission trips and sang in various graded children's choirs. Quality children's programmes also attracted young families to churches while children stimulated the enthusiasm of retired adults who agreed
to act as sponsors or prayer partners to give more time and 
attention to children in a hurry-up world (Warren and Bevington 
1990:4-10). There were various publications and magazines for 
children and some of the larger congregations even had age-graded 
ministers on their salaried staff who were full-time pastors to 
children (Chapman 1990:14-20). The Women's Missionary Union has 
since the late nineteenth century adopted a deliberate policy of 
educating for missions 'from childhood to manhood' so that 'as a 
direct result of missions education for children in Southern 
Baptist Churches, people have experienced God's call to them for 
full-time missions' (Massey 1990:21,27).

c) Ongoing interest in the place of children

Concern for the place of the child is seen in the number of books 
and articles which have been produced by Southern Baptists over 
the last two decades. Examples include: C Ingle: 
'Children and Conversion' (1970); E Chamberlain: 
'When Can a Child Believe?' (1973); W L Hendricks: A 
Theology for Children (1980); G Temp Sparkman: The 
Salvation and Nurture of the Child of God (1983); Cos H Davis: 
Children and the Christian Faith (revised edition 1990). The 
October 1990 issue of Baptist History and Heritage was dedicated 
to the theme The Child in Baptist Life and included four 
specialised articles. The Summer 1991 edition of Southwestern 
Journal of Theology was dedicated to the subject of Ministering 
to Children.

Of particular concern is the growing number of children who are 
being baptised, eg. in 1987, 103,889 children under twelve out of 
a total of 338,495 persons, were baptised in Southern Baptist
churches. Of these, 40,055 were children under nine (Sparkman 1988:1). This has even led to charges of 'infant baptism'!

Although this trend has not generally been repeated in Baptist churches in other countries, it raises significant questions which will be considered later in chapter 4.
2. CURRENT ISSUES IN THE THEOLOGY OF THE CHILD

2.1 ORIGINAL SIN, GUILT, INNOCENCE AND THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Introduction

Some theological issues can be calmly discussed; others tend to generate more 'heat' than 'light'. The doctrine of 'original sin' is one of the latter! While various questions have compelled attention both inside and outside the Christian Church, the doctrines of divine election and original sin have constantly borne the brunt of attack from those on the outside. Original sin concerns the relationship between Adam's act of disobedience and subsequent human sinning, especially the spread of sin and the guilt of sin, throughout the human race. This is suggested in Romans 5:12: 'It is therefore as follows: through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death passed on to all persons in that all sinned' (revised Berkeley Version). In an era when individual 'human rights' are of great importance, the 'arbitrary' assigning of guilt to persons for sin of which they are not personally responsible, and which was committed long before they were born, seems highly unreasonable and totally unjust. Other critics feel that this doctrine is harmful to ethical behaviour because it undermines personal responsibility for sin. The implications of the doctrine are especially important for a theology of
the child because it has bearing on the spiritual standing of infants and children. For some churches it is closely connected with the practice of infant baptism, while for Baptists in particular it concerns also the question of 'guilt' or 'innocence' and the 'age of accountability' in relation to children.

2.1.1 Relevant issues in the development of the doctrine of original sin.

1. The biblical basis of the doctrine

Sin is a major theme in both the Old and New Testaments. The doctrine of original or inherited sin however, only seldom arises, often indirectly rather than directly. Many contemporary theologians question or even reject it (although admittedly some of these same theologians may also reject many other doctrines for which there appears to be more solid biblical evidence). H. Haag (1969:19) for example, asserts 'The doctrine of original sin is not found in any of the writings of the Old Testament'; others recognize that the 'idea', though not the explicit doctrine, of inherited sin, is found in Old Testament texts such as Psalm 51:7.

The fact and the spread of sin is, however, clear in the Old Testament. The 'Fall' of Genesis 3 is followed in the very next chapter by an account of murder; by Genesis 6:5 'evil' had spread to the 'heart' of the human race as a whole;
Genesis 8:21 notes that this corruption already begins 'from youth'. Calvin (1975:228-229) seems to understand something of the transmission of sin in Genesis 5:3 where, after the fall, Adam 'had a son in his own image, in his own likeness', since Adam's corruption and pollution 'has flowed down to all his posterity'. Calvin's 'dogmatic' exegesis is generally disregarded today, however, for several reasons.

1. There is nothing further in the text itself to support this exegesis.

2. Other Old and New Testament passages such as Genesis 9:6, 1 Corinthians 11:7, and James 3:9 assume that fallen humankind still has the image of God even though it has been marred by sin.

3. Literary-critical analysis generally links Genesis 1 and 5 as being largely the work of one writer/editor while chapters 2-4 may be mainly the work of a different writer or editor. This would mean that this writer would assume the same meaning for the image in Genesis 5:1-3 as in Genesis 1:26-27.

W. Brueggemann (1982:68), however, considers Genesis 5:3 ambiguous implying that Adam is one step removed from the image of God—'the image of Adam is something less and marred ...Seth and his heirs are a strange, unresolved mixture of the regal image of God and the threatened image of Adam.' Kidner (1974:80) however, warns that the contrast between 'his own likeness' in this verse and 'the likeness of God' in
Genesis 5:1 should not be pressed too far. We have already noted in 1.1.2.3 some other Old Testament references to the natural tendency of children towards wrong. Jeremiah 17:9 describes the 'heart' or nature of humankind which is in a desperate condition but again this does not really describe how it is connected with Adam's sin.

Original sin seems only implicit in the teaching of Jesus himself. John 8:44 seems to contain an allusion to the Fall of Genesis 3; other references such as Mark 7:20-23 and Luke 11:13 refer to the corruption of human nature rather than to its transmission from Adam. It is in Paul that the doctrine is most explicit, especially in Romans 5:12-19, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 and Ephesians 2:3. Romans 5:12-19 especially is a key passage for the doctrine and will be considered more fully in 2.1.3.

2. Jewish understanding of the Fall and sin in the Old Testament and the reaction to New Testament teaching:

N.P. Williams (1927:12-91) asserts that Genesis 3 is not the historical source of the Jewish Fall-doctrine, which originated in the thought of post-exilic Judaism as a result of reflection on the empirical universality of actual sin. The source of this 'fall' was at first found in the story of the lustful 'sons of God' in Genesis 6:1-6; the Adam and Eve narrative in Genesis 3 later replaced Genesis 6 as the main
popular source for the fall doctrine. In 'academic' Rabbinic Judaism however, the origin of evil came to be explained in the yetzer ha-ra or 'evil imagination' of Genesis 6:5 and 8:21. This 'evil imagination' was implanted by God in each individual person and is reflected in the apocryphal or deuterocanonical book of Ecclesiasticus (Williams 1927: 12-91). A.P. Hayman (1984:17) explains the 'evil yetzer' as 'man's power of self-assertion, necessary for procreation, earning a living, building civilisation, etc. but capable also of being perverted into moral evil'.

J.Pridmore (1977:106-110) notes that in spite of the possession of this 'evil imagination' from conception or from birth, the rabbis do not regard this inclination as in any sense a corruption, hereditary or otherwise, in human nature. The rabbis would emphatically deny that human nature is either diseased or culpable before God. From the age of thirteen, the individual is able to control the yetzer ha-ra through the knowledge and use of the law. For various reasons, however, the rabbis had an essentially optimistic view of the moral nature of childhood and can speak, without any sense of inconsistency, of the 'sinlessness' of children. The sinlessness, however, is negative, not positive, and means basically that young children cannot be held guilty of having broken the law. Hayman (1984:9-22) also suggests that this later rabbinic view is a covert reaction to
developing Christian doctrine.

'It is precisely at these essential preconditions for the functioning of Judaism that Paul hits when he argues that Adam's transgression had placed all people in a state of condemnation and helplessness from which they cannot raise themselves. The rabbinic response to Paul and to Christianity is to take an essentially "light" view of the consequences of the Fall, an optimistic view of human nature and to maintain a firm adherence to the belief in unimpaired free-will.'

This would mean that partly because of the 'corporate solidarity' of the family as explained in 1.1.2.1 and also because of this 'optimistic' view of the moral nature of childhood, Jewish parents would not think in terms of the inherited sin or inherited guilt of children. On the other hand, this fact does not really help us very much because as already noted, both Jesus and especially Paul, opposed this 'optimistic' view of human nature as held by the rabbis; 'legalistic righteousness' could not save - humankind needed redemption from outside (Phlp 3:4-9; Rom 10:1-4).

Whatever view we may take concerning the spread and guilt of sin, original sin is at least saying that humankind is not really free; we have lost the moral freedom with which we were originally created.

3. How widely has the doctrine of original sin been accepted
in the universal church? Many of the doctrines (e.g. the Incarnation) enshrined in the ancient creeds (e.g. the Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, Chalcedonian Creed) have been questioned, revised or rejected in modern times, especially since the nineteenth century. Whereas a confession is a more specific statement of belief held only by a certain section of Christendom (e.g. the Westminster Confession, The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England or the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689), the ancient 'ecumenical' creeds are widely held by most branches of the 'mainstream' Christian churches including the Roman Catholic, Protestant and Eastern (Greek Orthodox) branches. None of the early ecumenical creeds and confessions of the church give any detailed treatment of the question. By the end of the fourth century, the fall doctrine was generally assumed but not much discussed; this could have been because the theory of enticement to sin by the direct attack of demons from the outside had a more vivid reality for the early Christians as an explanation of evil suggestions than the more abstract idea of a hereditary bias influencing the person from within.

That the doctrine of original sin (particularly in its later Augustinian form) was not universally accepted especially in the Eastern church, may be seen in the contrasting beliefs and practices of Origen and Chrysostom since even two centuries after Origen, Chrysostom held to some view of the
sinlessness of children. Origen (185-214) first viewed 'original sin' as a weakness rather than a disease, but later, probably due to his contact with the practice of infant baptism at Caesarea, which seemed to necessitate some doctrine of inborn depravity or guilt, (because baptism was linked with the forgiveness of sin) he began to see it as a positive pollution to which guilt is somehow attached; thus 'original sin' began to be linked with 'original guilt'.

Tertullian (160-220) also viewed 'original sin' as a positive corruption and not a mere weakness; the fact that he does not, on the other hand, assert 'original guilt' may partly be due to his opposition to infant baptism (Williams 1927:208-314). Stander and Louw (1988:79,80,93,151) also note the gradual, but not uniform development of the doctrine during the first four centuries. Cyprian (200/210-257) seems to link both original sin and original guilt; Chrysostom (350-407), however, appears not to believe in original sin since he declares children coming for baptism as 'sinless'. This probably explains why Chrysostom does not include the 'remission of sins' in his list of benefits bestowed by baptism, because infants and children who are sinless do not need forgiveness of sins. Stander and Louw conclude 'The doctrine of inherited original sin which became popular in the third and fourth centuries tied in well with baptism symbolizing the washing away of sins.'
Many commentators understand the 'twice born' version of original sin as linked with the doctrine of grace (which became the third major section of Christian theology to be developed after the doctrines of God and of Christ) largely in terms of the contrasting spiritual temperaments and experiences of Augustine and Pelagius (who strongly opposed the idea of original sin) in the fifth century.

Augustine's (354-430) view may be summarized as follows (Wright 1988:59).

1. The 'original righteousness' or perfections of Adam and Eve were lost in the disastrous consequences of the fall.
2. Based on Ambrosiaster's mistaken reading of Romans 5:12, the insistence that, because all sinned 'in Adam', all are bound by the penalties for that sin - physical and spiritual death, guilt and the diseased disordering of human nature.
3. 'Concupiscence' (sexual lust or desire for worldly things) from which no sexual acts of fallen humanity are free (even within Christian marriage) as the means of transmission of original sin from parents to children.
4. The impossibility of even the beginning of faith without grace to turn the will to God, i.e. human will was no longer really 'free'.
5. Baptism as the channel of this grace, so that infants dying unbaptized are condemned to hell, or perhaps to its milder reaches (reflected later in the teaching of 'limbo').
The Second Council of Orange in 529 only approved a modified form of Augustinianism in opposition to Pelagianism (original guilt was not affirmed, while free will was only weakened not destroyed); as already noted, the Eastern or Greek Church in particular has never accepted the Augustinian version of original sin but has left the details unspecified in a sort of 'reverential vagueness'. The later mediaeval period saw a gradual decline of the doctrine of Augustinianism in the Western Church, which, broadly speaking, was divided between the modified Augustinianism of Thomas Aquinas and the almost anti-Augustinian view of Duns Scotus. At the Council of Trent (1545-1563) the Roman Catholic Church formally recognized this compromised position, which in practice generally favoured the anti-Augustinian view (Williams 1927:395-423).

By contrast, the triumph of Augustinianism is seen at its peak in the Protestant Reformation, especially in the teachings of Luther, Calvin and the later Puritans. The Reformation made the Fall and Original Sin, almost for the first time, a matter of popular and not merely 'academic' theological interest. Many Calvinistic liturgical confessions made the congregation acknowledge 'original' as well as 'actual' sin whereas similar Catholic confessions required a confession only of actual sin. Those opposed to the Calvinistic view sometimes allege that whereas in Catholic scholasticism the Fall was from the supernatural to
the natural plane, the Calvinistic view of 'total depravity' implies a fall from the natural to the subnatural plane. The contrast in Reformed theology, however, is not nature-
subnature, but rather between grace and sin. 'Total
depravity' does not imply that sinners are now less than
human, but that sin extends to the whole of life. The
Calvinistic view of original sin, original guilt, divine
election and 'total depravity' taken together, has often been
charged with inevitably making God the direct author of evil
fills forty pages of his massive 600 page study, Sin, in
refuting this charge, showing how both Scripture and the
Protestant confessions are unambiguous in asserting that God
is perfectly holy, pure and untainted by sin.

The fact that original sin was not enshrined in the early
ecumenical creeds, and was so divergently understood in
different branches of the Christian church has at least two
implications:
i) We ought to proceed cautiously in formulating our own
understanding of the doctrine, being especially careful not
to go beyond the biblical evidence in our conclusions.

ii) On the other hand, the mere fact that the doctrine is
'controversial' does not mean that it cannot be true. For
example, the doctrine of justification by faith alone is also
not 'officially' accepted by large sections of the Christian
church; without a clear formulation of the doctrine however, the Reformation may never have happened. Similarly, the rejection of infant baptism is a 'minority' view, but one which has far-reaching implications for the character of the church.

4. Explaining the spread of sin:
The universal presence of sin is both an observable fact of human experience as well as a theological fact that is emphasised in the letter to the Romans, especially in the first eight chapters. What is not clear, however, is how sin has spread and continues to spread to all humankind. It is therefore more accurate to refer to the spread rather than the 'transmission' of sin, since this avoids some of the implications of the 'biological transmission' view explained below. Two traditional explanations for the spread of this sin are still widely held today.

1 Realism interprets Romans 5:12 literally to mean that all were somehow present in Adam when he sinned, so that all sinned with him, possibly as in Hebrews 7:4-10 when Levi was present 'in the body' of his forefather Abraham.

2 Federalism argues that in view of the parallel drawn between Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12-19 and in 1 Corinthians 15:22; 45-49, our universal solidarity with Adam is of the kind which Christ has with those He redeems, i.e. representative or federal headship.

In addition, there are three other lesser known theories
which have been or are currently held today.

iii) Biological transmission focusses on the concept of inherited sin and understands this in a literal physical sense. As people inherit physical and personal characteristics such as facial appearance, colour of eyes and hair from their biological parents, so the sinful nature is inherited or passed on from parent to child. This view is not so widely accepted today and is open to the charge of undermining moral responsibility because people cannot be held accountable for something with which they are born.

iv) Personal identity or the historical view. The eighteenth-century theologian and revivalist Johnathan Edwards proposed a new principle of 'personal identity' which was a rather unstable mix of 'realistic' and 'federal' views (Otto 1990:205-221). The imputation of Adam's sin to humankind was defended by way of the analogy of the tree to its branches (Edwards 1979: 200-222). D. Weddle (1974:164-165) explains Edward's proposal as seeing the unity of the race as 'historical', established in a context of shared action, rather than 'physical' in the Augustinian sense. All people born now are as integrally related to the first man and woman as the moments of their lives at forty are contiguous with their birth. As people are morally culpable for the moments of their past existence because they are truly their own, so all people are truly one with the first man and woman. It is not Adam's guilt, but the guilt of the
species, for which people are responsible, for it is the species that rebelled against God. Otto (1990:216-217) points out, however, that Edwards' view of personal identity implies a pantheistic teaching of preservation as continued creation out of nothing which confuses the basic Reformed distinction between creation and preservation and denies the existence of matter in a time-space sense. Apart from these objections, Edwards' theory has not achieved popular support, probably because it involves complicated philosophical reasoning and is difficult to follow and explain.

v) Incorporation focuses not on the imputation of Adam's sin to the sinner and the righteousness of Christ to the believer but on incorporation and union with both Adam and Christ in Romans 5 and 6. König (1988:121-124) bases this view on the biblical idea of corporate solidarity as outlined in 1.1.2.1 and on the various texts which teach that believers actually share the life of Christ which somehow includes sharing in his death and resurrection (e.g. Ga 2:20; Col 3:4). One difficulty of this view is that while Romans 6 goes on to explain how this incorporation into Christ takes place, we are not told how our incorporation in Adam actually takes place.

2.1.2 Principles underlying the Baptist approach to original sin

We have already noted in 1.1.1 that a totally 'objective'
approach to Scripture, although ideal in principle, seems impossible in practice. What are some of the perspectives that influence the Baptist approach to the doctrine of original sin?

1. Opposition to any link between infant baptism and cleansing from original sin. We have already seen in 1.3.1 that the sixteenth-century Anabaptists found it necessary to develop their own doctrine of original sin to counter that of Augustine who claimed that belief in original sin was the reason for baptizing infants. Even up to the present time, some have suggested that the context of Romans 6:1-4, following immediately after the key passage of Romans 5:12-21 indicates that Paul viewed baptism as the solution for original sin. K.Lake (quoted in Williams 1927:134-136) claims: 'Baptism is for St. Paul and his readers universally and unquestioningly accepted as a mystery or sacrament which works \textit{ex opere operato}; and from the unhesitating manner in which St. Paul uses this fact as a basis for argument, as if it were a point on which Christian teaching did not vary, it would seem as though this sacramental teaching is central in the primitive Christianity to which the Roman Empire began to be converted.' Williams concurs with Lake's view and similarly interprets John 3:5 (being 'born of water and of the Spirit') as applying to baptism 'as the remedy for some implied and undefined defect inherent in human nature...

Faith, in short, brings "release from sin" in the "forensic",

135
and Baptism in the "medical" sense, of these words'. If however, baptism was 'universally and unquestioningly accepted as a mystery or sacrament which works ex opere operato', why does Peter have to explain in 1 Peter 3:21 that the baptism which 'saves' is 'not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...? Thus Anglican scholar A.M. Stibbs (1968:144) explains: 'Here Peter deliberately adds two statements in parenthesis in order to make unmistakably plain that it is not mere participation in the outward form of baptism that saves. It is only Christ who can save through His death and resurrection, not the baptismal water and its administration. Those who would share in this salvation must enter into Christ crucified and risen. Such entrance and incorporation into Christ, though outwardly witnessed to and sealed by Christian baptism, are vitally realized by the individual only by the personal self-committal of faith into Christ and by genuine open confession of such faith to God, of which confession public baptism is normally the significant occasion.'

In addition, one would have to ask why, if baptism in itself could achieve this solution to the problem of original sin in humankind, Paul was so reluctant to make baptism a major feature of his ministry but largely left this to others so that he could concentrate on his calling of preaching the gospel (See the argument in 1 Corinthians 1:13-18).
Most paedobaptist Protestants today do not base their view of infant baptism on any view of 'baptismal regeneration' or forgiveness of original or actual sin but rather relate it to 'incorporation' into the outward Christian church or see it as a sign of being within the blessings of the Covenant. There is also a general recognition that the New testament does not view baptism in isolation from the saving work of Christ, faith and the new life of the Christian. Thus König (1986:11-17) notes that the New Testament can without tension or contradiction sometimes say that salvation comes through faith and in another text say that it comes through baptism, ie baptism assumes faith is also present. Baptists, while accepting this observation would, however, go further and maintain that this harmony can only be maintained where a credible profession of faith is evident on the part of those being baptized, ie. it will exclude infants. This, of course, is also partly influenced by the general Baptist approach to baptism and the Lord's Supper as ordinances (ie symbolic) rather than sacraments (which imply that God acts in some way whether or not the sign is accompanied by faith).

2. An emphasis on conscious personal faith, discipleship and individual responsibility.

R. Friedman (1959:206) notes that 'In the rather extensive doctrinal literature of the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century there are scarcely more than a dozen pages dealing with the issue of original sin, in fact, most doctrinal
tracts of the Anabaptist brethren completely bypass this idea or doctrine. This is probably because without a certain 'freedom of the will', discipleship, the heart of Anabaptism, loses its meaning. They did not believe in a 'Pelagian' type of freedom of the will, but rather in the sense that with the help of God's grace, people may overcome evil tendencies in their character and obey the commandments. This in turn may be partly a reaction to the pessimism of some Reformed Christians which, because of the emphasis on moral depravity, stifles the desire for progressive sanctification and increases the desire to be released from 'this body of death' (Rm 7:24) through physical death where sin has no more power over the Christian (See König 1988:116).

Although recognizing that believers must continue to fight against sin until the end of their days, the Anabaptists also emphasized the teaching of individual responsibility in Ezekiel 18, Jeremiah and other Old Testament prophets to remove the fatalistic character of the 'inherited' sin which in Protestant orthodoxy tended to become oppressive and discouraging as to the possibilities of Christian living.

We have noted in 1.3.2 and 2.2.3.3 the 'Second Adam doctrine' that the atonement of Christ for the whole world has brought it about that original sin now leads only to physical death, but not condemnation to eternal death or hell which only follows after the actual personal sin of the unrepentent. This is seen as a fulfilment of Ezekiel 18:20 that the
children shall not bear the sins of the fathers, but that those who sin die for their own sin. This means also that Christ died for innocent children, who will therefore gain eternal life without any merit on their part.

3. A recognition of inherited depravity but not of original guilt

Other than Reformed Baptists, who seem largely to follow the 'federal' view of original sin (e.g. the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith Chapter 6) many Baptist scholars (e.g. Strong 1907:594; Erickson 1987:636-639) favour the 'realist' view of the transmission of sin. This could be motivated partly by a desire to avoid the implication that infants and children are condemned for 'alien' guilt alone i.e. the sin of Adam, rather than for their own sinful nature or actual sin. Those who reject the idea that people cannot be held responsible for a sinful nature which they did not personally originate fail to see however, that, according to the 'realist' interpretation, the sinful nature is not something external to us, but is our inmost selves. The following evidence suggests that even infants and young children have a sinful nature:

i) Ephesians 2:3 which declares that all humankind are 'by nature children of wrath' signifies by 'nature' something inborn and original, not something subsequently acquired. This nature is guilty and condemnable, since God's wrath rests only upon that which deserves it.
ii) Strong (1907:579-580) argues that the statement in Romans 5:14 that death, the penalty of sin, comes upon all, even those who did not sin as Adam did by breaking a command, implies that sin already exists in the case of infants, prior to moral consciousness, and therefore in the nature, as distinguished from the personal activity. Since infants die, which is the penalty of sin, this shows that their nature contains in itself, though undeveloped, the germs of actual transgression of the law and sin.

iii) The presence of a corrupt nature can be seen in childhood, when human nature acts itself out spontaneously. Pelagius, however, would interpret this phenomenon in terms of custom, example, imitation and environment. Sin came into the world, not by transmission or inheritance but because people followed Adam's example and imitated his disobedience. Each individual person is created anew and is therefore good. There is no inherited bias towards sin; if most children appear to tend towards sinful behaviour, it is because individual acts of sin build up into social sin and so children, like adults, become enslaved to the habit of sin, almost as a kind of necessity, although there have been a few 'saints' who have lived without sin. Pelagius also thought of God's 'grace' as given in various external provisions of the Christian life such as the law, rather than as a power infused into the person of the Christian (Cunliffe-Jones 1980:159-161).
In this view Pelagius was to some extent following Origen who in interpreting Romans 5:12-21, had remarked that children 'are impelled to the death of sin not so much by nature as by instruction'. According to Pelagius, Adam and Christ are contrasted as antithetical types — forma a contrario — for the human race. Adam, on the one hand, is the forma of sin leading his descendants to death by his example. Christ, on the other hand, is the forma of righteousness, offering forgiveness to those who believe and setting an example of righteousness to enable them to obey the law. All people are related to the forma of Adam or the forma of Christ by the intention of their will. It should also be noted that in Romans 5:12-21, Pelagius understands the references to death, as referring primarily if not exclusively to spiritual death, he is silent on physical death, ignorance and concupiscence. In short, in his comments on this passage of Romans, Pelagius concentrates on deliberate sin to the exclusion of any inherited consequences of the Fall (De Bruyn 1988:33-34).

One weakness of Pelagius's view is, however, that even where parents live carefully before their children and avoid sinful behaviour patterns i.e. they do not provide sinful examples or environments for their children to imitate, sinful behaviour can still be observed in children even before they encounter the example of people from outside their own home. In fact, the argument from observation and experience is inconclusive.
because it can be argued in opposite ways and leads to a questionable sort of 'natural theology'. The strongest evidence against Pelagius's view is rather to be found in the various Scripture passages under the first heading of 2.1.1 which indicate that sin comes from an inborn tendency present in people themselves, from the 'heart', which although intensified by a negative environment, is not in itself produced by it.

In what sense, then, are infants and children 'guilty' because of their sinful nature, and how does this differ from the idea of 'original guilt'? Strong (1907:596) suggests that actual sin, in which the personal agent reaffirms the underlying determination of his will, is more guilty than original sin alone; no-one is finally condemned solely because of original sin. All who, like infants, do not commit personal transgressions, are saved through the application of Christ's atonement. Further, Scripture recognizes different degrees of guilt. If Matthew 19:14 'to such belong the kingdom of God' implies the relative innocence of childhood, Matthew 23:32 'fill up the measure of your fathers' suggests the greater guilt of personal transgression added to inherited depravity. Erickson (1987:639) links the question of guilt with a 'realist' view of original sin. Although we were involved in Adam's sin and receive a corrupt nature, with the matter of guilt however,
just as with the imputation of Christ's righteousness, there must be some conscious and voluntary decision on our part. Until this is the case, there is only a conditional imputation of guilt. Thus, there is no condemnation until one reaches the age of responsibility. How does this 'conditional imputation' become actual? In what sense have we sinned 'in Adam'? This 'conditional imputation' becomes actual, Erickson concludes, whenever we accept or approve our corrupt nature. 'There is a time in the life of each one of us when we become aware of our own tendency toward sin. At that point we may abhor the sinful nature that has been there all the time. We would in that case repent of it and might even, if there is an awareness of the gospel, ask God for forgiveness and cleansing. At the very least there would be a rejection of our sinful makeup. But if we acquiesce in that sinful nature, we are in effect saying that it is good. In placing our tacit approval upon the corruption, we are also approving or concurring in the action in the Garden of Eden so long ago. We become guilty of that sin without having to commit a sin of our own.' Erickson is not saying that this repentance is possible without God; the grace of God is assumed throughout, but his explanation attempts to answer the problem of precisely how Adam's sin becomes our sin, or of how we are 'incorporated' in Adam, which is assumed but not explained in Romans 5:12-21. It is thus an interpretation at best and a hypothesis or construction at
worst, since it is not based on direct exposition of Scripture at this point. While to the present writer this explanation seems reasonable and likely, it is of course by its tentative nature, not fully satisfactory. There does not in fact seem to be a totally satisfactory answer to all the problems of 'original sin'. It must also be recognized however, that other denominational and theological perspectives on the issue are also faced with unresolved difficulties.

2.1.3 Exegetical highlights in Romans 5:12-21
Romans 5:12-21 is undoubtedly the key Biblical passage for the various understandings of original sin. D. Weaver's (1985: 134, 141-149, 158, 243, 251) study of the interpretation of Romans 5:12 among the Greek church fathers of the Eastern Church from the fifth to the twelfth centuries indicate an approach that was distinctly different from that of their Latin, Western contemporaries. Although grammatical and exegetical conclusions varied, there was a consensus which limited the 'inheritance' from Adam to mortality and corruption, since 'guilt' could result only from a freely committed act. 'In its Western development, the doctrine of original sin was determined to a large extent by the issues of predestination and human freedom, the relation of nature and grace, and the practice of infant baptism. In the Christian East, on the other hand, Christological and
Soteriological considerations played the primary role. John Chrysostom (347-407) for example, comments on Romans 5:12,19,21 'For if one does not become a sinner out of himself, one is not bound to punishment.' John emphasises repeatedly that it is mortality and not sin which is transmitted.

Similarly, Cyril of Alexandria (died 444) explicitly rejects the notion of an inheritance of guilt, or an ante-natal participation in Adam's sin; sin can be transmitted in its consequences, but not in its guilt. For Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428) and Theodoret of Cyrus (393-466) the theology of the indwelling Logos was incompatible with the doctrine of original sin. For Theodoret, inherited mortality and corruption is a source of personal sin. Theodore even wrote a book entitled Against those who say that by nature, and not by will, do men fall, which appears to have been directed against the Latin church father Jerome (342-420), who was a vigorous proponent of original sin. The diversity of interpretation of ἐφ' ἡσυχαῖοι in Romans 5:12 among the Greek fathers contrasts sharply with the uniformity of interpretation in the Latin West. It should thus be recognised that while there is general acceptance of the universal fact of sin amongst Christians (except amongst the Pelagians), even 'orthodox' Christians differ significantly in their approach to original sin, including on exegetical
grounds. It would also appear that Baptists who distinguish original sin from original guilt may be closer to 'Greek Orthodox' theology at this point than to 'Augustinian' theology, whether in its Catholic or Calvinistic form.

In an important major commentary Anglican scholar, C.E.B. Cranfield (1980:274-291) discusses six possible interpretations of **εἰπὸν ὅτι πάντες εμάρτην** in Romans 5:12, concluding that the approach which understands **εμάρτην** to refer to people sinning in their own persons but as a result of the corrupt nature inherited from Adam, is most probably correct. In reference to **πάντες** ('all'), Cranfield does not apply this to those dying in infancy and assumes that since they are a special and exceptional case, Paul must surely be assumed to be thinking in terms of adults. **Πάντες εμάρτην** (all sinned) also has the same meaning here as in Romans 3:23 and in every other occurrence in the Pauline letters where it quite clearly refers to actual sin. It should also be remembered that there are **dissimilarities** as well as similarities between Christ and Adam. It may therefore not follow that Paul must have held that because he saw the righteousness that we have through Christ to be quite independent of our works, Paul must necessarily have held that the guilt which is ours through Adam must necessarily also be quite independent of our actual sinning. It is surely enough for the justification of the analogy that in
both cases the act of one man has far-reaching consequences for all other people: it is not necessary that the ways in which the consequences follow from the acts should also be exactly parallel. This concurs with the general interpretation of Baptist scholars such as Coble (1970:56-57) and Strong (1907:596).

Baptist attitudes to this doctrine in its classical Protestant form have varied from a modified acceptance of original sin which have included some idea of guilt (e.g. the 1689 Baptist Confession of faith 6:3 as previously noted in 2.1.2.), or a modified acceptance which seems not to include the idea of guilt of infants and young children (e.g. Strong 1907:596; Erickson 1987:638-639), and a strong rejection of the traditional Augustinian approach to original sin (e.g. Coble 1970:56-57).

In attempting an exegesis of this passage, we may proceed in at least two ways:

i) We may commence a detailed analysis of the passage itself in its immediate context only.

ii) We may avoid a detailed historico-grammatical exegesis and start 'further back' with general assumptions of the Old Testament and New Testament background and some basic theological principles, coming only to broad conclusions concerning the main theme of the passage.

iii) We may attempt to combine these two approaches so that
the specific interpretations arrived at following a detailed 
exegesis are guided and informed by this general background. 
The third option seems here to be the most holistic approach.

The Old Testament prophets in general and Jeremiah 31:29-30 and Ezekiel 14:12-23; 18:1-32 in particular had already rejected the idea that guilt could be inherited. We have already noted in 1.1.2.5 that the concept of individual responsibility was developed against the background of corporate solidarity over the centuries of Old Testament history. We have also noted that the relationship between the Old and New Testament is a rich and complex one, characterized by both continuity and discontinuity and the idea of 'progressive revelation'. The new wine of Christianity burst the old wineskins of Judaism in various ways, as is evidenced in the gospels, Acts and epistles. The new covenant in Christ retains a strong corporate element, but not as a means of justification. The corporate element in the New Testament is chiefly concerned with reconciliation and with sanctification. In Christ the world is reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:19). Reconciliation then in one sense was achieved when Jesus died. Incorporation into Christ is, however, only actualized personally through faith and baptism when according to Romans 6:1-4 we are incorporated into Christ and share in his death and resurrection. Sanctification focusses on the growth of the Christian
community to be like Christ in his body, the church. It is concerned with the development of the relationship amongst those who have received the salvation of Christ, while justification involves the initiation of this relationship. One may therefore say that while salvation is individual, it is not individualistic. All this is relevant to our understanding of the theme of original sin before we proceed to our specific passage.

The main theme of Romans 5 is the greatness of what God had done in Christ. In verses 1-11 Paul unfolded the wonders of justification by faith; verses 12-21 then show the fact of sin with its universal extent and results, as a background against which to highlight the wondrous victory of Christ's redemptive work, i.e. the main purpose is not to give an explanation of the process of the spread of sin in humankind. Although the passage clearly links Adam's sin with the spread of sin and death to all, Paul's primary presentation of his view of sin is found in Romans 1:18-3:26; here sin is seen to be the problem of the manner and acting of the mature person, not infants or young children. 'Sinners' were those who have had ample opportunity to see the reality of God's nature through the world in which they lived (Coble 1970:57-61).

This concept of sin should be borne in mind before reaching conclusions about how 'original sin' in this passage may be attributed to children.
The legal phraseology of the passage indicates that the result of death for sin is not a matter for arbitrary sovereign decree, but of judicial penalty (‘law’, ‘breaking a command’, ‘trespass’, ‘condemnation’, etc). This should be remembered when considering the ‘guilt’ or ‘innocence’ of children and the suggestion of injustice if we are held accountable for ‘alien’ sin. Verse 12 suggests that death is not natural to the physical constitution of humankind but is a penal consequence of sin. The death referred to in the passage is mainly physical but also spiritual. Physical death is indicated by v.14, by the allusion to Genesis 3:19, and by the general Jewish and Christian assumption that physical death was the result of Adam’s sin (e.g. Wisdom 2:23-24, 2 Esdras 7:48, John 8:44, 1 Corinthians 15:21); spiritual death is evident from v. 18 and 21 where, zoe is the opposite of thanatos, and from 2 Timothy 1:10 where the same contrast occurs. Verse 16 indicates a numerical difference between the condemnation and the justification. Condemnation results from one offense; justification delivers from many offenses (Strong 1907:622-627).

There are two major differences of interpretation in the passage:

1. Does ‘death’ come in Romans 5:12 because of the sin of one man (v.12a) or because ‘all sinned’ (v.12b)? The view that death came through the sin of one man (Adam) rather than because ‘all sinned’ is supported by the majority of
commentators including Bruce (1969:129-130); Haldane (1963:207-211); Hodge (1965:146-149,161); Lloyd-Jones (1971:210); Louw (1979:75); Morris (1988:230-232); Murray (1967:183-187); Nygren (1952:213-215); Ridderbos (1959:116-118); Stott (1966:25); Wilson (1969:89). On the other hand, a minority of commentators including Barrett (1962:111); Byrne (1988:19-20, 26); Dodd (1932:80); Ziesler (1989:147-149) understand 'death' in Romans 5:12 as coming because all sinned themselves, not just 'in Adam'. M. Black (1989:79-82), C. E. B. Cranfield (1980:275-279), J. D. G. Dunn (1988:275) and S. E. Porter (1990:22-30) recognise both interpretations as exegetically valid. Another group of commentators (Heil 1987:62-63; Kasemann 1980:180; Robinson 1979:61-62) are either evasive on this question or do not actually refer to it. We have already seen in 2.1.1 that Augustine understood εφ ωκ (‘because’) as meaning ‘in whom’, since the Latin mistranslated the Greek at this point. Accordingly, he understood this last clause of v. 12 to read ‘in Adam’, so that Adam’s sin was ours as well. Since, however, this interpretation was based on an inaccurate translation, it is necessary to investigate the meaning of ‘all sinned’. If Paul is referring to the personal sin(s) of all, in keeping with the principle of responsibility for one’s personal actions and for them alone, the meaning would be that all die because all are guilty, and all are guilty because each one has sinned on his own. Erickson (1987:636-637) points out 151
the grammatical difficulties for this view in the phrase pantes emarton (all sinned) rather than all have sinned. Were the above interpretation correct, the word would properly be written amartanousin, the present tense denoting something continually going on. Further, the sin referred to in 'all men sin' would be different from that referred to in 'sin came into the world through one man', as well as from that referred to in verses 15 and 17. Further, Paul explicitly states no less that five times that the universal sway of death stems from the single sin of one man (v. 15,16,17,18,19).

Erickson (1987:637) and Morris (1988:231-232) suggest a way of understanding the last clause in verse 12 that avoids these problems and makes some sense out of verses 15 and 17. The verb emarton is a simple aorist which most commonly refers to a single past action. Had Paul intended to refer to a continued process of sin, the present and imperfect tenses were available to him but he chose the aorist, and it should be taken at face value. The view of Erickson and Morris has, however, been questioned on at least two grounds. 1. S. Porter (1990:25) notes that the 'realist' interpretation of 'all' in Romans 5:12 overstates 'interpreting the aorist verb form as punctiliar and past-referring when it is probably an omnitemporal statement referring to past, present and future events (cf Rom 3:23).'

152
2) Modern Greek scholars and Bible translators (See E A Nida & J P Louw et al: *Style and Discourse*; J P Louw: *A Semantic Discourse Analysis of Romans*) tend not to base major exegetical conclusions on tense distinctions alone. The emphasis is less on the fixed meanings of individual words or the verbal aspect of sentences as on the meaning of larger semantic units. This implies that words alone do not always have fixed meanings but rather gain their meanings from full sentences and the wider context in which they appear. This particular suggestion of Erickson and Morris therefore appears to be of limited value. Nevertheless it is still true that if we regard the sin of all men and the sin of Adam as the same, whether in a 'federal' or 'realist' sense, the problems become considerably less complex. There is then no conflict between verse 12 and verses 15 and 17. Further, the potential problems presented by verse 14 where Paul argues that the reason why they die is not because they deliberately broke the commandment as did Adam and died for their transgression, is resolved, for it is not imitation or repetition of Adam's sin, but participation in it, that is emphasized here. Those who died before the time of Moses must have violated some law; since the Mosaic law and the law of conscience as suggested in Romans 2:12-15 have been ruled out, it seems that the sin must have been against the 'Eden statute' in Genesis 2:17, ie the commandment which Adam disobeyed.

a) In terms of salvation history, the meaning of Adam as a representative can only be fully understood in terms of Christ; a comparable example would be 2 Corinthians 5:14.

b) If 'all sinned' in verse 12 refers to the personal sins of all, then 'nevertheless' in verse 14 does not make sense. Ridderbos does not see any reference here to a personal tendency to sin in a moral sense, because of Adam's fall; rather, he sees 'death' as a legal sentence on the whole human race because of Adam's sin.

Whatever other qualifications may be added later and although it is not clear precisely how sin spread to all people, it seems clear to this writer that death came because of Adam's sin, since so much of the total argument of the passage depends on this parallel and the differences between Adam and Christ.

2. Who are 'the many' (οἱ πολλοί) in v. 15 and 19 and 'all people' (πάντες ανθρώπους) in v. 18? There are at least four possibilities:

i) Some point to the precise parallel between those in Adam and those in Christ ('just as...so also') in v. 18 and 19 and see this as an argument for universalism, ie that all people without exception will ultimately be saved and none will be lost, because if all are in Adam and Paul also concludes in Romans 3:23 that all have 'sinned', then the
parallel is that all have been made righteous through the obedience of Christ. In addition, if they are constituted sinners without any personal act on their part, so they are constituted righteous through the obedience of Christ without any act of personal response on their part. However, this interpretation would contradict the teaching of Paul's letters elsewhere as well as his preaching in Acts. There is abundant evidence in Scripture that only through faith can the work of Christ become effective in our lives.

ii) Some holding to the 'federal' or representative view of original sin and of the redeeming work of Christ (which is undoubtedly also present in this passage), would understand the passage in terms of election and 'limited atonement', so that the righteousness of Christ was given to 'all' those whom he represented, i.e. those to whom the grace of God abounded (many in contrast to all).

iii) Others see the 'many' who shall be constituted righteous in v.19 as those who are described in v. 17 as 'those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness', i.e. believers (here the contrast is on many rather than few, and the emphasis is on 'receiving' or responding to Christ).

iv) König (1970:279-281) suggests that to grasp the sense in which the New Testament uses oi polloi, it is necessary to note that the Biblical writers do not think exclusively or inclusively in terms of numbers of people, but in terms of
salvation history, i.e. the thought in relation to redemption is concrete rather than abstract. Through a comparison of Isaiah 45:22, Matthew 28:19 and Acts 1:8, the use of the Hebrew rabim (the many) in Isaiah 52-53 and the fact that Hebrew and Aramaic has no precise word for 'everything' or 'everyone', it is concluded that both Jesus in Mark 10:45, Matthew 20:28 and Paul in Romans 5:15,16,19 understood 'many' in terms of the heathen or Gentile nations in addition to Israel. On this interpretation, Paul can easily use 'all' and 'many' interchangeably because he is thinking not of a specific number of people but the fact that the many would include both Jews and Greeks, i.e. not necessarily every individual without exception, but rather all nations and peoples without distinction.

Concerning the question of original guilt however, it should also be noted in this context of the identity of the 'all' and the 'many' in Romans 5:18-19, that if we conclude that all people (including infants and children) are guilty before God because of Adam's sin without themselves having sinned in some way as suggested in 2.1.2, we must also conclude that Paul taught that all people are automatically made partakers of Christ's salvation without any response of faith on their part (i.e. 'unconscious believers'). We have already seen, however, that this is contradictory to other clear scriptural teaching. Augustine, however, allowed this and because of
his view of original guilt, baptized infants who were still unable to respond in faith. The present writer therefore sees no satisfactory solution to these problems of original sin, unless we distinguish between original sin and original guilt; once we allow this, some problems still remain but they would seem to be less serious than the alternative!

2.1.4 John Pridmore's interpretation of Romans 7:9

At Romans 7:7 Paul adopts the first person singular, the first time he does so since 1:8-16. One naturally concludes that throughout v.7-25, Paul is talking about himself. If however, he is writing autobiographically, we are faced with complex problems of interpretation as soon as we ask what stages of his spiritual experience he is describing e.g. before or after his conversion to Christ. If in the whole passage he writes of his own experience, he must be talking about himself at v.9.

In Romans 7:9 Paul says 'I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died'. Pridmore (1977:194) suggests that Paul is in fact speaking of himself but that the point of the passage lies in the fact that his experience is not unique but in some sense typical. Calvin (quoted in Cranfield 1980:351) referred this to the time before Paul's conversion when although much preoccupied with the law, he did not properly understand it but mistakenly imagined he was fulfilling all its requirements. Lloyd-Jones (1973:114-116;138-140), by
comparison with Romans 7:7, 10:2-5 and Philippians 3:1-9, concludes that when Paul realized the inward, spiritual character of the law, his merely legalistic righteousness became apparent to him, and, like Nabal in 1 Samuel 25:37, he became 'as one dead'. Others understand the verse in a general sense as applying historically to the situation of the human race in Genesis 1:28 onwards, when the human race was 'alive' before the fall and the later giving of the law (Cranfield 1980:351).

Pridmore (1977:195-201) understands Paul's affirmation in Romans 7:7 'I had not known sin, except through the law' to be a general truth, but one which is particularly true of childhood; v.9 is then understood to mean that Paul is saying he was spiritually alive (exon) as a child, before the time when, as in v.8, the law 'stirred up' sin in him. A Jewish writer (see Encyclopaedia Judaica Vol 5;1971:427) 'could appropriately regard childhood as the time when one was xoris nomou (without or apart from law) because children were in a large measure sheltered by their parents' obedience; where they have not gained the 'knowledge of good and evil' they would not be held morally responsible. (A Jewish boy usually became a 'son of the commandment' at age thirteen). Many commentators will not allow exon here its full theological meaning of 'fully alive', 'spiritually alive' or 'alive in relation to God' (eg because Paul viewed his Pharisaical past as 'loss' in Philippians 3:7, his belief in a 'new creation' at conversion in 2 Corinthians 4:6, 5:17; and the radical
distinction which he draws between the Christian and the pre-Christian life in 1 Corinthians 6:11). Pridmore challenges the assumptions of these commentators whom, he alleges, 'have imposed on Paul their blindness to the fact that childhood has a theology of its own'. Paul had broken free from Pharisaism and could be here as a Christian attaching to childhood a positive significance which it was not generally allowed in Judaism. Pridmore's interpretation of Romans 7:9, then, is that 'As a child, I was, in relation to God, alive.' This would mean that there is no question of original sin or guilt making children 'spiritually dead' from birth or needing forgiveness through repentance and faith and the 'new birth'. They are 'alive in relation to God', until, by deliberate sin and rejection of Christ, 'the commandment comes, sin revives' and spiritual death results.

Pridmore (1977:195) concedes that his interpretation 'does not command general assent amongst modern scholars' (although Anglican scholars Cranfield 1980:351; Stott 1966:68 and Baptist scholar D.Guthrie sa:25IN/V/B accept it as a possible or even a likely interpretation). Reference has been made to Pridmore's view in this context, however, because:

1. The view relates to the teaching of the seventeenth-century General Baptist Thomas Grantham that people start life (from birth) in the Body of Christ but sin themselves out of it in the years of responsibility (see 1.3.2.1). Grantham, however, did not base his views on Romans 7:9.
2. It indicates the difficulty of consistently relating the Baptist insistence on conscious personal faith to some traditional ideas of original sin on the one hand and a 'theology of childhood' on the other. This difficulty leads us into a consideration of the relation between original sin and the concept of the guilt or innocence of children, and the 'age of accountability'.

2.1.5 Innocence, Guilt and the 'Age of Accountability'
Most Christians, and a significant number of non-Christians, have no difficulty in accepting the idea of original sin as far as the hereditary, sinful bias of humankind is concerned, because it seems to fit the facts of universal human experience. The ethical, philosophical and spiritual difficulties seem mainly to arise in connection with the teaching of original guilt, if it is insisted that it is part of the 'package' that automatically comes with belief in 'original sin'. In 1990 and 1991, the writer conducted a survey amongst pastors and members of Baptist congregations around Southern Africa, through the use of a detailed questionnaire covering many aspects in relation to the place of the child in the church. The results are summarised and interpreted in chapter 3. The questionnaire results indicated that 73% of Baptist respondents in Southern Africa agreed with the statement that 'infants and children are "innocent" rather than sinless; all children inherit a tendency to sin' (See 3.3.1.1). On the other hand, 57% agreed that 'we are not merely born sinners
but are also guilty sinners from birth' (25% disagreed and 18% were uncertain). In addition, 50% agreed that 'children may be regarded as innocent until they reach the age of accountability' (29% disagreed and 21% were uncertain). Although the varying responses to the questions suggest a lack of clarity amongst Baptists concerning the implications of the doctrine of original sin, they do indicate that the concept of a relative innocency of children is familiar to many.

How do Baptists understand the 'innocence' of children? We have already seen in 1.3.1 that the early Anabaptists were not influenced by romantic, idealistic or sentimental views of the nature of the child, they were not 'Pelagian' because they recognized that infants were disposed to evil and had a corrupt nature from the beginning. They believed, however, that Deuteronomy 1:39 suggests the relative innocence of young children who are described as 'having no knowledge of good or evil'. Young children are in some ways like Adam before the Fall, not that Adam had a disposition to evil before the Fall but that sin does not begin to be active until they reach the point of the choice between good and evil. Thus they are not guilty of actual personal sin before this stage of choice. 'We might say children are sinful because of their humanness but sinners because of their own choice' (Hendricks 1970:89). Marlin Jeschke (1983:104), a Mennonite, notes that the essentially Scriptural division of the human race into the saved and the lost needs some qualification in respect of infants and young children who could
be designated 'the innocent'.

The 1990 survey results suggest a certain amount of ambiguity and uncertainty concerning the 'guilt' or 'innocence' of children amongst Baptists in Southern Africa. The published statements of Reformed or Calvinistic Baptists, however, more consistently imply that, even in the case of infants and young children, original sin also involved original guilt. This is reflected in the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, chapter 6 paragraph 3 (see 2.1.2), and also in the views of Reformed Baptist David Kingdon (1975:94) when he states: 'biblically speaking there is no such person as an innocent child ... if a child is saved on the ground of its innocence than it is not saved by the free and sovereign grace of God ... To maintain that a child is safe until it reaches the age of discretion, as many do, is to clutch at a broken reed.' It is no doubt partly for this reason that Reformed Baptists in Southern Africa generally tend not to subscribe to Article Four of the 1924 Statement of Belief of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (see Appendix 1) which asserts 'that all human beings inherit a sinful nature which issues (in the case of those who reach moral responsibility) in actual transgression involving a personal guilt' (Stone 1991:1). This means that they would attribute guilt not just to the 'actual transgression' but also to the inherited imputed sin. B. Stone (1991:1) explains, however, that the 1689 Baptist Confession attributes the penalty of death not because of imputed guilt, but because of imputed sin.
Those Baptists and other Christians who accept some view of the relative innocence of children, must inevitably proceed to the parallel concept of the 'age of accountability'. In the 1990 survey, 50% of respondents agreed that 'children may be regarded as innocent until they reach the "age of accountability"', while 29% disagreed and 21% were uncertain. Only 15% agreed that as this is not a biblical concept, we need not be concerned with it (see 3.3.2.2). Although the term 'age of accountability' (like the term 'original sin') is not a biblical expression, the idea of an age of accountability is seen in the various texts noted in the next paragraph. Hendricks (1970:84) defines the concept as 'a time or period of life when one is aware enough of God to respond to him'; Doherty (1986:78) links it more specifically with sin in his definition 'that age when the child commits sin consciously and deliberately, and when he is, therefore, held accountable for it before God.' Others think in more general terms of the age of 'discretion' or 'autonomy'. The concept is of practical importance for all Christians; Roman Catholics have traditionally regarded age seven as the normal age for 'first communion' while Anglicans, Methodists and other paedobaptists have in the past generally seen the ages of twelve to sixteen as the usual age for 'confirmation' or 'reception into full church membership'. These ecclesiastical practices in different denominations certainly recognize that a certain level of responsibility is appropriate for the entry of children into the various aspects of corporate Christian participation. The problem of the age of accountability

163
is especially important to Baptists because of their emphasis on 'regenerate church membership', the difficulties caused by setting arbitrary ages at which children are accountable and the dilemmas posed by some modern child evangelism (see 2.4).

Although the 'age of accountability' is not a distinct biblical doctrine, the following Scripture passages do at least suggest the concept:

1. Numbers 14:29-31 and Deuteronomy 1:39 refer to children under the age of 20 who were not to be punished by God because they had no knowledge between good and evil; they were therefore not held accountable for the parents' sins.

2. Isaiah 7:16 seems to suggest that a child reaches moral discernment at some identifiable stage.

3. On the other hand, Jonah 4:11 suggests that spiritual and moral discernment and accountability may be influenced not only by age, but by opportunity. 'The Ninevites deserve compassion not only as creatures for whom God cares, but also as virtual children compared with the Jews. They know no better, for they had not had the spiritual advantages of Israel, and so it is necessary to make allowances for them' (Allen 1976:234).

4. None of the above verses establish conclusively that there is an age of accountability. Some suggest that 2 Samuel 12:23 indicates that there could well be, and that infants are certainly not yet at the age of accountability (see 2.2.2.1).

5. John 3:19 indicates that people are condemned by their actual
rejection of God's revelation. But can it be said of little children that they have 'chosen darkness rather than light'? It seems not. The above verses, taken together seem to imply an age or stage of accountability.

There are, however, various practical difficulties raised by this concept for ministry amongst children. For example, it is sometimes claimed that because children are dependent and not autonomous, it is meaningless and even harmful to ask them to enter into commitments; child evangelism should be stopped and we should restrict ourselves to teaching the Word. There are several weaknesses about this view:

1. The distinction between teaching Scripture and evangelism is an illusion. When properly taught it calls for responses and commitments (Heb 4:12).
2. Salvation is much more than justification; it involves a developing relationship.
3. In human life adult autonomy is gradually attained through many small graded steps of increased freedom of choice. This is true for the child in a social sense; if it is also true in a religious sense, then the 'age of accountability' when a child is truly able to grasp and respond to the key aspects of the gospel in a responsible way, may often arrive much earlier, while the child is still in many other ways dependent on parents. In the case of a child of Christian parents, it is sometimes difficult to pinpoint a precise date or stage when conversion has either taken
place or may be expected as likely to take place, because ideally such a child may from infancy love and obey Jesus in a sort of ongoing conversion without consciously experiencing a first conversion at a specific point in time.

4. If the 'age of accountability' in particular children is ultimately known only to God, children’s workers may lose conviction about their work if it is too dependent on inherently unobservable facts.

5. The question is not whether a response from a child is relevant but rather what kind of response is appropriate to a particular stage e.g. although young children usually cannot grasp the full theological weight of the concept of 'repentance' (do adults?), they are progressively able to follow the key element of a change of mind and change of behaviour. (See Prince 1979:44-53 for suggestions about appropriate responses for infants, young children, middle children and adolescents from Christian and from non-Christian homes).

Hendricks (1970:97) closes his consideration of the theme with the observation: 'A wise course is to correct our practices which do not preserve the full biblical meaning of salvation. The time of accountability is the moment of grace when one is brought to a decision for or against Christ by the Spirit. This moment requires the proclamation of the Word, the drawing of the Spirit, and the yielding of the individual to God. Until this moment is possible, one may leave children in the hands of God.'
The present writer would suggest that, since the term 'original sin' is not biblical in any case and tends to produce such emotional reactions, to discard the term itself would be no loss, provided the essential biblical ideas (rather than particular philosophical presuppositions) behind the doctrine, are maintained. This is vital because the doctrine of original sin is important not only for its specific biblical content but because of its integral relation to other doctrines including the ideas of grace and salvation, the atonement, the nature of humankind and the function of baptism and evangelism; it also has implications for sanctification and ethics; in short, many of the distinctives of the Christian faith which distinguish it from a merely human philosophy.
2.2 INFANT SALVATION

2.2.1 Introduction - a decline of interest?

The question of infant salvation does not enjoy high priority on today's theological agenda. During the first centuries after the Reformation however, it was a question important enough to be referred to in some of the confessions of faith produced at those times. There are probably two main reasons for this apparent decline of interest:

1. The decline in the number of children dying in infancy, especially in Western countries, following the rise of modern medical science in the twentieth century. As late as 1886, statistics for the Netherlands showed that 48% of the total number of deaths were of children under the age of five (Hoeksema 1971:147).

2. D.F. Tennant (October 1982:356) asserts: 'It could be said that the current mood in twentieth-century theology seems to reflect some impatience with the whole idea of salvation, certainly if it is thereby implied that there are any who are not saved.' Because of the many pressing national and international issues which the church has often neglected, theologians are understandably concerned with the 'relevance' of theology, so that they are not seen to be wasting time answering questions no-one is asking! (The theme of a major theological conference held in South Africa during 1990 was in fact The Relevance of Theology in the 1990's). Questions of infant salvation therefore appear to be symptomatic of ivory-towered escapism.
Any pastor who has had to minister to parents, whether believing or otherwise, who have lost infants or young children, will confirm, however, that infant salvation is a very real pastoral/theological question. The writer has known cases where couples have left a more 'orthodox' Christian church to join a church which, in his opinion, is more akin to an exclusive sect, but which in its official doctrines rejected the notion of original sin and thereby gave the bereaved parents a real sense of comfort and hope concerning the destiny of the child they had lost. In addition, G.W. Bromiley (1979:91) has noted that throughout the range of Christian history and geography 'a high proportion of the world's population has in fact died in infancy or early childhood' while even today statistics show that about 25% of the world's children die in immaturity (Baxter 1988:72).

2.2.2 Different theological perspectives and theories

B.H. Butler (1971:344) has shown how interest in the doctrine of infant salvation has been approached from at least three basic theological and denominational perspectives. The Roman Catholic Church has viewed the question in relation to infant baptism in the context of the church's teaching that baptism is essential to salvation, and that salvation comes only through the agency of the Church, thus creating the serious problem of infants dying without baptism. The Reformed view is dominated by the doctrine of election and leads to the question of whether some infants are non-elect. Baptists have attempted to justify their rejection of
infant baptism by showing that infants dying in infancy would be saved apart from baptism. Some Baptists have, however, also approached the question from the standpoint of election.

2.2.2.1 Roman Catholic views
It has become extremely difficult to pin down precisely what the present 'official' Roman Catholic teaching is regarding infant salvation. Different approaches and conclusions are currently held within the church itself as is indicated by a 67-page article written by a Catholic theologian in 1954 (Van Roo 1954:406-473), and a 10-page note written in 1988 (Walsh 1988:100-109). The older 'hard-line' position may be outlined as follows:
1. There is no salvation outside the church.
2. Baptism is the means of regeneration and entry into the church.
3. Those who die unbaptized are without salvation.
Since the Middle Ages however, Catholic theologians have been concerned about unbaptized infants dying in infancy. This led to the theory of the limbus infantum, an abode on the edge of hell where unbaptized infants were consigned, that they might suffer the penalty of original sin which normally would have been removed through baptism. Butler (1971:345) explains: 'In order to mitigate the logic which thus condemned those dying in mortal or original sin to the same eternal punishment, there arose a distinction between poena danni and poena sensa. Unbaptized infants were thought to suffer only the former, which entailed
the loss of the beatific vision. Such is the formulation expressed by Pope Innocent III (c. 1200), which decreed the penalty of original sin to be the lack of the vision of God, but the penalty of actual sin to be the torments of eternal hell.' The 'Limbo' teaching then, is actually a mitigation or softening of the lot of unbaptized infants. The doctrine of Limbo has never been given papal affirmation as a dogma, but has generally been received as in line with the Church's teaching and as replacing Augustine's earlier and harsher theory. Sympathy with the lot of unbaptized infants seems to have motivated adaptions along two lines by Catholic theologians (Van Roo 1954:428, 438-439, 462-463):

a) Limbo has been conceived as a 'natural paradise' rather than an abode of hell.

b) Because the early Patristic Church allowed that a 'baptism of blood' (i.e. martyrdom) could take the place of water baptism (Warfield 1932:412), the expedient of baptism in voto, i.e. baptism by intention (the faith of parents who intended to baptize their infants but for one reason or another failed to do so) was also regarded as sufficient. (One recent Catholic theologian even 'stretches' this so universally as to imply that in Christ's cross, the whole world has, at least in germ, already been baptized.) The concept of in voto has an almost limitless application. This has been perceived by more conservative Catholic theologians who are unwilling to allow any view which undermines the necessity of baptism by the Church.

171
Catholic theologians are also struggling to harmonize their teaching of the status of unbaptized children dying in infancy with the 'universal salvific will', which also extends to these infants, i.e. God's desire for the salvation of all people and infants as expressed in 1 Timothy 1:15 and Matthew 18:14, as well as in the fact that even the Roman Catholic Council of Trent decrees that 'the church, being itself a revealed community, does not judge about what is hidden, what is not revealed' (Van Roo 1954: 422,463).

A more recent issue for Catholics has been the salvation of non-Catholics. The acceptance since Vatican II (1962-1965) of Protestants as 'separated brethren' rather than heretics has also led to the conclusion that since Protestants are now in some way accepted, Protestant baptism must therefore in some way be valid. Van Roo (1954:473) concludes that although Catholics are 'not free to affirm that all infants are saved... the question is not definitively and irrevocably closed.'

The 'open' state of the question as reflected in Van Roo's closing statement above is seen in the further developments noted in L.G. Walsh's (1988:100-109) more recent summary of the general Roman Catholic position. It is normally forbidden to baptise a child without some serious commitment to the church on the part of the parents and to a Christian upbringing for the child; where the child is in danger of death, however, baptism is granted immediately unless the parents positively oppose it. It is
believed that the sacrament makes them children of God, frees from original sin and makes their death a passage to resurrection, ie baptised children dying in infancy go straight to heaven without first having to go to Purgatory or 'limbo'.

There appears to be a continuing tension in current Roman Catholic thinking between the necessity of baptism for salvation and God's desire that all should be saved. On the one hand, in 1854 and 1863 Pope Pius IX accepted that God will not allow those who are not guilty of voluntary sin to suffer eternal punishment, yet, on the other hand, even the preparatory commission of Vatican 2 recommended that the magisterium continue to proclaim that all unbaptised dead children are excluded from eternal salvation (Beinert 1991:227-228). In the writings of modern Catholic theologian Karl Rahner tension is also apparent between the necessity of the sacraments including baptism and the fact that 'a person can be justified by his subjective acts of faith and contrition even before the reception of these sacraments' (McCool 1975:73,219-220,307). V.Wilkin has also suggested that infants dying unbaptised are saved by a 'baptism of the resurrection'. Limbo could for them become the 'baptistry of heaven' as they wait until the general resurrection for their saving transformation in Christ (Walsh 1988:107-108).

From a pastoral perspective, P.Gumpel (1968:319) urges Catholic pastors to tell parents of children who have died without baptism
that there is no definite doctrine of faith regarding the fate of such children and that such parents should therefore 'entrust the final lot of their child to the mysterious but infinitely kind and powerful love of God, to whose grace no limit is set by the earthly circumstances which he in his providence has allowed to come about.'

2.2.2.2 Reformed views

Warfield's (1932:421-430) study The Development of the Doctrine of Infant Salvation finds that both the Lutheran and Anglican positions seem to reflect either a cautious or charitable agnosticism on the salvation of infants dying in infancy, being also somehow tied to their view of baptism and the church, and suggests 'A similar difficulty is experienced by all types of Protestant thought in which the older idea of the Church, as primarily an external body, has been incompletely reformed... It was among the Reformed alone that the newly recovered Scriptural apprehension of the Church, to which the promises were given, as essentially not an externally organized body but the people of God, membership in which is mediated not by the external act of baptism but by the internal regeneration of the Holy Spirit, bore its fruit in rectifying the doctrine of the application of redemption' (Warfield 1932:427,429-430).

In Reformed doctrine, salvation is not grounded in sacramental grace but in the free grace of God's election. Thus although
many Reformed scholars will vigorously defend the practice of infant baptism, they in no way link this salvation to any view of 'baptismal regeneration'. Butler (1971:348) notes that Zwingli stated the Reformed position more clearly than any other Reformer. Zwingli's view included the following.

1. All children of believers dying in infancy are elect and therefore saved.

2. On the basis of Romans 5:20, it is probable that all infants dying in infancy are saved; death in infancy may therefore be a sign of their election. Although this must be left with God, it would certainly be 'rash and even impious to affirm their damnation' (quoted by Warfield 1932: 431). C.W. Shields has asserted that John Calvin taught the salvation of all infants (Butler 1971:348-349) although Warfield (1932:431 footnote 66) suggests Calvin believed that some infants dying were lost (The salvation of all people dying in infancy appears to be confirmed by Calvin himself in the Institutes 4:15:22; the references in the Institutes 4:16:17,26 and in Calvin's [1972:252] comment on Matthew 19:13-15 are somewhat ambiguous and could be understood either way). A concise summary of the Reformed belief is found in the Westminster Confession: 'Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and 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' (Butler 1971:349).
The reference to the regeneration (though not by baptism itself) of infants is significant, and noticeably absent from some of the non-Calvinistic Baptist statements. J. Buchanan (1966:115-116, 119-120) asserts: '...they must be saved substantially in the same way, there being only one method of salvation for all sinners... for if saved at all, they must be born again... The regeneration of infants may be ascribed to a direct operation of the Spirit on their minds... by this direct operation he may implant that principle of grace which is the germ of the new creature, the incorruptible seed, which may lie long under the furrow, but, will sooner or later spring up, and produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness.' Modern Reformed theologian G.W. Bromiley (1979:99-100) explains 'Certainly this gift and work of the Holy Spirit is a miracle in infants... in whatever infant awareness they have, as they are sinners in Adam, so by the ministry of the Holy Spirit they can be believers in the children's Saviour, who himself was not without fellowship with the Father during the days of his own infancy.'

The reference to 'elect infants' in the Westminster Confession would appear to imply that there are non-elect infants but both Warfield (1932:437) and Hoeksema (1971:157-159) note that no Reformed Confession either states that all infants are saved or that any are not saved, i.e. they are silent on the question of possible 'non-elect' infants. Webb (1981:294) asserts that only the Reformed position gives any proper assurance concerning
infants, because it grounds their salvation in the free grace and electing love of God. Warfield follows this approach and claims that if one affirms the salvation of all infants who die, one must hold such a view on Reformed principles or the 'gracious' view.

D. K. Clark (1984:460-464) notes that Warfield does seem to hold that all infants who die will be saved, but finds a flaw in Warfield's Calvinistic logic at this point. Someone taking Warfield's gracious view, cannot hold that God acts reasonably in saving all infants who die and only some adults... his thesis:

If one affirms the salvation of all infants who die, one must do so on Reformed principles and the gracious view. But the argument here shows that this conclusion holds only if one admits either universalism or the arbitrariness of God's choosing. But if some adults are not saved and God's will is reasonable, then the logic of Warfield's Reformed position requires that some infants who die will not be saved'. Clark (1984:461-462) adds: 'Of course, classical Calvinism does not feel the need to justify apparently contradictory actions of God' and asks: 'Is the salvation of all infants who die held for sentimental reasons?' Although it is possible that Warfield may hold that there is a difference between infants and adults as the latter have some responsibility, would this not imply that infants may then be saved on some grounds other than the free grace and electing love of God, such as their relative 'innocence'? It would appear that no view of infant salvation (including the Baptist views to be outlined later) is without its problems!
2.2.2.3. Baptist views

We have already noted how the Anabaptists and early Baptists were forced into a declaration on the subject of infant salvation in order to justify their refusal to baptize infants. Their teaching may be summarized as follows.

a) General Baptists

The 'General Baptists' held an Arminian view of the atonement which had suggested that all infants, whether children of believers or unbelievers, were saved through the work of the 'Second Adam'. They are conceived and born in innocency and without sin and according to Romans 4:15 and 5:13 'Where there is no law there is no transgression', and 'sin is not imputed where there is no law'. The law was not given to infants but to those who could understand (Mt 13:9). Infants, because of original sin, are only subject to the 'first death' i.e. physical death. The 'second death' (i.e. spiritual separation from God in hell) only follows the sin of the unrepentant. The Orthodox Creed of 1678 specifically rejects the teaching that unbaptized infants go to Purgatory or Limbo. All infants are members of the invisible church.

b) Particular Baptists

Particular or Calvinistic Baptists differ from the General Baptists in that they appear to ground the salvation of infants dying in infancy in election rather than in connection with their innocence and the general atonement of Christ. There is no reference to the 'first death' and 'second death' teaching and
they seemed generally to adopt an 'optimistic agnosticism' towards the salvation of all infants dying in infancy, rather than the clear assertion of this as found in General Baptist writings. The 1689 Baptist Confession is akin to other Reformed Confessions such as the Westminster Confession in asserting that saved infants are regenerated by the Holy Spirit. There appears to be some uncertainty concerning the word 'elect' before 'infants' in the 1689 Baptist Confession. Lumpkin's 444-page volume *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (1974:265) includes the word 'elect', whereas it does not appear in most later editions such as the edition published by C.H. Spurgeon in 1855 (Evangelical Press 1974:24). The earliest explicit statement of opinion by a 'High Calvinist' in the context of election, of the salvation of all infants dying in infancy, is found in John Gill's 1761 work *Body of Divinity, Book II, Of Election* (Butler 1971:351-352).

c) C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Spurgeon, also known as the 'prince of preachers' was a Particular Baptist of moderately Calvinistic convictions. His writings continue to have great influence amongst both 'Arminian' and 'Reformed' Baptists, and so his views concerning infant salvation could be regarded as broadly representative of a wide range of modern Baptist opinion. He unequivocally asserts the salvation of all infants: 'I have never at any time in my life said, believed or imagined that any infant, under any circumstances, would be cast into Hell. I have always believed
in the salvation of all infants, and I intensely detest the opinions which your opponent dared to attribute to me. I do not believe that on this earth there is a single professing Christian holding the damnation of infants; or, if there be, he must be insane, or utterly ignorant of Christianity" (Ray 1903:384). Their salvation is not on the basis of their supposed innocency, but on the free grace of Christ. Spurgeon seemed to hold that saved infants make up the majority of the population of heaven - they are 'the most numerous company in the army of the elect' (Spurgeon 1989:38,44). Some of Spurgeon's other views concerning the status of children have already been noted previously in 1.4.2

d) A. H. Strong (1836-1921).
Strong devotes four pages of his 1194 page *Systematic Theology* to the subject of infant salvation. He was a Northern Baptist, and President of Rochester Theological Seminary in the United States of America. For Strong (1907:661-662) 'Infants are in a state of sin, need to be regenerated and can be saved only through Christ'. While people are judged finally for actual sin and personal transgression, infants have none and they will escape this test. As infants inherit sin from Adam, so they inherit salvation from Christ. Strong asserts that there is no evidence that children dying in infancy are regenerated before death. On the basis of 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 1 John 3:2 he suggests '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' (1907:663). Strong's suggestion at this point has not received general support. Webb (1981:510) comments: 'The reasoning is far-fetched and the texts are strained to support the hypothesis.' The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, while asserting the regeneration of infants dying in infancy, does not specify when this would take place.

e) E. Y. Mullins (1860-1928)

Mullins was President of the Southern Baptist Seminary for nearly thirty years, President of the Southern Baptist Convention 1921-1924, and President of the Baptist World Alliance 1923-1928. Mullins recognizes that there is comparatively little direct teaching in Scripture regarding infant salvation. In contrast to the statement of Grantham in the seventeenth century that people begin life within the body of Christ until they remove themselves by sin in the years of responsibility (see 1.3.2.1), Mullins asserts that infants are not in the kingdom of God when they are born but must voluntarily and individually choose to enter the kingdom in their later years. Condemnation is not for hereditary sin, but only for actual sin; Christ died for the human race as a whole and removed the curse for hereditary sin (Butler 1971:353). Mullins, however, restricts himself to these general assertions and does not elucidate how this can be worked out in practice.

f) Millard J. Erickson.

Erickson, a Regular Baptist, is Dean and Professor of Theology at

181
Bethel Theological Seminary in the United States of America, and author of the 1300 page Christian Theology (1987) which is a standard reference work in Baptist Theological Colleges in Southern Africa and overseas. Erickson (1987:638-639) recognizes the lack of explicit Biblical teaching on the question of infant salvation: 'While the status of infants and those who never reach moral competence is a difficult question it appears that our Lord did not regard them as basically sinful or guilty'. By reference to Matthew 18:3;19:14 and 2 Samuel 12:23, Erickson concludes 'on the basis of such considerations, it is difficult to maintain that children are to be thought of as sinful, condemned and lost.' Discussion of Romans 5:12-19 also leads Erickson to assert 'And what are we to say of infants who die? Despite having participated in that first sin, they are somehow accepted and saved. Although they have made no conscious choice of Christ's work (or of Adam's sin for that matter), the spiritual effects of the curse are negated in their case... with this matter of guilt, however, just as with the imputation of Christ's righteousness, there must be some conscious and voluntary decision on our part. Until this is the case, there is only a conditional imputation of guilt. Thus, there is no condemnation until one reaches the age of responsibility. If a child dies before he or she is capable of making genuine moral decisions, there is only innocence, and the child will experience the same type of future existence with the Lord as those who have reached the age of moral responsibility and had their sins forgiven as a result of accepting the offer of
salvation based upon Christ's atoning death'.

g) J. Sidlow Baxter.
Dr Baxter is an internationally known preacher, pastor, Bible expositor, author and conference speaker, rather than an 'academic' theologian. His assertion of the salvation of infants is probably the most unequivocal of Baptist statements on the subject today. Baxter (1988:73-87) builds up his case as follows:
1. The Bible nowhere states or implies that young children who die are lost.
2. Although sinners 'by nature', they have no personal guilt.
3. Romans 4:15, 5:13 teach that there is no such thing as 'inherited guilt'.
4. They have never rejected the saviour.
5. They have none of the self-acquired characteristics which call forth the displeasure of God, e.g. Matthew 25:41-43.
6. Those who die as children are not saved by their innocence but they are saved because of it.
7. For infants who have died to be lost would contradict the character of God as revealed in the Word, e.g. Jonah 4:11, Ezekiel 16:21.
8. Baxter rejects the salvation of all those dying in infancy on the grounds of their election, because it suggests that the larger number of the elect must consist of those who passed away in babyhood rather than the comparatively small percentage of each generation who come to personal faith in Christ.
9. A comparison of Matthew 18:14 'it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish', with Exodus 20:7 'The Lord will not hold him guiltless' shows that Jesus is accentuating the positive, i.e. that it is the will of the Father that each of these little ones will be saved. A difficulty for this view, however, is found in 2 Peter 3:9: 'The Lord is ... not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.' Scripture is clear that in spite of this statement, there are those who are or will be lost. On the other hand, the text does not refer to infants and young children but rather to those who 'scoff' and 'ignore' the word of God (2 Peter 3:3,5), an attitude which can only be found amongst those of more mature years. On balance then, a stronger case for the salvation of those dying in infancy can be made on the basis of Matthew 18:14 and other passages, than for the ultimate salvation or 'repentance' of all people on the basis of 2 Peter 3:3-9, since that conclusion would contradict other clear Scriptural teaching.

2.2.3. Is there an 'official' Baptist view?

Christians of other more centrally controlled denominations, or those which have more detailed confessions and doctrinal standards which are binding on congregations are sometimes surprised at the variety of belief and practice among Baptists on many secondary matters. It is for this reason that there is no single approach to the question of infant salvation among Baptists. Although it is apparent that a large majority of
Baptists today hold to the salvation of all infants dying in infancy, this belief is often held on different grounds. R.A. Webb has analyzed and assessed many different approaches to the question of infant salvation, some of which appear to be interrelated.

a) Rejected theories

Few, if any, Baptists would base their belief in infant salvation on the following grounds:

1. The Sacramental theory of baptismal regeneration - that infant baptism removes the stain of original sin and 'regenerates' the child. This view is partly based on an inadequate exegesis of John 3:3-5 which assumes that being 'born of water' refers to water baptism in itself. This view is inadequate because

   a) the main thrust of the context, especially John 3:3-8 is to contrast being 'born of the flesh' and 'born of the Spirit'; rather than having confidence in that which is merely outward and physical, the inward and spiritual work of the Holy Spirit is essential. The main emphasis of the passage is not on water baptism but on the work of the Spirit (Boice 1975:244; Schnackenburg 1980:369-370). Some commentators see water here as referring to cleansing, while Boice (1975:245-246) suggests that it could refer to the cleansing function of the Word as in Ephesians 5:26.

   b) Many commentators eg Barrett (1978:209); Bruce (1983:84-85);
Carson (1991:191-193); Hendriksen (1969:134); Morgan (s a :58);
Tasker (1968:70-71); Tenney (1954:87); Turner & Mantey
(1964:90-92); Westcott (1908:108-109) do, however, acknowledge
that there is a possible or probable allusion to baptism in verse
5. (Titus 3:5 may be the closest biblical parallel). If this is
correct, the allusion to water may have in mind as Old Testament
background, Ezekiel 36:25-27; such an allusion to baptism may also
have in mind the contrast between John's baptism in water and
Jesus' baptism in the Spirit as found in John 1:33 and parallel
passages in the Synoptics.

2. The Sentimental theory - 'The Fatherhood of God and the
Brotherhood of Man - implying that because God is a universal
father, all people are his children' (Webb 1981:134), i.e.
universalism in relation to salvation, that all people without
exception will ultimately be saved and none will be lost.

3. The Evolutionary/Pantheistic theory based on an approach to
the Incarnation which neglects the necessity of the Atonement of
Christ and regards all humanity as being somehow incorporated into
Christ's sonship so that all people, regardless of their actual
relationship with God, are regarded as sons of God. Christ's
divinity has been united with humanity so that a new species or
new sort of race is now evolving and ever progressing upwards to
God. This view also involves an 'adoptionist' Christology, that
Christ raised himself up to divinity.

4. Post-mortem probation: This theory denies that an infant
can be saved as an infant, but allows for some opportunity for a
moral choice after death, leading to salvation.

b) A combination of approaches

It will be seen in the teaching of various Baptist scholars mentioned previously that most Baptists, other than Calvinistic or Reformed Baptists, base their beliefs in infant salvation on a combination of the following views:

1. Although not sinless, infants and young children are not guilty of actual personal sin. There is a distinction between original sin and original guilt.

2. Infants are incapable of moral action such as sin or doing right on the one hand, and of spiritual response such as repentance on the other. According to Revelation 20:12,13 and other passages, judgement will be according to works — 'by what they had done'. Thus L.Morris (1969:241) notes 'It is common New Testament teaching that judgement is on the basis of works'.

3. The character of God, especially the assertion in 1 John 4:8 that God is love, implies that it would be out of character for God to condemn to hell infants, who, although tainted by original sin, are innocent of actual personal sin and unable to respond to Christ in repentance and faith. If not, the gospel would certainly not be 'Good News'.

4. The salvation of infants cannot, however, be based on a sentimental view of the loving character of God but rather on the universal validity of the atonement of Christ. The death of Christ has satisfied the justice of God in relation to punishment
for sin. Just as infants inherit the sinful nature of Adam passively, without their conscious choice, so the merits of the atonement of Christ are credited to them passively without their conscious choice.

5. It will be noted that the combination of approaches outlined above tend to be adopted by Baptists of more 'Arminian' convictions in the area of soteriology. Calvinistic or Reformed Baptists, however, would base their belief on the election of infants dying in infancy, as held in the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith previously quoted. Some would assert the salvation of all infants dying in infancy, while others would adopt a 'hopeful agnosticism' concerning the salvation of non-elect infants.

6. Many Baptists, such as J.S. Baxter whose views are outlined above, would simply assert that the Bible nowhere teaches that any infants are lost and that several passages teach or imply the salvation of all infants.

c) Modern doctrinal statements

The Doctrinal Basis of the Baptist Union of Victoria, Australia (1888) which is still currently held, asserts 'Baptists believe that infants are God's little ones, whether children of Christian or non-Christian parents, and accept without modification the word of the Lord, "of such is the Kingdom of Heaven"' (Lumpkin 1974:417-418). The Statement of Belief of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa, first accepted in 1924, asserts in Article Four: 'We believe... that all human beings inherit a sinful nature which
issues (in the case of those who reach moral responsibility) in actual transgression involving a personal guilt' (S. A. Baptist Handbook 1987-1988:209). Although neither statement explicitly refers to those dying in infancy, one may certainly conclude that the two statements imply this conclusion.

d) A tentative opinion

Although Reformed or Calvinistic Baptists are a significant and influential group, the larger majority of Baptists worldwide are of more 'Arminian' convictions generally. The vast majority of Baptists, both Arminian and moderately Calvinistic such as C. H. Spurgeon, would hold to the salvation of all those dying in infancy. Some Reformed Baptists such as A. Scott (1990:8-11) and D. Kingdon (1975:98) insist that although personally hoping that all those dying in infancy will be saved, one cannot be certain either way since Scripture neither asserts nor denies the salvation of all children. It seems to the present writer however, that although Scripture is relatively silent on the topic, it is certainly not a very loud silence, and there are good grounds for agreeing with Baxter's view that 'The Bible nowhere says or implies that young children who die are lost' (Baxter 1988:73).

2.2.4 The Baptist view - 'sola scriptura' or inconsistency?

A. König (1987:139-140; 275-276) points out an apparent inconsistency of Baptist and other antipaedobaptist
interpretation in relation to baptism and infant salvation. Biblical demands that are held to exclude infant baptism are then ignored to allow for infant salvation. Baptists insist that faith is necessary to both baptism and salvation, but allow that babies may be saved without faith. On the one hand, antipaedobaptist scholars such as F. P. Moller (1983:130) of the Apostolic Faith Mission suggest that on the basis of Mark 10:14, it is not necessary for infants and small children to be 'born again' or regenerated, in spite of the clear Biblical demand for the new birth (e.g. John 3:3-5; Ephesians 2:1-5). On the other hand, Baptist D. Kingdon (1975:97-100) acknowledges that infants, like adults, need to be born again, but suggests on the basis of Luke 1:15 that this may take place without infants themselves believing. König then asks why Baptists insist that a baby does not need to believe to be saved, but must believe to be baptized? Is faith more necessary for baptism than for salvation? Why may this exception be made for salvation, but not for baptism? This seems to be a valid criticism and is a reminder that few Christians are totally consistent in all of their beliefs and practices.

Baptists can only respond that although this may seem to be an inconsistency, it is not a conscious one but rather a result of their Biblical convictions concerning New Testament baptism and the nature of the church. Baptists believe that the New Testament teaching on Baptism in both Acts and the Epistles is
only meaningful if administered to believers; this again is linked to the conviction that church membership is for believers only. The only explicit identifiable examples of actual baptism recorded are those of believers; that infants were included in the 'household' baptisms in Acts cannot be proved, and, as discussed in 1.1.3, is believed to be highly unlikely. Baptism is associated with response to the gospel message; unless one believes in 'baptismal regeneration' or that baptism is helpful as a sign of entry into the sphere of covenant blessing, it is therefore not essential for baptism to be administered to infants and children who do not themselves believe. Although Baptists reject infant baptism because it is not accompanied by the faith of the one baptized, and in their opinion is not necessary, they recognize the fact that large numbers of infants and young children do in fact die before they are able to respond personally to the gospel. There is therefore no such 'choice' in the matter of infant salvation - infants do die, and may die unbaptized including those whose parents believe in infant baptism. Ordinary believers and theologians of various persuasions thus have to account for the eternal destiny of such children. Although it may appear inconsistent, Baptists are convinced that the Scriptural case for infant salvation and regeneration is much stronger than the case for infant baptism.

2.2.5 The present state of those dying in infancy.

The general concern for infant salvation has tended to overlook
the question of the present state or development of children dying in infancy. Butler (1971:356) asks 'Why should it be necessary to postulate a limbo which virtually petrifies the infant, and appears to foster a view in parent's minds that their child who has died has become, as it were, mummified? ' J.S. Baxter (1988:64-65,90-91) answers ' never think of your child there as static. There are no such abnormalities as immortal babies. There is no such thing as everlasting childhood... in heaven there is no perpetual suspension of growth, no permanent immaturity. All is progressive vitality... you will see and recognize your precious one, still yours by distinguishing similarities, but having developed into supernaturally superb adulthood, and, fulfilling exalted heavenly ministries beyond your most golden dreams!'

On what Scripture passages are these confident assurances based? No specific passages are mentioned other than 1 John 3:2 and 1 Corinthians 15:49 in connection with the spiritual resurrection body of the believer. It seems to the present writer that Baxter's suggestions, although speculative, are probably likely inferences from the general teaching of Scripture concerning eschatological themes such as the future life and the heavenly state which are then applied to infants and children, such as Luke 24:36-43, Philippians 3:20-21, 2 Corinthians 5:1-9, Revelation 21:4,22:3-4 etc. Certainly these assumptions are possible and likely, bearing in mind that the whole passage of 1 Corinthians 192
15:35-53 teaches both continuity and discontinuity with the earthly physical body and stresses that such things are not limited by present human understanding but are possible in the power of God. Some of Baxter's statements may possibly be questioned in the light of the Biblical emphasis on the unity of humankind, as if he implied the Greek view of 'the immortality of the soul' instead of the New Testament teaching of the resurrection of the body and the essential unity of the person in Biblical anthropology. It should be noted, however, that the main point of Baxter's argument is that we need not think of the present status of infants who have died as static, i.e., that they remain infants and do not develop. Biblical scholars and theologians of all persuasions and denominations recognise the difficulties of adequately explaining the so-called 'intermediate state'; one has to account for how one can be 'away from the body and at home with the Lord' (2 Cor 5:8) and 'depart and be with Christ' (Phil 1:23) while the physical body decays in the grave and the change to the resurrection body of 1 Corinthians 15:42-57 has not yet taken place. Baptist scholar B. Milne (1982:98) comments on the unity of the person; 'This disembodied state, however, is not the ideal (2 Cor 5:1-10). The full and proper goal for the believer is reached at the return of Christ who will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body' (Phil 3:20f).

Butler (1971:356) is more cautious and asks: 'Are there grounds
in reverent consideration of God's purpose for his children here on earth, such as found in 2 Corinthians 3:18, which might enable us to offer to bereaved parents a surer hope? Such a hope is that their loved one, deprived of a life here on earth with its troubles and misery, will grow in heaven physically (or the heavenly equivalent), morally, and spiritually? While it may be difficult or impossible to remove a sense of deprivation from parents whose child has died in infancy, we may be able to encourage a sense of fulfillment rather than utter loss. We have already noted the suggestion of Baptist Scholar M.J. Erickson (1987:639) that 'the child will experience the same type of future existence with the Lord as will those who have reached the age of moral responsibility...'

Perhaps this question would best be approached in connection with the glorification of the elect in Romans 8:30. If their death in infancy is a sign of their election, then these infants will certainly go on to glorification, since 'those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.' Although we are treading uncertain ground here, it seems to the present writer that the 'development' idea of Baxter and Butler is far more in line with the general thrust of Scripture than the 'static' or 'limbo' view!

194
2.3 CHILDREN AND FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The Bible itself recognises that it is possible to hear or read the Scriptures without understanding its message. Nehemiah 8:1-4 appears to indicate that this could be either because some hearers have not yet reached a point of understanding, presumably because they are still too young and/or insufficiently literate, while Nehemiah 8:7-8 suggests that proper teaching, exposition and explanation of background is also an aid to understanding. Passages such as Isaiah 6:9-10, 1 Corinthians 2:13-14 and 2 Corinthians 3:14-17 further suggest that lack of understanding may not be due to age or intellectual limitations but due to moral and spiritual reasons. Bible story books for children, graded Sunday School classes and children's talks/sermonettes in worship services are all indications of a general recognition that children grow and develop in their capacity to understand the Scriptures. 'Faith Development' today, however, normally refers to a combination of cognitive and religious development theories which have arisen from a background of developmental psychology. These theories may be broadly classified as either 'cognitive' or 'religious potential' theories. 'Cognitive development' theories are those which emphasise the intellectual development of the child and tend to link the possibility of religious understanding, experience and growth to the various stages...
which the child has reached. This is the approach associated with such researchers as Jean Piaget, Ronald Goldman, James Fowler, Erik Erikson and Lawrence Kohlberg.

'Religious potential' theories, on the other hand, recognise that children do have certain religious experiences which cannot be measured or discerned by psychological analysis; these may take place even though the child may not understand the real meaning of the experiences at the time. The religious potential view believes that the inherent religious potential of the child is often underestimated. This is the approach followed by such children's specialists as Maria Montessori, Sofia Cavalletti, Jerome Berryman and, to some extent, also Cornelia Roux of the Bureau for Children's Religion connected with the Faculty of Education at the University of Stellenbosch.

2.3.1 Faith Development and the theology of the child

The following questions are faced by all Christians in relation to faith development and the theology of the child.

1. The content of and approach to Christian education:
   Jean Piaget (1896-1980), a Swiss psychologist, spent many hours observing his own children in natural settings and concluded that growth took place in spurts or stages. Before Piaget, most educators assumed intelligence was fixed at birth and was influenced by the amount of knowledge a person had stored and how fast this knowledge could be learned.
Intelligence, according to Piaget, grew not by degrees or a process of adding more, but by transformations of the mind, like the change from a caterpillar to a butterfly. He described four major stages (Plueddemann 1986:5).

1. **Sensorimotor stage** (ages from birth - 2): The infant makes sense of the world primarily through physical observations - seeing, hearing, touching.

2. **Preoperational stage** (ages 2-7): Preschoolers have a new capacity to make sense of the world through language and fantasy; they learn through intuition and creative imagination rather than through systematic logic.

3. **Concrete operations stage** (usually age 7-11): The primary school child has a new capacity for mental logic but is limited to real, observable situations. Children at this stage learn facts easily in terms of black and white, right and wrong.

4. **Formal operations stage** (usually 11 and older): Adolescence and adulthood brings the opportunity to begin abstract thinking to solve hypothetical problems.

The older approach to Christian education regarded the child as a mini-adult and concentrated either on teaching catechisms in the form of propositional statements (questions and answers) or on Bible stories and Scripture memorization. The effect of Piaget’s theories was to stimulate a more graded curriculum in Sunday School teaching. It was
recognised that not all theological concepts nor Scripture passages were equally suited to children of different ages. Piaget's assumptions are reflected, for example, in the view of Baptist scholar J.M. Coffer (1960:121), who believes that certain Bible stories are thoroughly inappropriate for the pre-school child. The story of Abraham and the near-sacrifice of Isaac, for example, no matter how much it may inspire adults, will only produce terror in the mind of the young child. (This story is still included in the various recent reprints of Marian Schooland's *Big Book of Bible Stories* originally published in 1947 and intended for the 'very young child'.)

Coffer means that parents, teachers and preachers need to be more selective when choosing themes and Scripture passages for teaching children, to ensure that the ideas conveyed are compatible with what is known of the average cognitive level of the various age groups, along the lines of Piaget's stages as noted above. Baptist scholar G.Temp Sparkman (1983:85, 100,104) gives examples of how a faith development approach will help in the selection process. The 'young' child normally has God and Jesus thoroughly confused; by the 'middle' stage, Jesus can now be placed within time as a man with a history and life in a specific part of the world. This is a prelude to understanding the Incarnation, a concept too difficult for the concrete thinker; at the 'middle' stage, the child still conceives of 'sin' in terms of
specific sinful acts and does not yet understand the idea of
a 'sinful condition'. Teachers of middle children should
therefore avoid texts which merely require children to accept
a 'concept' and will use mainly material which they can
integrate with their experience, eg they can relate more to
Jesus' blessing of the children than to the raising of
Jairus' daughter, more to serving wine to his disciples in
the enjoyment of a meal than to turning water into wine.
The 1990/91 questionnaire results indicate both areas of
general agreement and also areas of uncertainty amongst
Baptists in Southern Africa in relation to the implications
of faith development theories for the theology of the child.
A detailed analysis will be found in 3.3.1.2 and 3.3.2.3.
2. The emerging problems
As one proceeds and attempts to integrate the findings of
some faith development theories into the Christian education
of children, various difficulties arise.
a) Apparent conflict between some faith development theories
and Scripture.
Roux (1989:17-18) has noted that religious thinking
presupposes formal or non-religious thinking. This means
that religious thinking is not a different or special thought
process but is identical with that exercised in other fields.
While the above statements in themselves may be biblically,
scientifically and psychologically sound, some of the
conclusions reached by some cognitive development theorists
go on, however, to imply that meaningful Christian
education is not really possible until adolescence, as
suggested by the following summary which is somewhat
different to and arrives at more radical and prescriptive
conclusions than the theory of Piaget:
i) The pre-religious stage (age 0-6): Because the child's
cognitive understanding is so underdeveloped, it is beyond
the child's ability to have any meaningful religious thoughts
or feelings.

ii) Sub-religious stage (age 7-11): Children in this stage
are still unable to have any adequate grasp of religious
matters. God is still a sort of mythical, unpredictable,
even occult character, sometimes benevolent and sometimes
malevolent. The Bible is read as a collection of magical
stories which are understood strictly literally.

iii) The personal religious stage is only reached by those
aged twelve and older who are able to think correctly about
God. This is the stage when the child is able to consciously
accept or reject Christian teaching.

Some have concluded from this developmental analysis
described above that pre-adolescent children should not be
taught Scripture. The writer is aware that it is precarious
to attempt to counter psychological theory with biblical
arguments on a one-to-one basis, because Scripture and
psychology operate on different levels. A naive
fundamentalism which, for example, attempts to counter the
scientific evidence for the age of the earth by calculating
dates through the use of biblical genealogies, should be
avoided. There would however appear to be more solid
biblical and theological grounds for differing from this
particular conclusion noted above, so that this may be a
problem of Scriptural authority rather than of
'fundamentalism'.

1. Developmental psychology is a social science which appears
to have far more conflicting theories and 'schools' within
its own field than the physical sciences such as physics,
chemistry, biology etc.

2. Whereas Piaget's theory is descriptive rather than
prescriptive, this particular approach leads to more radical
conclusions which appear to conflict with both Scriptural
teaching and the view of those who adopt the 'religious
potential' view of developmental psychology.

3. The plain statements of passages such as Deuteronomy
4:9, 6:7; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:1-4; 2 Timothy 3:15 and
others imply that parents are to bring up their children in
the ways of God while their lives are still young enough to
be 'shaped'.

4. Other scholars (eg Cavalletti 1983:30-45) who adopt a
'religious potential' approach, dispute this particular
conclusion of cognitive development theory. Their research
suggests, on the contrary, that not only do some pre-school
children aged three to six have both religious knowledge,
experience and thought, those in the sub-religious stage of six to twelve also do not necessarily view God in mythical or magical terms but may have a balanced, positive understanding of God as the loving Father and Creator of the universe, i.e. they do not only begin to think 'normally' of God from the age of twelve but much earlier.

5. Some educationalists active in Christian education in schools also oppose the idea that young children cannot understand the Bible. A.J. Rowe (1981:18,27,32) asserts to the contrary that 'to postpone biblical teaching until adolescence will probably retard the development of religious thinking'.

6. The work of the Holy Spirit in revelation or illumination as suggested in Matthew 21:15-16 and Luke 10:21 means that God may sometimes be pleased to reveal spiritual truths to children, even if this is normally beyond their usual cognitive ability. Obviously, regular Sunday School curricula have to be geared to the normal ability of the average child rather than to the unusual; the point however, is that the above theory, with its age limits for the pre-religious and sub-religious stages is not only unrealistically high but seems also in fact to leave out the possible illumination of the Holy Spirit in Biblical teaching to children even where this is geared to their average cognitive ability.

7. One of the chief means used by the Holy Spirit to
communicate God's truth is the Scripture (Eph 6:17; Heb 4:12; Rm 10:17). If pre-adolescent children are not taught Scripture, the Holy Spirit will have less of the basic gospel material to use in drawing them to Christ by the time they enter adolescence.

8. There are many examples both in the past and in the present of children who have come to understand and believe the gospel and go on to actively serve God, many years before adolescence. Doherty (1986:64) lists examples of well-known Christians from the second to the twentieth century who first came to believe the gospel and give evidence of a regenerated life, from the ages of five to eleven.

In response to the statement 'it is futile to attempt to teach such abstract concepts such as "God", "sin", "forgiveness", "salvation" etc., to very young children', 77% of respondents in the 1990 questionnaire disagreed, while 11% agreed and 12% were uncertain (see 3.3.1.2). This indicates that where faith development theories appear to be in conflict with Scripture teaching or with what is believed to be contrary evidence in the lives of actual children, most Southern African Baptists would be unwilling to incorporate such theories in their approach to the Christian education of children.
b) The hermeneutical approach of some religious potential theories:

Most evangelical Christians have fewer objections to the religious potential type of faith developmental theory because in contrast to the view which suggests that preadolescent children cannot really grasp Biblical concepts, it is recognised that even from the age of three children are able to have genuine religious experiences and often have a positive attitude towards biblical material and towards religious education (Roux 1989:33). It does appear, however, that some of the methods used in conveying the message of various biblical passages to children are rather limited in their application, focussing mainly on symbolical elements such as the parables. Sofia Cavalletti, for example, made much use of the parable of the Good Shepherd in her teaching and research; Jerome Berryman (1979:275-279,284) also emphasises the use of parables to evoke religious participation in both adults and children - adults are not to teach children about parables but must 'enter' them with children. 'The creature-who-creates comes into the presence of the Creator in the parable through the Son's experience of the Father. The Holy Spirit mediates the experience to others by the opening of the parable'. All the stages of faith development are present in many of the parables. Adults are not authoritatively in charge of the interpretation of the parables - they are not the
'property' of clergy or lay, adult or child, but are Christ's gifts to us.
The question is, however, whether this approach can be used when teaching children from the wider range of literary genres found in Scripture; it seems suitable only to the more symbolic passages which lend themselves to a creative use of the imagination in interpretation. It would not, for example, be suitable in conveying accurately (even at a simplified level suitable for children) the message of the more doctrinal and historical sections of the gospels and epistles. While Berryman's approach reveals a commendable desire to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to individual children and adults 'directly' through the parables rather than imposing an 'official' interpretation of the 'experts', this approach may possibly become too subjective or child-centred and needs the corrective of other sound hermeneutical principles such as the context, interpreting Scripture by Scripture etc. Thus Roux (1989:3,35), writing in a Dutch Reformed context, warns against too great a use of symbolism amongst children and emphasises the need for seeing the connection between the biblical text and biblical events. Overemphasis on the experience world of the child can lead to this becoming the only criteria in teaching children so that the actual meaning of the text is lost in the process. The present writer would also point out the following two limitations of an overemphasis on the use of parables.
i) Jesus explained (Mk 4:11-12; Mt 13:10-15) that his use of parables was not only intended to reveal, but also to conceal the truth from some. This is a 'hard saying' which needs detailed exegesis and a multifaceted interpretation to handle adequately; the main point is that parables may, in this very intention, not be the most suitable sections of Scripture for conveying basic truths to children.

ii) It is a fact that children who have grown up only on a diet of 'Bible stories' sometimes tend later to reject Christianity along with the stories of 'Father Christmas' and the 'Easter Bunny' if they see Bible teaching only as 'stories' or 'symbols'. They need something more solid as a foundation on which to build their faith i.e. the significance of the actual historical events of the gospel should not be neglected.

c) The inadequacy of psycho-religious theories to analyse specifically Christian faith.

Some faith development specialists also have a non-religious and extra-Biblical element to their work – it can include people of other religions or of no religion. James Fowler's (1986:7) own definitions of 'faith' include 'a person’s way of seeing himself or herself in relation to others against a background of shared meaning and purpose' and 'faith is a relationship of trust and loyalty to a centre of value'.

In order to clarify the point to be made in this context, it
is necessary to outline Fowler's seven stages of faith (Fowler 1983:190-195) which were based on the cognitive development model of Piaget:

1. **Primal faith**, characteristic of children under three, is largely inaccessible to empirical research, yet important because the quality of mutuality and the strength of trust, autonomy, hope and courage (or the opposites) developed in this stage underlie (or threaten to undermine) all that comes later in faith development.

2. **Intuitive-Projective faith** is most typical of children from three to seven and is marked by a relative fluidity of thought patterns. The child is continually encountering novelties for which no stable knowledge patterns have yet formed. This is the stage of first self-awareness, but moral concepts of right and wrong are not yet developed; religious symbolism cannot yet be properly grasped.

3. **Mythic-literal faith** is characteristic of children from seven to twelve. At this stage they begin to take on for themselves the stories, beliefs and observances distinctive of their particular communities. Beliefs are interpreted literally as are moral rules and attitudes. This can result either in overstifling, authoritarian legalism or in its opposite, a crushing sense of badness because of mistreatment neglect or the apparent disfavour of significant others. Fowler observes also that adults can sometimes be trapped in this stage and do not develop further spiritually.
4. **Synthetic-conventional faith** is found mainly amongst adolescents aged thirteen to eighteen, but unfortunately also becomes a permanent stage for many adults. Interpersonal relationships become very important; security, social cohesion and meaning in life are found through one’s identity with the particular group’s beliefs; this is therefore a highly ‘conformist’ stage; transition can begin at a later stage through contradiction between valued authority sources or marked changes in leaders, policies or practices.

5. **Individual-reflective faith** usually emerges in early adulthood (ages eighteen to thirty) but in some adults may only appear ‘late’, e.g. in the forties. A ‘world view’ is independently adopted and personal commitments, lifestyle, beliefs and attitudes are individually determined.

6. **Conjunctive faith** and **Universal faith** are usually only found in people over the age of thirty and will not be considered here as they do not normally affect children.

We have already noted above that Fowler’s understanding of ‘faith’ is very broad and can accommodate those of non-biblical religions or of no religion. The question then is whether such psychological theories are really adequate to analyse the **Christian faith** as described in Scripture. Faith development theories seem to assume that all people are automatically at some or other stage of faith, merely on the basis of being a normal, growing person. Baptist and many
other Christians, while accepting in principle that people experience salvation developmentally, would see biblical faith as only really beginning at the 'new birth' of John 3:1-8, 1 Peter 1:3 etc, i.e. there is nothing 'automatic' about it. Thus, R. Scott (1984:6) comments: 'Nicodemus was surely at one of Fowler's stages of faith development, probably stage four, individuative-reflexive. Jesus did not attempt to draw Nicodemus to another stage of faith development. He told him of the imperative of a spiritual birth in order to be in the Kingdom of God. Mahatma Ghandi, probably at Fowler's stage six 'universalizing', by his own testimony rejected Jesus. Jesus said "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6). By rejecting Jesus, Mahatma Ghandi rejected spiritual life'. On the other hand, it is interesting to notice that Scott (1984:53-60) later describes Fowler's 'stages' of faith development as a 'good model' for 'spiritual formation' and quotes him extensively and positively in seven successive pages of his dissertation. While the four issues noted in points 1,2a,2b and 2c above are of general interest to all Christians, further questions emerge which are of particular interest to Baptists.
2.3.2 Problems and Opportunities for Baptists in relation to faith development theories

2.3.2.1 The relation between nature and grace in a 'conversionist' theology:

Some Christians of various denominations other than Baptists, have serious reservations about the compatibility of some key Christian doctrines with certain psychological and psychiatric theories. (See for example J. Adams 1970:1-19 where, amongst other things, it is asserted 'Freud is an enemy, not a friend'). While many Christians see both theology and psychology as being 'legitimate' in their respective spheres or as 'friends' sharing complimentary roles, some go as far as to see a total discontinuity not only between the claims of psychology and of Scripture but also between the 'supernatural' aspects of Christianity and the 'natural aspects' of daily living. This often leads to an unnecessary division between the 'religious' and 'secular' aspects of life. This is a problem faced by all Christians, but in relation to the 'tension' between childhood developmental psychology as a social science and Christian theology as an application of biblical principles which are believed but which cannot be 'proved' to be true, Baptists have a great deal at stake.

It seems that this 'tension' is not so evident in 'liturgical' communities where a child is set aside by the rite of infant baptism, guaranteed (at least in theory) a
religious education by the parents and/or 'godparents', and
given catechetical instruction by the church which is then
followed by further confirming sacraments, because a gradual
growth of the latent seed of faith is expected as a child
matures, rather than a specific conversion or 'crisis' of
faith. On the other hand, it is precisely in 'conversionist'
or evangelistic circles where physical birth must be followed
by a theological awareness of the 'fall' and then a spiritual
rebirth or conversion, that the tension is most apparent
(Hendricks 1978:62-63). An adequate biblical theology of the
relation between nature and grace will include recognition of
the following aspects.

1) Christian conversion does not supply a new body, a new
personality, a new way of learning or a new pattern of
understanding reality; it is rather a reorientation of the
previous self, i.e. it is essentially the same person who is
converted. When Paul speaks of the believer as a 'new
creation' in 2 Corinthians 5:17, this refers not to a new
personality but rather to relationships, motivation and basic
outlook on life. Romans 12:1-2 indicates that the believer
must voluntarily and progressively be changed by a new way of
thinking, a new orientation. Similarly, Baptist scholar B.
Milne (1982:97) notes 'Some, including John Wesley, have held
that man is a dichotomy before regeneration but a trichotomy
afterwards, but it is doubtful whether the new birth imparts
an extra element to our persons.'
b) We have already noted that religious thinking is apparently not some special or separate mode of thought but rather a process of thinking identical with that exercised in other fields. This implies that while developmental psychology cannot determine the essential content of Christian theology which may be taught to children, Christian theology can learn from the descriptive insights of developmental psychology as to when children can think theologically. This may explain, for example, why the 'conversion' of young children may often be followed by a later commitment based on a fuller understanding. Sparkman (1983:36) describes the relationship as follows: 'While there is interplay between the two, theology primarily defines the meaning of the problem; psychology primarily answers the "when" of the problem.'

c) Grace does not repudiate nature, it redeems it. This means that religious experience is a fully human experience because it enables the person to be fulfilled in an absolute sense because it includes God's intention for the person's life. The conversion of a child or adult should be holistic and integrating; it must not be divorced from the various aspects of life but must include intellectual, emotional and volitional elements in line with the unity of the human personality.

d) Because children's capacity for religious understanding and experience grow out of the same processes whereby they
relate to everything else in life, there are analogies for
their encounter with God. The most immediate analogies are
experiences with parents, friends and teachers. Children who
have had an inadequate or distorted experience of human love
will therefore have great difficulty in conceptualising the
love of God. This obviously has major implications for
ministry to children and will be considered in 2.3.2.4

2.3.2.2 Difficulties of integrating developmental concepts
into a Baptist theology of the child

G.Temp Sparkman, Professor of Religious Education at
Midwestern Baptist Theological College in the United States
of America has attempted to incorporate the developmental
perspective into a Baptist view of the place of the child in
the church. In his book *The Salvation and Nurture of the
Child of God* (1983:32-35), this is seen in terms of four
realities: Sonship-daughtership, the infant and young child
years (birth to six-seven); belonging, the middle child years
(seven-eight to eleven-twelve); affirmation, the adolescent
years; and creative trusteeship, the adult years. Sparkman
has largely succeeded in his purpose. This has only been
possible, however, by taking an approach which appears to
contradict the 'popular' Baptist approach at several points.

a) We note later in 4.1 that many Baptists interpret such
texts as John 3:18,36; Romans 8:1-11 and Galatians 5:16-23 as
implying that there are basically only two categories of people in relation to the gospel - believers/unbelievers or those who are either 'in the spirit' or 'in the flesh'. This leads some to the conclusion that children who have not yet come to personal faith in Christ are spiritually 'lost'. However, since the issue of children is not at stake in these texts, it is an open question whether they can legitimately be applied to a 'theology of the child'. The difficulty of taking texts which seem to be directed primarily at adults and simply transferring them to young children becomes apparent when one considers Sparkman's view that in the early years the church's task is to convey to children that they are children of God ...the hope is that the children will emerge from the kindergarten age, both knowing and feeling that they are already sons and daughters of God'. This appears at first to contradict a 'straightforward' understanding of John 1:12 which teaches that we only become children of God by adoption through faith in Christ. Sparkman, however, immediately goes on to explain that 'later they will learn of their estrangement from God... Being a child of God is not a status of salvation, for all are children of God, but not all are partakers of God's salvation. For that reason the church attempts to bring all under the influence of the saving Word.' Sparkman is thus using the term 'children of God' in a sense other than that used in John 1:12,13 and Romans 8:14-17. It seems that
whatever may be the status of children before they are able to consciously exercise faith in Christ, developmentally they need in the early years to grasp the idea of the love of God the Father for them, and of being, in some sense at least, God's children, so that they may develop an attitude of trust towards God. A proper understanding of the nature of sin will normally only develop later. Sparkman suggests that all children are the children of God by creation, having been made in God's image. In spite of the Fall into sin, many Old Testament scholars and systematic theologians conclude that the 'image' was not completely lost. The child will in due course learn of Jesus Christ in whom the 'image' is clear and the Sonship true and will then make a responsible decision.

The present writer, in the light of passages such as John 1:12-13, 8:44; Romans 8:15-16; Ephesians 2:1-10, would prefer to speak of all people being by birth God's 'offspring' as in Acts 17:29, and only becoming God's children in the full sense by adoption and the new birth.

b) Sparkman's next stage, 'belonging' (ages 7-12) is a status conveyed by the congregation where the child's parents participate. The origin is in the parental relationship - not in the genes, but in the relationship. This is to some extent a response to the question 'do children of believers have any special relationship to the church?' which is considered in 4.1 mainly in terms of an exposition of 1
Corinthians 7:14 and the concept of the 'catechumenate.' The church's task in the 'belonging' stage is to bless children as Jesus did, to let them know that they are within the community of faith until they decide for themselves whether or not to embrace the church's faith. During this time they will learn something, within the context of their emotional, intellectual and social-moral progress, about their heritage of faith until the 'affirmation' stage of adolescence when it is hoped that a positive appraisal of their heritage and a personal declaration of faith will be made. All this will sound strange in some ears, because 'belonging' seems to imply 'church membership', and if these children are already 'sons and daughters of God', why do they still need to 'affirm their faith'? This further illustrates the difficulty of directly relating developmental psychology to the usual picture of the church which Baptists believe they find in the New Testament. Thus Sparkman (1983:34) explains what usually begins to happen to children in this stage: 'For all of the feeling about being a son or daughter of God, there still exists an obscuring of that relationship and it cannot be seen as clearly. For all of the feeling of belonging, there still exists a measure of alienation.'

It therefore seems necessary to use familiar terms in a way that would not be true of adults but which seems appropriate in the case of children who seem to constitute a special category not directly explained as such in Scripture.
Baptists are thus attempting to make use of some of the insights of developmental psychology which are regarded as being compatible with the Baptist view of a 'believer's church'. This approach recognises that many of the modern questions relating to children are not directly addressed in Scripture but have to be considered in the light of broader theological principles.

c) The acceptance of faith development thinking will mean that in practice the concepts of nurture and evangelism will sometimes overlap. In the light of Ephesians 6:4, children of believing parents who grow up in the church are being nurtured and hearing the gospel at the same time. Children who grow up outside the church are largely beyond the nurturing environment of the church and are therefore primarily within the evangelistic field of the church. A comparison of 2 Timothy 1:5 and 3:15 (as discussed in 1.1.3.3 d) suggests however, that even this 'nurture' is intended to lead to salvation through faith in Christ.

2.3.2.3 The appropriate age for believers' baptism and church membership:
The Baptist emphasis on discipleship, conscious personal faith and regenerate church membership has tended over the years to result in a largely adult and teenage membership. Cognitive faith development theory has tended to confirm
that baptism and church membership at too young an age denies
the real value of believers' baptism as historically
understood by Baptists. J.D. Ban (1984:14-15) concludes, on
the basis of a detailed study of the theories of Piaget,
Fowler, Kohlberg and Erikson, that baptism before the age of
six to eight is tantamount to infant baptism. Ban personally
suggests age twelve as a minimum, while Ratliff
(1963:250-252) proposes 'adolescence' as the appropriate
stage for baptism. Some even suggest that to understand the
fuller implication of what it is to be a baptised believer
requires that Fowler's 'individuative-reflective' stage of
faith (which normally occurs from age 18 to 19) be reached.
The validity of such a conclusion is obviously dependent on
one's understanding of the significance of baptism. Linda
Isham, Director of the American Baptist Department of
Ministry with Children, understands baptism as follows.
a) that baptism signifies more than a child-like belief in
God and Jesus;
b) that baptism signifies a decision made by a person capable
of independent judgement and action;
c) that baptism signifies a decision that is understood as a
life-long commitment; and

d) that baptism signifies a decision to commit one's self,
one's time, one's material resources and one's personal
abilities and gifts to the work of God's kingdom. (Isham
quoted in Ban 1984:15)
Some will feel that Isham's view of the significance of baptism goes beyond New Testament evidence of simply indicating faith in Christ in response to the gospel. Baptists have, however, always linked baptism to an initial commitment to discipleship as suggested in Matthew 28:19. In addition, while recognising that Christian education is a lifelong task which follows baptism, Acts 2:41-42 indicates that the commitment of those baptised was serious enough for them to 'persevere in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers'. Baptists, then, do not expect maturity in disciples before baptism but only a serious commitment to discipleship which certainly seemed to be present in the case of these disciples. (The Christians in Romans 6:1-4 appear to have not yet understood the basic implication of their baptism, even long afterwards).

On biblical, theological and developmental grounds, L.C.Ratliff (1963:250-252) distinguishes between New Testament discipleship and the 'religion of childhood', concluding that the young child cannot really be converted in this sense because of inability to become a disciple. The baptism and church membership of children is discussed in 4.4; at this point we need to notice that many contemporary Baptists who oppose the baptism and church membership of preadolescent children feel that the conclusions of modern developmental psychology provides further 'scientific' or
non-theological evidence for the view that such children cannot really be 'disciples' in the full New Testament sense.

If this view is correct, what then are we to make of the religious experiences of young children? Ratliff (1963:235-252) concludes that until the child reaches early adolescence, something other than adult categories must be used to describe the religion of the child. Baptists may legitimately cultivate the 'religion of childhood' provided that are aware of some of its distinctive characteristics:

1. The 'innocence' of children which produces a tendency to be a 'natural believer' must not be confused with Christian commitment.

2. The self-centredness of young children is part of the process of development. This characteristic must not be identified with sinfulness.

3. The religion of childhood is an inherited religion, a reflection of the beliefs of parents and superiors.

4. The child can have meaningful religious experiences; this does not mean, however, that the child will naturally and inevitably become a Christian.

5. An acceptance of the religion of childhood relieves one of the pressure for early and spurious evangelism.

6. The religion of childhood forms the basis of later religious experience that should result in Christian commitment.

Ratliff's most significant conclusion, however, is the
assertion that 'baptism granted the preadolescent is not believer's baptism... When the churches baptize the preadolescent, the ordinance assumes a covenant meaning... Baptism in this context is not a declaration of discipleship, but rather an awareness that God has began a work in the life of the child...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... Southern Baptists must either cease baptizing preadolescents or cease claiming to practice believer's baptism.'

The problem however, is that some other Baptists are equally convinced that young preadolescent children in fact can become genuine New Testament disciples; some of those taking this view would logically go on to be in favour of the baptism and church membership of such young children. Their motivation may be summarised as follows.

1. Discipleship is not linked only to the fully developed theological understanding of children themselves; parents and church also have a vital role in discipleship training of children. L. Jenkins (1991:12) answers the question 'Can children be disciples?' with a strong 'yes', explaining the vital role of both parents and church in the discipling and pastoral care of children. 'Many major decisions of life are made long before they can be fully reasoned through. Even adults decide to follow Jesus long before they can understand
the theology... Jesus did not doubt that children could be his followers.'

Jenkins's arguments therefore seem to recognize the continued operation of the principle of corporate solidarity on the part of parents and church in relation to children rather than an overemphasis on individual responsibility in the modern western sense.

2. Other specialists in children's development who take a 'religious potential' rather than a 'cognitive' approach to children (see 2.3.2) conclude that children are capable of genuine religious experiences and growth in Biblical understanding at a much earlier age.

3. One may point to numerous examples of children who made early decisions and experienced baptism at a young age, who have not dropped out but have continued to live a consistent Christian life into adolescence, adulthood and maturity.

4. C.H. Spurgeon's assertion (already noted in 1.4.2) that 'a child of five, if properly instructed, can as readily believe and be regenerated as anyone'. Just as the views of respected leaders such as Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Wesley continued in later centuries to exert significant influence over the theological views of people in their respective churches, so Spurgeon's views continue to exert considerable influence over modern Baptists.

How is the apparent contradiction on the issue to be
resolved? The present writer would suggest the following approach.

1. As a general policy, the baptism and church membership of believing children who profess faith should normally not take place before adolescence. While the minimum New Testament requirement for baptism explicitly mentioned in the New Testament is a personal response to the gospel in repentance and faith, the need for a proper relation between nature and grace in a conversionist theology indicates that there ought to be some correlation between 'conversion' as a work of the Holy Spirit and faith development theory as a social science observing the normal development of growing children and adults. Since these theories generally indicate that the conceptual thinking needed for a responsible, lifelong commitment does not normally arrive before adolescence, this seems to confirm that if Baptists are to maintain their historical practice of a 'believer's church', baptism before this stage would normally be inappropriate. (Spurgeon lived before the days of developmental psychology; whether he would have revised his views on children in the light of this later research is, of course, impossible to determine. It is possible that he may sometimes have mistakenly interpreted the 'religion of childhood' for New Testament discipleship.)

2. The recognition of a proper relationship between nature and grace is one thing; to suggest that grace is absolutely bound to nature would obviously be biblically and
theologically unacceptable. This means that there may
sometimes be unusual cases where the baptism and church
membership of preadolescents may be appropriate. This may be
because some children reveal an intelligence and grasp of the
issues which is well beyond the 'average' for their age,
either because of a very stimulating home background and
Christian nurture, or because of rapid spiritual growth in
the power of the Holy Spirit in line with the principles
therefore be taken not to ignore the sovereign work of the
Holy Spirit at a stage of a child's life which may 'jump' the
usual pattern expected by developmental psychologists.
Jonathan Edwards (1979:361-363) describes in some detail the
conversion of a young girl, Phebe Bartlet, at the age of
four, as well as very convincing evidence of growth into her
fifth year and beyond; at age 58 she still 'maintained the
character of a true convert'. The late Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones
(Murray 1982:161-162) warns against linking conversion to
puberty and its concomitant changes. 'There is nothing which
is quite so pernicious and detrimental to the true interests
of Christianity as this association of "conversion" with a
certain age period...Such statements and such a belief show a
lack of faith and set a limit upon the power of God.'
(In this context, Lloyd-Jones is not arguing in favour of
conversion of children at a young age, but that Christian
work and preaching should not concentrate only on one
particular age group but be directed to those of all ages.)

3. Some theological questions are complicated in that they do not always involve a simple obedience to only one basic Biblical principle; sometimes a choice may have to be made between two or more possible options in the light of other equally biblical principles which are regarded as of even greater importance. König (1986:14-17,167) has pointed out that whereas in Acts the early church baptized quickly, many baptisms in Baptist churches today take place months or even years after the believer first exercised faith in Christ. The result is that, in the case of 'delayed' or 'retarded' baptisms, the New Testament meaning of baptism is seriously weakened because it does not coincide with faith. If a child first comes to faith in Christ at age six but is only considered for baptism at age twelve or later because this is considered the age of responsible discipleship, does this then not result in a weakened significance of baptism, which is also unbiblical or less than biblical?

It seems to the present writer that a decision in such cases must be determined by a 'biblical' rather than a 'biblicistic' approach. To baptize a child of six on profession of faith may be acceptable in terms of the 'letter' of Scripture, but appears, in the light of the Baptist perspective on the nature of the church, to contradict the equally 'biblical' emphasis on discipleship.
and regenerate church membership. The decision will then be determined by what is believed to be the more important Biblical principle at stake. In addition, it seems that, in the various nominally Christian, democratic, open, pluralistic societies of today, the likelihood of false professions of faith (e.g., Simon the magician in Acts 8:9-24) are far more likely than in New Testament times when the cost of discipleship (Lk 9:25-35) for both Jews and Gentiles, who often faced rejection by family, friends and society and even persecution by the state, was clear to all. This means that, because of the different social context in which the New Testament principles are being applied, some principles will have greater relevance than others. Baptist (and possibly also paedobaptist) pastoral experience indicates that the pastoral dangers of baptismal haste are far greater than the risks of baptismal caution, especially with children. Thus Chafin (1963:170-171) explains 'whatever a person may think about delayed church membership there seems to be more reason for it for the young child than for other age groups... If the only motive for delaying a child is to use the time to prepare the child better for baptism, there seems to be little danger of losing the child. If the only motive for baptising the child on the day in which he presents himself is that we are afraid we will lose him by the delay, it is entirely possible that our main motive is getting people baptised rather than seeing their lives changed.'
What Baptists are claiming is that the desire to preserve the
New Testament significance of baptism by baptizing
immediately upon profession of faith must not be so
mechanically applied that reasonable pastoral discernment to
preserve the link between baptism and discipleship as
indicated in Matthew 28:19-20, and implied in Acts 2:41-42 is
not exercised. Are Baptists 'adding' something to faith as
the basic requirement for baptism? This misunderstanding has
been intensified in recent years because 'discipleship' has
come to be a new theological catchword, which seems to imply a
'higher' condition than faith as if we can distinguish
between 'believers' or 'ordinary Christians' and 'disciples'.
This is most definitely not what Baptists believe; it is
rather a case of whether all those making some outward
response to the gospel must necessarily or automatically be
regarded as true believers merely because they indicate some
interest in baptism. While it is true that the meaning of
baptism is at stake when believers are not baptised quickly,
it is also true that it is altogether meaningless and even
harmful when baptism is administered where true incorporation
into Christ has not yet taken place. The issue is not
whether Christian instruction is given to unbaptised or
baptised persons, but whether baptism may be given without a
credible profession of faith which does not disappear only
days or weeks later. It may, of course, be argued that
neither Paul nor any other New Testament writer suggests any
further requirement than faith in Christ for valid baptism. It is at this point that we move from the field of Biblical doctrine to that of practical theology because individual cases cannot be settled in the abstract but only in the light of pastoral contact and experience. If the pastor is not convinced that the child or adult is truly regenerate or if there is a large measure of uncertainty in this regard, a choice may have to be made between 'delayed baptism' or 'premature' (and possibly false or misleading) baptism in particular cases. The choice involved thus indicates the conviction that both the child and the church ultimately have more to lose when baptism is administered without some evidence of personal faith and some understanding of the implications of discipleship, even if this is a child's understanding which, as in the case of adults, will deepen over the years (for a discussion of the appropriate age for believers' baptism and church membership from the perspective of child evangelism, see 2.4.4.2).

2.3.2.4 Opportunities for ministry to children

If Baptists are to have a proper theology of the relation between nature and grace, then childhood must not be seen in isolation from later life but rather as the time to establish a foundation of meaning upon which commitment can be built. Faith development theories have established the link between 'religious' thinking and 'non-religious' thinking. This
implies that ministry to children should not be seen merely in terms of activities to keep children occupied until they are ready for the 'real business' of the church; rather, children must receive pastoral care as do adults. Faith development research indicates that this ministry should focus on at least two areas:

a) Indirect ministry through families

Hendricks (1978:68) notes 'children who have never known human love have no model for conceptualizing divine love'. This means that ministry to children must first and foremost take place indirectly through the family. Coffer (1960:172-186) suggests that one of the greatest values in the Baptist approach to the sacraments is that they do not limit God's presence to certain activities in which the grace of God is more present than usual. The Christian family needs to be taught a 'sacramental' view of the nature of home life experiences because the family is the child's first experience with the church. For at least the first five years of parenthood, the educational emphasis of the church should be centred on family life. Husbands and wives should attend the same home Bible study group or adult Sunday School or Family Bible Hour class and not be separated into men's and women's groups as is currently the way classes are structured in many Southern Baptist congregations in the United States and also in some Baptist congregations in Southern Africa. Pastors can also protect children of
parents who cannot say 'no' to the many demands of an active church programme, by seeing that they are not so overloaded with church responsibilities and meetings to attend that they have no time left for the home. The church must not itself become the major disruptive influence in family living!

South African Baptist pastor T.H. Eayrs' (1989:58,59,81-83,104-109) research The Spiritual Effects of Divorce on Children indicated that in Scripture God reveals himself in both a Fatherhood and Motherhood dimension of his being. The result is that the growing child's conceptualization of God is adversely affected by the parent's divorce. It was also found that quite apart from actual divorces, many 'bad marriages' are having a similar effect (in some cases worse) upon the children involved. Ministry is needed, not only to divorced couples themselves, but also to the children involved, as well as ministry to children in 'bad marriages'. The importance of adequate parenting for the later 'faith development' of the child is already apparent from infancy. J.F. Love (1991:7-9) explains that an infant needs a 'culture of mothering', since a 'trust account' is built out of experiencing care, having needs graciously met, being tenderly held and touched, smiled at and talked to. Biblical expressions such as 'Thy face, Lord, do I seek' (Ps 27:8) depend upon such universal infantile experiences. From these early interactions infants form images which become the basis
for their later image of God. These early, inward images are somehow a 'starter' set of emotions which can help develop a more positive image of some of the attributes of God.

b) Direct ministry to children

There are particularly sensitive periods in a child's psychospiritual development which must be catered for. Erik Erikson sees human development as a rocky road of crises or conflicts. Growth and healthy development is dependent on the positive resolution of conflicts. C.E.Cooley (1991:33-34) notes that the child most often at risk is the child who has a natural temperament that is slow to adapt to change. Just as adults have to learn to cope with stress, so do many young children need to be taught how to deal with the stresses of divorced parents, peer pressure, unrealistic expectations, hectic schedules and parents who are often too busy to provide for their needs (See Cooley 1991:33 for details of programmes and materials to help adults teach children how to cope with stress.)

Attention must also be given to the pastor's relationship with children in the congregation, as well as the relationship of all older Christians with children. This will include prayer, reading Scripture and giving spiritual direction. M.Brister (1991:11) observes the importance of this relationship - 'In a fragmented, unblessed society the
only approval some persons receive is from their pastor'.

A right approach to children's ministry will also prevent churches from using children as 'pawns' to attract adults to church. R.J. Edge (1991:25-30) notes that the ministry of music is significant in the life of a child because music is a basic part of human development. 'Each church must decide if its music education programme for children will be performance-orientated or child-orientated. A performance-orientated programme fails to recognize the developmental needs of children. This kind of programme unwittingly tends to teach children that their importance in the church is merely to entertain adults in the congregation because rote preparation of grand-scale performances is the basis of these programmes. True discipleship of individual children is lost in this approach.' A child-centred approach to church music, on the other hand, provides a solid foundation for making a profession of faith in Christ through the relationships developed with other believing children in the choir, with adult leaders who witness and live a Christian example, and through music sung and Scriptures learned in choir.

The finding of 'religious potential' theorists confirm the importance of ministry to children from an early age. We have already noted in 1.1.3.2 Spurgeon's view that children are less hardened in unbelief than adults. Roux (1989:33)
has noted that in contrast to adolescent children, children aged three to six are not as significantly influenced or discouraged by negative aspects of their environment; they are not apathetic towards the biblical material and towards religious education but are positive towards it. This finding seems to confirm both Spurgeon's view as noted above as well as to a lesser extent the early Anabaptist view that sin does not really begin to be active until the child reaches the point of the choice between good and evil (see 1.3.1). This suggests that in some ways children are like wet cement which is slowly setting - the time for laying that solid foundation for a later commitment is gradually running out, and so the opportunities for parents, pastors and congregation to minister to children, both indirectly through the family and directly to children themselves, should not be neglected.
2.4 THE EVANGELISM OF CHILDREN

2.4.1 The historical development of child evangelism

We have already noted in 1.4.3 that it was not until the
nineteenth century that evangelistic efforts amongst Baptists
were specifically directed towards children; amongst
Southern Baptists it was not until the twentieth century that
significant numbers of preadolescent children began to be
baptised and received into church membership. This is not
to deny that faithful Christian parents attempted to lead
their own children to salvation; it is rather a reflection
of the sociological mood of the time which tended to regard
conversion and church membership as essentially an adult
affair. P.G. Downs (1982:6-8) notes two possible major
reasons for the neglect of child evangelism in the past.

1. The position of some English eighteenth-century
dissenters and the later revivalists who followed in their
traditions. Growing out of an extreme Calvinism with a
strong emphasis on the total depravity of the human race,
children were taught that they could not pray or do anything
acceptable to God. The basic approach was to convince
children of their utter sinfulness; parents could only pray
that when their children reached "the age of discretion",
they would then respond in faith to Christ. However, since
salvation was always the result of divine election, it would
be presumptuous for Christian parents to assume that their
child would be saved. While this approach took seriously
the sinful nature of humankind and the radical nature of saving faith, it missed the fact that children can also be part of the kingdom (Mt 19:14) and that, to some extent at least, a child is capable of faith (Eph 6:4).

2. A second perspective was clearly a reaction to the abuses of these revivalists. In 1846, Congregational scholar Horace Bushnell wrote *Discourses on Christian Nurture* (later entitled simply *Christian Nurture*). The key concept in Bushnell's argument is that Christian nurture should, in effect, prevent the necessity of radical conversion. This did not imply the automatic salvation of children of believers, but that the regeneration of children nurtured into salvation is as much a work of the Holy Spirit as is the radical conversion of an adult. However, it does seem that to Bushnell, the process of Christian nurture was so natural that there is almost no sense of the divine in it, as if regeneration could be taught like good manners or proper culture.

A number of factors influenced the modern trend towards specialized children's evangelism in the twentieth century. 1. The emergence of the Sunday School movement over 200 years ago, as founded by Robert Raikes and popularized by leaders such as John Wesley. Although in the past there has sometimes been a certain tension and division between the Sunday School (which tended to be very much a 'lay' movement
implying a 'hands-off' attitude on the part of professional clerics) and the church, most Sunday Schools in Baptist churches today are regarded as an evangelistic arm or 'nursery' of the church.

2. C.H. Spurgeon's famous assertion that 'A child of five, if properly instructed, can as readily believe and be regenerated as anyone' (Rohrer 1970:67) also stimulated the move towards specialized child evangelism.

3. The establishment of the interdenominational Children's Special Service Mission (later Scripture Union) in 1867 set the standard for the entire spectrum of evangelical church life. Children were people in whom the Holy Spirit could work, and a true work of God ought to lead to a lasting change in the child's life. A similar movement known as Child Evangelism Fellowship began in North America in 1937 and is now an international movement operating in many countries including Southern Africa.

2.4.2 Children's evangelism - the ongoing debate.

The British world of evangelical children's work remained relatively stable until the 1950's. John Prince (1979:2-3) explains that in practice children were approached as people quite different in character from adults. Their sensitivity and inability to withstand emotional pressure was recognized. Yet theologically they were assumed to share the adult lot totally. Hudson Pope, the recognized leader of children's workers, who handled children with the greatest sensitivity,
saw all children as having sinful hearts until they accepted Christ. A child was either (a) born again, truly converted, a child of God by faith in Christ, a child of light or (b) an unconverted child of Adam, wrong in heart and, according to age and opportunity, wrong also in practice.

Thus a theological black-and-whiteness lay a little uneasily alongside the carefully thought out methods. Children were challenged as persons with some degree of responsibility, but also, in the view of Scripture, subject to their parents' authority. The inherent incompatibility between the theological and practical approaches remained unrecognized.

From the 1950's this stable picture was gradually disrupted by at least three factors.

1. The impact of several organizations with roots in North American fundamentalism. Although with a similar theological foundation as in the views of Hudson Pope quoted above, these truths were usually worked out differently in practice. In particular, a definite outward decision became essential; one organization even required a call for decision to be made at every meeting held in its name among children. Many in the older, more cautious circles rejected the decisionistic approach.

2. Although a major rethinking of the theological, psychological and practical bases of children's evangelism had been quietly developing for some years previously, John Pridmore blew the lid off the issues with his two-part
article Of Such is the Kingdom in the September and October 1973 editions of the popular British Christian magazine 'Crusade'. His articles were essentially a summary of some of the key points of his 1967 Masters degree thesis The New Testament Theology of Childhood (see 1.1.3.2). Pridmore's main assertions included the following:

(a) Mark 10:13-16 indicates not that children should come to Christ to be in the kingdom but that they should come to Christ because the kingdom is already given to them (see discussion in 1.1.3.1 b). Children may, however, at some later stage, exclude themselves from the sphere of salvation.

(b) Luke 2:40,52 concerning the childhood of Jesus suggests that for each succeeding stage of a child’s growing life, there is the possibility of a fullness of spiritual life appropriate to that stage as there is of physical life. This means that infants and young children may have a true relationship with God now; children’s work is therefore not restricted to merely 'sowing the seed' for a possible future conversion. Rather than one decisive step to Christ, the pattern of a child’s response will be lots of little steps of trust and obedience. (This passage is also discussed in 1.1.3.1). The obvious difficulty of applying these texts to the theology of the child is the uniqueness of Jesus who was without sin - he certainly had no need to be 'saved'. The balanced childhood development of Jesus cannot in itself prove that children do not need 'one decisive step' to Christ.

(c) Our approach to children now should not be the
evangelism of those outside the Kingdom but the nurture of those within it. (See 1.1.3.3d where this view was understood as a contradiction of the teaching of 2 Timothy 3:15 and Titus 1:6)

The 'letters to the editor' pages of Crusade magazine soon published many letters of comment and criticism, in particular a detailed reaction from Sam Doherty of Child Evangelism Fellowship.

Two other major criticisms of Pridmore's views in addition to those noted above, include reference to the sinfulness and spiritual death of the entire human race and the difficulty with the view that a person can belong to Christ at one point and then at a later time no longer belong to Christ i.e. the 'security' of the believer is endangered. Pridmore's reply (Crusade, sa) included the following.

(i) Textual criticism has shown that Matthew 18:11 'The Son of Man came to seek the lost' is in none of the early manuscripts of this passage. We therefore cannot conclude that when Jesus is specifically talking about children he says they are lost (The text is found in Luke 19:10, but not in the context of children). Doherty (1986:71) claims, however, 'The fact that this verse is not found in some Biblical manuscripts does not minimize the teaching, because the terms, "gone astray" and "perish" are repeated in the next three verses.' Commenting on Matthew 18:14 that it is not the will of God that one of these little ones should
perish, Doherty adds 'The fact that God does not want it to happen means that it could happen'.

(ii) To what extent can what is said about human sinfulness and spiritual death in Romans and Ephesians be applied to children? Even those who believe that infants and children are lost and spiritually dead usually also believe that a child who dies before the age of understanding and accountability goes to heaven. But to go to heaven if they die is not the destiny of those whom Paul writes about in the opening chapters of Romans. If little children who die still go to heaven, they cannot still be lost and spiritually dead. Pridmore therefore concludes that Paul, like all New Testament writers, writes about adults unless he makes it clear he is referring to children.

3. The impact of 'faith development' theories and developmental psychology: We have already noted in 2.3 that there has been a reaction against simply regarding the growing child as a 'little adult'. Children's workers need to adapt their approach according to the particular cognitive and religious developmental stage of particular children. This has sometimes led to the conclusion that children do not normally develop the conceptual thinking necessary to understand the key elements of the Christian gospel until adolescence; to 'evangelize' younger children would therefore be counter-productive (In 2.3.2.3 for example, Ratliff distinguishes between the 'religion of childhood' and New Testament discipleship, asserting that preadolescent
children are not really ready or able to become disciples of 
Jesus). Although the 'religious potential' school of faith 
development recognizes the genuineness of preadolescent 
religious experiences, the emphasis on nurture rather than 
regeneration sometimes reduces evangelism and conversion only 
to a continuous process of small steps rather than to one 
decisive commitment, even of the 'quiet' kind.

4. Family Solidarity:
There has been a swing away from the unhealthy individualism 
of the past towards a recovery of the biblical emphasis on 
the family. The difficulty for children's evangelism 
arises, however, when we ask whether the child has any 
personal spiritual standing or is seen only in relation to 
the family? Some would go as far as to assert that 
children's religious obligations are contained and fulfilled 
in the relationship to their parents. At what point does 
such dependence change into independence and responsibility? 
Although some of these concepts may apply in the Christian 
family, how does the principle of family solidarity apply to 
the non-Christian family? What about the division that the 
presentation of the gospel sometimes brings (Mt 10: 34-39)? 
Is it right for an evangelist to proclaim a message that may 
divide an eighteen year old from his/her family? If it is, 
how much further down the age scale is it legitimate? 
Different answers are given in different contexts and these 
uncertainties have sometimes undermined the evangelistic 
vision of some children's workers.

241
The uncertainties produced by these four developments have produced various reactions. Some have merely ignored the new developments and carried on 'business as usual'; others have tried to learn from the new insights while continuing and adapting their evangelistic work amongst children; some have even 'accepted as proven the probing statements of the debaters and are tending to suspend their work till the issues are resolved' (Prince 1979:5). There has therefore, in some circles of children's evangelism, been a failure of nerve or a crisis of confidence.

2.4.3 Basic theologies in relation to children's evangelism

It would appear that the possible views concerning the spiritual standing of children fall into three basic groups:

1. All children begin life outside God’s Kingdom until they opt in: This view is sometimes linked to the doctrine of original sin as suggested in Romans 3:22-23; 5:12-19, 1 Corinthians 15:22, Ephesians 2:1-5 and in Psalm 51:5, 58:3. The reasoning would then be that if, as in Ephesians 2:1-3 'we were by nature children of wrath' until we are 'made alive' in Christ, we must be outside of Christ and spiritually dead before this new birth. In traditional Roman Catholic theology this is linked to the view of 'baptismal regeneration' so that baptism is believed to remove the stain of original sin (see 2.2 regarding the position of infants dying without baptism). In some other paedobaptist churches,
original sin is emphasized but children are not considered 'outside' the kingdom or church whether before or after baptism.

In addition, this view is also based on other Biblical teaching including the necessity of the 'new birth' by the Holy Spirit in order to see or enter the kingdom (Jn 3:3-5), the command to all humankind (including children in this view) to repent and believe (Ac 2:38, 3:19, 16:31, 17:30; Eph 2:8, Jn 1:12-13, Rom 5:1); verses such as John 3:18,36 which indicate that there are only two groups of people, the view that Romans 8:30 indicates that only a 'justified' person can be 'glorified', and a particular understanding of Matthew 18:11-14 applied to children. Some adherents of this view also point to the experience of children's workers who find little evidence of the 'innocence' of children but instead find that sin is real to boys and girls of tender years (Doherty 1986:75-77). Examples of those holding to this view include S. Doherty (1986:69-78) of Child Evangelism Fellowship, Reformed Baptist D. Kingdon (1975:92-94) author of Children of Abraham, Hudson Pope and Anthony Capon of Scripture Union (Doherty 1986:76-77).

2. Children of the Covenant are covered by their parent's faith: The second view differs from the first in that the children of believing and unbelieving parents are understood to be in a different position. The strong biblical emphasis on the solidarity of the family is linked to the generally
accepted interpretation that as the people of God's new covenant, Christians inherit the promises of the old. The New Covenant in Christ continues the Old Testament emphasis (noted in 1.1.2.1) that to be part of the people of God is a corporate matter covering whole families. This view underlies the practices of some mainline denominations of a non-Baptist persuasion. The admission of infants into the body of believing people by baptism expresses the conviction that they are part of the people of God. Some adherents of this view go further and believe in infant regeneration through baptism.

3. All children are in God's kingdom until they opt out:
Both Pridmore (1977:136) and Inchley (1985:110) appear to adopt this view. Pridmore takes the statement of Jesus in Luke 18:16 'for to such belongs the kingdom' to mean 'their's is the kingdom' which was actually said by Jesus in respect of the poor in Luke 6:20. Pridmore devotes a significant part of his thesis to arguing that the two expressions are equivalent (see also 1.1.3.2 b). Prince (1979:24), however, asserts that 'the great majority of commentators disagree with Pridmore'. Many also base this view on the teaching of Romans 4:15, 5:13 that where there is no law, there is no transgression and so the gifts of salvation and eternal life may justly be extended to all irresponsible persons (infants, the mentally retarded, etc). Children are believed to be included in the great atoning sacrifice of Christ until they
deliberately reject him. We have already noted in 1.3.2.1 that some of the seventeenth century 'General Baptists' adopted some form of this view. The 1990 questionnaire distributed among Southern African Baptists, however, indicated that only 18% of respondents agreed that 'all children belong to God and are in the Kingdom until they definitely reject Christ' while a further 20% were uncertain (see 3.3.1.1).

How do the various views adopted influence the approach taken to child evangelism? While one cannot assume that adherents of particular viewpoints will necessarily adopt a particular approach, it seems fair to make the following observations.

1. The first view is obviously a powerful stimulus to seek the salvation of as many children as possible, especially one's own children. Some will emphasize the need for children to make an outward 'decision', while Reformed Baptists believing in election will also earnestly look for evidence of regeneration. One possible criticism is that the anxiety of parents to see their children make an outward profession of faith may lead to undue pressure for a response, i.e. psychological manipulation that is less than the true working of the Holy Spirit. This view may also assume that children are regarded by God in the same light as adults rather than asking how God is seen to regard children in Scripture. There is also the danger that it may substitute
justification by a decision of faith for justification by faith is the 'radical' conversion model may be emphasised to the detriment of the 'nurture' model of conversion so that the child who may be unable to remember a specific date or experience of 'accepting Christ' in the past may be regarded as 'unsaved' even though that child may know Christ personally now. We have noted in 3.3.1.1 that 79% of respondents amongst Southern African Baptists supported this first view while 9% disagreed and 12% were uncertain.

E.M.B. Green (1970:220) an evangelical Anglican, when referring to New Testament passages which indicate the presence of children in some of the churches, denies that there is any suggestion that direct evangelizing is necessary or fitting in a Christian house. Rather, the children of believers are already treated as being in the Christian fellowship unless they contract out. In total contrast, the late J.I. Overholtzer, founder of the Child Evangelism Fellowship, concludes that since Ephesians is addressed to the 'saints which are at Ephesus' and children of believing parents are also directly addressed, these children had been born again for 'saints' surely are. 'This not only proved that children could be and are born again, but that evidently child evangelism was the common practice in the families of the believers at Ephesus! I searched the other Epistles and found the same thing in Colossians 1:2 and 3:20'. The late Dr H.A. Ironside, then pastor of Moody Memorial Church in
Chicago USA, also agreed that this interpretation was correct (Rohrer 1970:89). Once again, it is interesting to note how various people can arrive at totally different interpretations of the same Scripture passages, no doubt influenced by their presuppositions.

One of the major difficulties with this view is that even those who adopt it also believe that those dying in infancy and early childhood will be saved and go to heaven, which implies an inconsistency if these children were in fact 'lost' (i.e. if they still go to heaven and are 'saved', they could not have been 'lost' in the first place). There appear to be only three possible 'solutions' to this dilemma:

a) Death in infancy is a sign of election to salvation; non-elect infants are in fact 'lost', but they will always survive until the 'age of accountability' or until adulthood.

b) As asserted in the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith (see 1.3.2.2), 'infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit'; this implies that, in their natural state before regeneration, they were lost.

c) Children dying in infancy constitute a special case; in their natural condition, they are lost, but the general atonement of Christ is applied to them at death so that they are 'saved' through the merits of Christ with or without 'regeneration'.

We have already seen in 2.2.3.5 that the above 'solutions' are open to the charge of inconsistency in that, whereas
Baptists insist on conscious personal faith and the new birth as a condition for baptism, they allow salvation for those dying in infancy without conscious faith (and sometimes even without regeneration).

There does not seem to be a satisfactory solution to all aspects of these problems arising from this first basic theology in relation to children's evangelism. The most practical approach seems to be to recognize the following.

i) Scripture does not directly address the question of the spiritual standing of children in terms of the above problems

ii) It is doubtful whether Scriptural statements addressed primarily to adults can simply be transferred and applied to children. It may therefore be best to regard children as being to some extent in a special category. We should therefore not expect to find answers to all the problems.

2 Very few Baptists would support this second view. The questionnaire results in 3.3.1.1 indicated that only 16% of respondents agreed that 'The presence of a Christian parent establishes right standing with God' while 75% disagreed and 9% were uncertain. (Admittedly, many paedobaptists would respond similarly in that they do not believe that the mere presence of Christian parents in itself establishes a right relationship with God for their children; some paedobaptists would, however, see 'covenant children' as enjoying a more privileged position than the children of unbelievers, while
some would see infant baptism as having achieved something for the religious standing of their children). It is also most unlikely that many amongst this minority group of Baptists would also go on to understand this 'family solidarity' to mean that a child of believing parents only needs specifically to reject the Christian faith to be excluded from the blessings of the covenant (which is normally accepted in this second view); almost all Baptists would insist that something stronger is required positively to attain faith, i.e. some conscious affirmation of personal faith and commitment is required even within a 'nurture' pattern of conversion. For Baptists, public profession of faith would normally take place at baptism.

3 It would appear on the surface that this view may sometimes result in a lack of clear spiritual experience and assurance in children and adults. John Inchley (1985:110-112) who supports this view, maintains on the one hand that 'this also means ... that the many children who do not refuse but receive when the proper time comes for them to do so will have no experience of conversion in the biblical sense of the word. Many adults will immediately recognise themselves as having been in that category'. On the other hand, this need not imply that supporters of this view are indifferent towards the evangelism of children. Inchley (1985:112-116) goes on to stress 'The need for personal response, without being overdone, should form a constant part of the teaching
given to the boys and girls in our care.... Everyone who is capable of understanding, however, will need to be shown that a rejection of the Saviour when he reveals himself to an individual is in danger of the judgement and wrath of God (see John 3:36 and 16:8,9) ... merely believing about Jesus is insufficient for personal salvation'. It seems that ultimately both views still recognize the need for personal faith and commitment for salvation, but differ concerning the point at which an unbelieving child may be considered 'lost'. Many Baptists appear to adopt a mixture of the first and third views in that they hold only part of the Augustinian doctrine of original sin together with the idea of the 'innocence' of infants and children until the age of accountability. They thus conclude that a child is 'safe' but not 'saved' until the age of accountability. In response to the statement 'Infants and children are "innocent" rather than sinless; all children inherit a tendency to sin', 73% agreed while 17% disagreed and 10% were uncertain (see 3.3.1.1).

The view that it is possible for a person to start life inside the kingdom of God and then at some later stage be excluded from it also creates difficulty for those who hold to the doctrine of the 'final perseverance of the saints' (sometimes also called the 'security of the believer' - the view that once truly regenerate, the believer is never lost again), and the doctrine of assurance of salvation (see
Berkouwer 1979; Kendall 1984; Lloyd-Jones 1975, etc). For many Christians, including some Baptists, this is not a problem because they accept the possibility of even a true believer's 'falling from grace' in a final and ultimate sense. Others will find great difficulty in the idea of starting life as a regenerate child and later growing into an unregenerate adult (which is what the third view seems to imply, unless a child can be within the kingdom of God without regeneration, which seems to contradict John 3:3-5).

Again, one has to ask whether the problems of this view emerge from using various Biblical passages in a way that is outside the reasonable range of meaning and application of the particular texts ie it may be that the issue of the spiritual standing of children is not at stake in texts such as John 3:3-5; 5:24; 6:37; 10:27-28; Romans 8:29-39, which deal with regeneration and the final perseverance of believers. There are clearly problems with all the views. As already noted, very few Baptists support the second view, primarily because of the insistence on conscious personal faith as a prerequisite for baptism and the desire to maintain a believers' church, ie a congregation of committed disciples. Most Baptists appear to support the first view, although, as noted above, this leads to further problems which appear impossible to resolve satisfactorily. How is it possible to reconcile the possibility that children appear to be in some ways in a special category and yet to still have
an adequate theology of evangelism towards children, since they are included in the 'whole creation' of the gospel imperative in Mark 16:15 and Matthew 28:18-20? Baptist scholar G.R. Beasley-Murray's (1965:152-155) understanding of the 'three solidarities' serves as a bridge between the first and third views which, while not solving all the problems, provides a more adequate theology of children's evangelism because it suggests why young children can be regarded as 'safe' yet still need to be 'saved' when they reach the age of accountability. It is necessary to distinguish various aspects of the relation of Christ to the universe.

Firstly, the doctrine of the Logos as suggested in John 1:1-14, Ephesians 1:10 and Colossians 1:17 presumes that Christ sustains a vital relation to the totality of existence. Secondly, by his incarnation the Son assumed solidarity with all humankind. Paul unites his view of Christ as the Second Adam with the doctrine of representation to view the death of Christ for all people as the death of all (2 Cor 5:14), i.e. in Christ as representative of humanity, the human race as a totality is reconciled to God. Thirdly, the same Christ who died and rose for all has also given the Spirit for all, and those that are united to Christ through that Spirit form another solidarity, which Paul terms the 'Body of Christ'. It is only when this union with Christ takes place through the Spirit that the death and resurrection of Christ that were for all becomes effective in people who enter this third
solidarity. The fact that the church, humankind generally and the entire universe stand under the Lordship of Christ the Redeemer does not justify a lack of differentiation in the relation of these 'solidarities' to the Redeemer. Beasley-Murray goes on to argue that infants and children are members of the race that is both fallen and redeemed - they are in solidarity with the First Adam and with the Second or Last Adam. To define exactly what this implies about their relation to God is notoriously difficult and Christian thought about it has swung between the two extremes of a pendulum. If earlier generations have over-emphasised the link with the first Adam and developed doctrines of original sin, original guilt, the danger of infants dying unbaptised and the need for baptism to transfer infants into the kingdom of God, popular sentiment today tends to assure all children are 'saved', by which is normally meant that they are forgiven or free from sin. The New Testament doctrine of salvation however, goes far beyond this. To draw children into the 'third solidarity', the Body of Christ, is the purpose of child evangelism (see also 4.3.1).

2.4.4 Problems of children's evangelism

2.4.4.1 Problems relating to family solidarity

Most children's workers acknowledge that the ideal situation is a Christian home with Christian parents leading their children to Christ. Today, however, a fully Christian home in an exception rather than the rule even in 'Western'
countries; the situation is even more difficult in largely non-Christian communities. Because of the biblical emphasis on the spiritual and social solidarity of the family, some conclude that evangelism should not be directed to children, but only to families as a whole. Many churches and mission agencies have therefore adapted their programmes to cater for whole families; where children come to faith in such a context, they are obviously in a healthier environment for Christian nurture than where evangelism takes place in isolation from the family. The main difficulty arises where the children come from unbelieving homes or homes where parents are antagonistic or indifferent to the Christian message. The dilemma may be summarized as follows.

Real life situations are rarely a question of obeying only one direct divine command, sometimes a choice between two parallel or conflicting commands has to be made in particular cases. In relation to children, we are called both to proclaim the gospel and to encourage the solidarity of the family. The Christian worker cannot always avoid the tension by challenging only the 'responsible' since it cannot be precisely determined when any child becomes accountable or autonomous of parents. Fortunately only a few of the more extreme cases lead to real conflict. If parents are hostile to the Christian message, does this mean it would be unethical to present the gospel to their children? Is the doctrine of family solidarity intended to prevent the
inclusion of some children in Christ's great commission? While some would avoid the presentation of the gospel to children where it may lead to divisions in the family, others such as J. Prince (1979:51) of Scripture Union and S. Doherty (1988:99-100) of Child Evangelism Fellowship reject such an approach and give priority to the responsibility to proclaim the gospel to all, including children. Only 3% of respondents in the 1990 survey amongst Southern African Baptists agreed with the statement (see 3.3.1.2) 'Evangelism of young children is unwise because it may cause division in unbelieving homes; evangelism should be directed only to adults and families'; 89% disagreed while 8% were uncertain.

It seems to the present writer that the weight of biblical evidence is against the idea that 'family solidarity' can legitimately be used to silence the presentation of the gospel to children.

a) There is both corporate solidarity and individual responsibility in the Old Testament, including specific warnings to children that they will be held responsible if they follow in the steps of their evil parents. 2 Kings 22 especially v 8-20 shows how the high priest of Josiah's time did not hesitate to go against the principle of family solidarity in order to win the young king Josiah away from the evil influence of his father, to the cause of Jahweh.

b) Not only is God the Holy Spirit able to save and keep a child in an unbelieving home, children can sometimes be the
means of leading their parents to Christ. The late Byang Kato, former secretary of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar, became a Christian at age twelve; his parents were devout idol worshippers who opposed him bitterly but he later saw his parents and whole family come to Christ (Doherty 1986:101).

c) Jesus warned of the potential division that may result in families because of allegiance to him (Matthew 10:34-39).

'The presentation of the gospel to unbelieving families has, throughout history, proved every bit as divisive as the Lord said it would be. Any evangelist, whether in the post-Christian West or the non-Christian cultures of the world, knows that his message may divide families' (Prince 1979:34).

All workers agree, however, that sensitivity, wisdom, honesty and courtesy can avoid many potential problems. For example, it is important to be sure that the gospel itself is the cause of any 'offence' which may arise, as suggested in 1 Corinthians 1:18-29, Galatians 6:12-14 etc, and not some secondary issue. The writer remembers a situation where some parents withdrew their children from a Baptist Sunday School because their young children were beginning to criticise them for the 'sin' of drinking alcoholic beverages at home. It appears that someone had presented the 'temperance' or 'total abstinence' cause among the children. It would probably be wiser to deal with such ethical issues in a different context and at a different age level.
A rather different problem is that of communicating the gospel in an increasingly secular culture with changing family patterns. Many children will therefore reflect the value of the secular society - some of them may already be conditioned materialists, believing that only that which can be experienced with the five senses is 'real' in life. In other words, if a century ago, one could assume that the home and community context would be supportive to the early faith of children, one would have to assume that today's society would be more contradictory and antagonistic towards children's faith. How will this affect our approach in children's evangelism? It will include such necessities as a process of pre-evangelism, ie of establishing the fact that there is a real and true God who, although invisible, created the universe, and is concerned about both our behaviour and our needs. In addition, even where churches and mission agencies attempt to make the family the context of its evangelism, great changes are taking place in the pattern of family life which are disrupting the cohesion of the family unit and its responsibility for mutual support. A larger number of children contacted in evangelistic activities will have problems arising from a broken or disturbed home. These children are likely to misunderstand aspects of the gospel eg the 'Fatherhood' of God if their own experience of their father has been negative. Certain adjustments may be necessary such as having a different approach to children of Christian and non-Christian parents, and establishing
substitute' family relationships for those from broken homes. Unfortunately, many children are not attracted to Christianity because of their negative experience in a so-called 'Christian home'. Parents need to be taught that a Christian home is one in which relationships and atmosphere are Christian, rather than one in which the only criterion is that one or both parents are Christian.

2.4.4.2 Integrating evangelism and a Baptist theology of the child

We have already seen in 2.3.2.2 and 2.3.2.3 that certain difficulties arise when attempting to integrate 'faith development' theories into a Baptist theology of the child. Similar problems are also apparent when attempting to integrate child evangelism with some aspects of the place of the child in a Baptist church. (Although there is some overlap, the following is not a repetition of those paragraphs which discuss the issues from a perspective of developmental psychology but is specifically a consideration of the problems from the perspective of child evangelism).

If, as was proposed in 2.3.2.3, the baptism and church membership of children should be linked to a credible profession of faith, which is normally only to be found by the stage of adolescence, does this not imply that any definite response to the gospel should be postponed until adolescence or the age of accountability?

1) To link conversion, baptism and church membership to a
set age would be tantamount to replacing infant baptism with 'adult' baptism rather than 'believers' baptism; this may be similar to arranging 'confirmation' at a set age, regardless of any evidence of the new birth.

2) To postpone any definite response to the gospel would be a contradiction of the specific teaching of Jesus in Luke 18:16, Matthew 19:14 and Mark 10:14, which encourages children to come to him. This would be to expect too little from the child.

On the other hand, as we have already noted in 1.1.3.2(b), the above passages concerning children coming to Christ cannot legitimately be stretched to apply to baptism and church membership; these questions are not at stake in these texts. The question of the appropriate age for baptism and church membership is considered in detail in 2.3.2.3 and 4.4 where it is concluded on theological and pastoral grounds that baptism and church membership at too early an age is often not appropriate because it fails to distinguish between New Testament faith and the 'religion of childhood'.

Some may object that to withhold baptism from anyone professing faith is to move away from grace to salvation by works because 'discipleship' involves setting too high a standard whether for children or adults. This is a misunderstanding. The question is not whether a certain standard has been reached but whether there is reasonable evidence that New Testament faith in Christ has in fact begun or not; i.e. whether it is real believers' baptism. Where this
belief is evident then baptism of younger children is appropriate; the fact that this evidence often cannot be discerned until adolescence does not make it adolescent baptism or disciples' baptism. In practice this would seem to mean that while the majority of baptisms may usually only take place from adolescence onwards, the baptism of younger children will also be appropriate in cases where there is at least some evidence of repentance and faith. An example would be that the baptism of a child of six may be postponed; if evidence of repentance and faith is discerned even six months later then baptism of such a six-year-old child would be theologically correct, whereas the baptism of a sixteen-year-old teenager where there is no evidence of repentance and faith would not be acceptable.

A number of theological questions arise from the approach above. Is this approach too intellectual? Surely theological understanding only comes after faith grows? Is it really possible to test the genuineness of children's responses? Is it easier for children to believe and be saved than for adults? Are there two ways of relating to God, one for children and one for adults?

A good way of proceeding in problem-solving is to move from the known to the unknown. All biblical Christians, whether holding to believers' baptism or infant baptism will agree that there is only one plan of salvation in the Bible. The heresy of gnosticism which already appears to be in the
background of Colossians and 1 John, taught that there were
two types of salvation - one for those who were given special
knowledge (gnosis) and one for ordinary people. Are Baptists
displaying Gnostic tendencies in expecting too high a level
of understanding from children to 'qualify' for New
Testament salvation? D.J. Gunnels (1991:37) suggests that the
development of the right concepts of God, the death and
resurrection of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit
sometimes indicates the readiness of a child to make a
genuine commitment to Christ. Although this is in line with
modern developmental psychology, some feel that the idea of
developing 'right concepts' is to make the gospel too
intellectual. A study of Colossians, 1 John and actual
Gnostic writings reveal however, that the 'knowledge'
advocated by the Gnostics was something mysterious or
esoteric which was added to the essential message of Christ.
The opposite mistake is for those of 'simple faith' to
suggest that one 'doesn't have to believe anything to be
saved, just trust God, and trust Jesus, it is enough'. One
has to go on to ask, however, what is 'trust', who is 'God',
and why should we trust him? Even simple expressions such as
this require some understanding. Christians also recognize
that no person can 'understand' the Christian faith without
the help of the Holy Spirit as noted in 1 Corinthians 2:14.
Scripture is also clear that God requires the proclamation of
the gospel and its acceptance by those he enables to trust.
There is only one essential gospel and so the 'age of
accountability' (see 2.1.5) must be related to the ability to grasp and accept the basic truths of the gospel as in the questions noted above and summarized in the sermons in Acts (see Hendricks 1970:91). The question then returns again to the meaning of evangelism. The basic meaning of the word 'evangelize' is to 'announce the good news'. This basic, simple message (kerygma) is found in the preaching of the early chapters of Acts. Without the basic facts contained in this message, the Christian faith is unintelligible.

When Gunnels goes on to assert that it is impossible for a child to be 'saved' before the child knows he or she is 'lost' the question then arises whether such theological understanding rather only comes after faith grows, not before, i.e. a person only begins to realize the depths of his/her sin in the light of the goodness of God after being forgiven and entering into a relationship with God. Are Baptists not then getting the sequence wrong or expecting too much of children for a 'valid' response? This problem relates to an old debate concerning the preaching of the law before the preaching of the gospel in the historical development of doctrine. Some of the old Pietists assumed that a long period of conviction or misery over sin was necessary before sinners were ready to receive the forgiving grace of the gospel. John Calvin, however, asserted that repentance follows faith and is produced by faith (Berkouwer 1971:190). Baptists are not, however, making either a
'theological' understanding of sin or an intense experience of sin, a requirement for salvation; the point is that people (including children) only become aware of their need for a Saviour once they realize that they have something to be saved from. The relationship is well expressed in the verse from Joseph Hart's hymn (Methodist Hymn Book 1933 No 324):

'Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requires
Is to feel your need of him:
This he gives you.
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam.'

Baptists would therefore concur with Berkouwer's (1971:189) explanation 'Contrition must come before the joyful news of the Gospel. The lapse of time between the preaching of the law and the preaching of the Gospel may be ever so small and may even be infinitesimal. Yet the temporal problematic must still be maintained. Therefore the correlation of guilt and forgiveness is rigidly preserved'. This does not necessarily imply that such a sense of need will only come at adolescence; it does, however, mean that the absence of any such sense of need, which may be indicated when a child's response is little more than a desire to do what their friends are doing, requires postponing baptism until there is some evidence of such a sense of need.

Some also question whether it is either desirable or possible
to test the genuineness of responses coming from children. This in turn should be linked with the question whether it is easier for children to believe and be saved than it is for adults. P.G. Downs (1982:11-12) observes that one of the great mercies of God is that he has so designed children that they will readily believe the Gospel. As a result, it is not difficult to lead children to Christ. What is more difficult is to help them to understand the implications of faith in the biblical sense. As the child grows older this natural faith diminishes and the task becomes more difficult. But with the young child, nurture is simply providing content and direction to his/her God-given credulity. Similarly J.I. Overholtzer asserts that since little children have not lost the essential characteristics necessary for coming to God as lost sinners and accepting salvation by grace, 'Jesus is teaching that it is easier for a child to come to Christ than it is for an adult... if I deal with twenty adults, I am usually able to win one to Christ. But if I deal with twenty children, nineteen of them will accept Christ. If I had my life to live over, I would devote it to child evangelism' (Rohrer 1970:147,104).

Is it really easier for children to be saved than for adults? In one way, we may answer 'yes' - children are not yet as 'hardened' by sin as are adults; they are not usually as resistant as adults to the cost of following Christ, because they do not yet have as much to lose in the material sense -
there are not yet as many 'thorns' to choke the word so that it becomes unproductive (Mt 13:22). On the other hand, Overholtzer's claim that nineteen out of twenty children will 'accept Christ' ought to make us cautious and remember the distinction between 'the religion of childhood' and New Testament discipleship as explained in 2.3.2.3. John 1:12,13 is clear that adoption into God's family, while on the one hand involving 'receiving Christ' and believing on his name, is also a result of being born 'not of natural descent nor of a human decision or a husband's will, but born of God' i.e. the sovereign will and working of God is essential, and this cannot be manipulated or guaranteed by human effort (which Overholtzer's statement seems to imply). Many responses of children who have 'made decisions' appear to come to nothing in later life, particularly where manipulation and superficial responses are encouraged. Some children's evangelists and even pastors feel obliged to 'deliver the goods' to their supporters in terms of the numerical 'success' of their evangelistic efforts. Where this is the case, there is the danger of manipulation of children, whether by 'sincere' workers who have an inadequate theology of conversion or by those whose ethics leave much to be desired. The 'fragility' of the child must therefore be respected; at no stage must the trust which a child so readily gives to a friendly adult be betrayed. Children should therefore not be 'pressurised' into making a decision or commitment. E.Prest (s a,12) notes: 'Children are
gullible, and under the right conditions can be manipulated to respond in virtually any prescribed direction'. Any 'pressure' that moves children to respond must therefore come from the Holy Spirit in relation to the truth of the message proclaimed, and not be psychologically manipulated. While recognising the validity of Overholtzer's statement concerning the importance and value of child evangelism, the claim that nineteen out of twenty children will accept Christ is open to theological misunderstanding as well as to questions arising from pastoral experience with children.

Even where manipulation is consciously avoided, eager children's workers may lack discernment and misinterpret what is only a superficial response as if it indicated a deeper response to the gospel. This is why the present writer feels that the genuineness of responses coming from children should always be tested. While adults can also be superficially and temporarily moved (as suggested in the Parable of the Sower), this is even more likely in the case of children. Children often respond for no greater reason than hero-worship (the desire to please a popular leader, teacher or parent), emotionalism, (which is not based on an understanding of the gospel) or because of group-response where one child simply follows the other. Although it is admittedly sometimes difficult to assess a child's true motives for responding, confusion can often be avoided by clear teaching of the meaning of response, and by dealing with children on a one-
to-one basis. Attempts must therefore be made to ensure the personal nature of the response made, e.g. make it known that a child may write a letter to the person in charge of the meeting if they are really interested, or arrange to speak to the leader later, rather than invite a 'group response'. This can also be done by allowing time for children to think about their response. The writer well remembers a recent case where a group of standard three Sunday School children remained behind after a baptismal service to express interest in being baptised themselves in the near future. A brief baptismal class to explain the significance of baptism in relation to church membership and the Christian life was held the following week, after which only one indicated a real desire to follow Christ and be baptised; in the case of the others, they no longer even wanted to be baptised; even those whose parents were church members acknowledged that they were not yet ready to follow Christ in discipleship. This was not a case of causing 'little ones who believe in me to stumble' (Mt 18:6); it was rather a case of realizing that the interest of many of the children was not really serious enough in biblical terms to make baptism meaningful. The pastor conducting this class has already baptised younger children where he was satisfied that faith was present and does not take an 'adolescent baptism' view. This was therefore not a case of confusing justification and sanctification or of making 'perseverence' a condition for baptism; the question is therefore not whether children or
adults 'continue' (Acts 2:41-42) before they are baptised (which would be a wrong sequence) but whether they have really started the Christian life. A related question is whether 'faith' and 'discipleship' can really be separated in the New Testament. The idea that Christ can be accepted as Saviour but not as Lord, that one can be a 'believer' without being a 'disciple' is surely unbiblical. Christ is our Lord Jesus Christ and to be a disciple simply means to be a pupil, learner or apprentice; it is not a claim to be in a 'higher' category of Christian. Baptists do not reverse the New Testament order of baptism followed by teaching. The reluctance to baptise quickly only arises when there is an unwillingness or inability on the part of the applicant to make an initial commitment to follow Christ and so receive Christian education. The children referred to in the abovementioned case seemed to want to be 'done' but without any ongoing commitment to follow Christ; it seemed a very 'nominal' rather than a genuine response. While care must be taken not to be insensitive to the possible work of the Holy Spirit in children, nor to impose any legalistic standards, surely a response which does not last at least one week is not likely to indicate a true work of the Spirit. In any case such children or adults are not rejected or neglected; they continue to receive pastoral care in the positive expectation that they will yet be 'ready' to exercise faith in Christ at some future time. Baptists believe that the responses of children and adults ought to be tested. This
becomes especially important for the stability of children themselves by the mid-adolescent stage as objective and critical thinking develops. E.P. Torrance (1970:105) notes 'A desire to leave childhood behind may include an objection to religion as childish, if a literal interpretation of religion has not been previously transformed to a more spiritual interpretation. Investigators report that this tendency is quite strong among fifteen-year-olds, and that it is at about fifteen or sixteen that many people abandon formal religious allegiance because they equated it with childish thinking.' In other words, the 'religion of childhood' may crumble under pressure; a biblical faith truly built on the foundation of Christ should be able to adapt and grow in spite of these pressures. While recognizing the importance of child evangelism and the fact that children can indeed become believers at an early age, Baptists therefore believe, however, that it is usually better to wait until this credible profession of conversion is possible, before outwardly incorporating such children into the membership of the church. This may be before adolescence in some cases; it may be as early as one can be satisfied that genuine faith is present.
3. CURRENT BAPTIST BELIEF AND PRACTICE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.

3.1 Introduction.

Baptists like to think that they 'know what they believe'. This may be true concerning some of the basic evangelical doctrines which are more straightforwardly presented in Scripture, but it is hardly true in relation to the theology of the child. This assertion is borne out by the results of a 16-page questionnaire concerning over 70 related questions on the theme of God, the church and children, which was distributed throughout Southern Africa during 1990 and 1991. The information gathered reveals areas of general agreement as well as areas of uncertainty where Baptists hold widely contrasting views, especially on questions where the Biblical 'raw material' is limited. The full questionnaire, together with the main edited results, appears in the Appendices.

3.2 Some statistics relevant to the interpretation of the questionnaire results

Number of questionnaires distributed = 1000
Number of completed questionnaires returned = 263
Percentage response = 26.3%

In addition to those received from South Africa and the TVBC states, four were received from Zimbabwe, three from Namibia and one from St. Helena.
Breakdown of Respondents:

**AGE (In Years):**
- Under 20 = 12.6%
- 20-29 = 15.6%
- 30-39 = 24%
- 40-49 = 21%
- 50-59 = 15.3%
- 60 and older = 11.5%

**GENDER:**
- Female = 24.4%
- Male = 75.6%

**EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OBTAINED:**
- Less than Matric (Std 10) = 9%
- Matric = 25%
- Matric + Diploma = 36%
- University Graduate = 30%

**LENGTH OF MEMBERSHIP IN BAPTIST CONGREGATIONS (In Years):**
- Under 3 = 11%
- 3-5 = 9.8%
- 6-10 = 13.9%
- 11-20 = 27%
- Over 20 years = 38.3% (including six over 50 years).

**OTHER CATEGORIES OF RESPONDENTS:**
- Pastors of local Baptist congregations: 37%
- Students at Baptist Theological colleges: 21.4%
- Baptist Youth of South Africa team members: 12.9%
- Baptist Women's Association members: 8%
- 'Full time' Christian workers other than accredited pastors: 6.8%
- Church elders or deacons: 6.5%
- Accredited pastors serving outside the Baptist Union of Southern Africa: 4.3%
- Church Members not already included in the above categories: 3%

**LENGTH OF SERVICE OF PASTORS REFERRED TO ABOVE (In Years):**
- Under 3 = 11.4%
- 3-5 = 20.6%
- 6-10 = 24.7%
- 11-20 = 19.6%
- Over 20 = 23.7% (Including two of more than 50 Years).
Questionnaires were distributed as widely as possible; there was no attempt to restrict responses to 'select' groups which could be expected to hold predetermined views. It is reasonable to assume that the respondents were also those who had at least some interest in or ability to answer the various questions; this may account for why the vast majority of respondents were amongst the leadership, rather than uninvolved 'laypersons'. The 1 000 questionnaires were distributed as follows:

1990 Assembly delegates (including church delegates B.W.A. members and pastors attending as church delegates) 400
Students and staff of Baptist colleges incl. Parktown, Cape Town, ABK, B.I.T.S. (Debe Nek), and Baptist students at interdenominational Bible colleges. 155
Regional Baptist Associations (Border, Central, Eastern Province, Natal, Northern, Western Province), for pastors not at Assembly and for interested church members. 115
Baptist Youth of South Africa (Staff and team members 1990 and 1991) 50
Baptist Missions Department (Staff and accredited missionaries) 20
Baptist Convention 50
Eastern Baptist Association 25
Afrikaanse Baptist Kerk 30
Zimbabwe, Namibia, Transkei 20
Direct by post to Christian workers, lecturers, interested church members. 75
Direct by hand to members of various congregations 60

It is the opinion of the writer that in spite of the relatively low return of 26%, the survey results do in fact represent the views of a large cross section of Baptist leadership in Southern Africa, since a total of 88% of respondents were either pastors, theological students, Youth Team workers and other full-time workers, or elders or deacons. (The response to the questions requiring statistical information rather than theological opinion was much lower and were often based on estimates rather than official records; this information will be less reliable.)

The themes covered include the relationship between children and God as well as that between children and the church. Some areas of general agreement emerge, while it is apparent that on other questions there is considerable disagreement and uncertainty. The need for the development of a more consistent 'Baptist theology of the Child' remains evident.
3.3 The relationship between children and God.

3.3.1 Areas of general agreement.

3.3.1.1 Spiritual standing, sin and moral accountability.
While some Christians take the view that children (or at least children of Christian parents) are automatically in the kingdom of God until or unless they specifically 'opt out' at a later stage, the vast majority of Baptists (almost 80%) appear to hold the opposite view, i.e. that children start life outside the kingdom and remain outside until they enter it by repentance and faith. The presence of a Christian parent can at best only provide a Godly influence which makes the eventual entrance of such children into the kingdom by their own personal faith more likely than when there are unbelieving parents; it cannot in itself create right standing with God.

A smaller but still clear majority of Baptists (62%-72%) seem to hold some view of 'original sin'. Infants and children are not sinless or morally neutral but at best 'innocent'; all inherit a tendency to sin even if they are not held personally accountable until some later 'age of accountability' when they are individually able to grasp and accept the basic truths of the gospel (63% agreed).
All children start life outside the kingdom of God; they can only enter it in the same way as adults (by repentance and faith).

The presence of a Christian parent establishes right standing with God.
The presence of a Christian parent creates privilege, not right standing.

All children belong to God and are in 'the kingdom' until they definitely reject Christ.

Infants and young children are sinless or morally neutral.
Infants and children are 'innocent' rather than sinless; all children inherit a tendency to sin.

3.3.1.2 Faith development, evangelism and conversion of children.

Faith development, as we have seen in 2.3, concerns, amongst other things, the application of developmental psychology to the process of spiritual growth including the need to avoid imposing adult expectations on children but rather to allow for teaching and responses appropriate to the child's abilities and cognitive development. If applied in a mechanical or humanistic way, however, this may lead to the view that conversion is only a characteristic of the adolescent stage of development and can be produced or manipulated in response to the right input at the right time. It would also lead to the view that genuine conversion and discipleship cannot occur amongst young children since such concepts are generally beyond the scope of their particular stage of development.
The vast majority (90%) of Baptists agree that 'faith is not an intellectual achievement but comes by hearing the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit'. Similarly 77% disagreed that 'it is futile to attempt to teach abstract concepts such as "God", "sin", "forgiveness", "salvation" etc., to very young children'. The general conviction is that genuine spiritual birth (82%) and the understanding of at least some basic themes are not beyond the capacity of very young children (77%) but on the contrary, may be prayerfully cultivated and expected in some cases at least. The evangelistic imperative is even stronger - almost 90% believed that evangelism of young children is necessary 'because children, like adults, are lost and spiritually dead outside of Christ'; 'evangelism of children should not be neglected even at the risk of causing division in unbelieving homes' (89%).
It is futile to attempt to teach such abstract concepts such as 'God', 'sin', 'forgiveness', 'salvation', etc., to very young children.

Even young children are capable of conviction of sin and faith in Christ.
88%

Evangelism of young children is necessary because children, like adults, are lost and spiritually dead outside of Christ.

2%

AGREE DISAGREE UNCERTAIN

10%

Evangelism of children is unnecessary because they are born into the kingdom of God and remain in it until they voluntarily opt out.

89%

3%

AGREE DISAGREE UNCERTAIN

8%
3.3.2 Areas of Uncertainty.

3.3.2.1 Infant Salvation.
In reply to the assertion that 'since the Bible is silent concerning infant salvation, we cannot speculate concerning the salvation of children dying in infancy', 47% agreed, 28% disagreed and 25% were uncertain. Of those who disagreed, the following Scripture passages were quoted as having some bearing on infant salvation: 2 Samuel 12:18-23; Jonah 4:11; Matthew 18:14 and 2 Timothy 3:15, i.e. it is supposed that there are at least 'hints' concerning the spiritual status of infants and their salvation which amount to more than speculation, even though they may not be explicit or detailed statements.
Similarly, 47% agreed that 'since repentance and faith are essential to salvation, we cannot speak of infants being 'saved', while 24% disagreed and 29% were uncertain. There is even greater uncertainty when we consider how salvation comes to children dying in infancy. Only 25 or 9.5% of respondents replied to this question at all and those who did reply indicated different and contrasting beliefs. While 16% of those believed that such infants were saved through the loving character of God, 12% through their personal innocence, 4% through the atonement of Christ for all and 4% because of their election to salvation, the remaining 64% opted for various combinations of two or three of these five options including 8% whose options included salvation through their parent's faith. There is thus much uncertainty in Baptist opinion including approximately 90% of respondents who declined to indicate any definite opinion at all concerning how salvation comes to infants. It should in fairness be remembered, however, that much of the uncertainty on this particular question would apply equally not only to Baptists, but also to a wide range of Christians from different denominations and theological perspectives. This is no doubt partly due to the fact that there is relatively little biblical information on the subject and because that which we do have may be interpreted in different ways. (See 2.2)
The Bible is silent concerning infant salvation; we cannot speculate concerning the salvation of children dying in infancy.

Since repentance and faith are essential to salvation, we cannot speak of infants being saved.

3.3.2.2 Original sin, guilt, innocence and the age of accountability.

Although 57% of respondents rejected the idea that 'sin cannot be inherited but only personally and consciously committed', 27% accepted it while 16% were uncertain. Similarly, 57% agreed that 'we are not merely born sinners, but are also guilty sinners from birth', 25% disagreed while 18% were uncertain. This result is particularly interesting in the light of the fact that most of the available overseas Baptist literature seems to distinguish between original sin and original guilt in relation to children (e.g. see Knights & a , 2-3). No definite reason for this particular response can be suggested, although the present writer...
is inclined to think that part of the reason may be due to a fairly strong Calvinistic leaning among some South African Baptists, probably due to the influence of Charles Spurgeon as noted in 1.4.2. The 1689 Baptist confession of Faith was republished by Spurgeon in 1855 and is generally held by most Reformed Baptists in Southern Africa as a common statement of belief. With reference to the transmission of sin to the whole human race as descendents of Adam and Eve, the 1689 Confession asserts 'The guilt of their sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation...' (Evangelical Press 1974:17). On the other hand, this suggestion is counterbalanced by the 54% (30% disagreed and 16% were uncertain) who agreed that 'physical death (eventually) is already the penalty for our sin in Adam; spiritual death (separation from God / condemnation) only follows from our own personal sin'. As explained in 1.3.2.1, this explanation was originally proposed by Thomas Grantham of the more 'Arminian' General Baptists in the seventeenth century in an attempt to account for the spiritual standing and eternal destiny of children dying in infancy in view of the Baptist rejection of infant baptism.

Another area of uncertainty is the concept of 'accountability' where 50% agreed that 'children may be regarded as innocent until they reach the age of accountability', while 29% disagreed and 21% were uncertain. This response appears partly to contradict
the earlier response where 57% agreed that 'we are not merely born sinners, but are also all guilty sinners from birth,' i.e. one would have expected a closer correlation in the response to these two related questions. It may be that at this point a considerable number of Baptists are making traditional responses to familiar terminology without attempting to work out a consistent response.

Further, the response to the assertion that the 'age of accountability' is not a Biblical concept (15% agreed, 55% disagreed and 30% were uncertain) suggests that some may not be familiar with some of the texts which imply the concept (e.g. Numbers 14:29, Deuteronomy 1:39). Few attempted to suggest at what age children reach the age of accountability. Most acknowledged that it varied according to the individual child; actual ages suggested ranged from 3 to 13 years.

57%

27%

16%

AGREE DISAGREE UNCERTAIN

Sin cannot be inherited but only personally and consciously committed.
We are not merely born sinners, but are also guilty sinners from birth.

Physical death (eventually) is already the penalty for our sin in Adam; spiritual death (separation from God / condemnation) only follows from our own personal sin.

Children may be regarded as innocent until they reach the 'age of accountability'.
3.3.2.3 'Faith development'

In response to the assertion that 'the religious development of children is parallel to their intellectual development', 27% agreed, 48% disagreed and 25% were uncertain. Similarly, 47% agreed that 'different Biblical truths should only be introduced at the appropriate age levels' while 35% disagreed and 18% were uncertain. Bearing in mind, as noted above, the strong response of 90% who agreed that 'faith is not an intellectual achievement but comes by hearing the word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit', these responses suggest a certain tension where Baptists, and no doubt other Christians also, are still working through the implications of attempting to integrate their understanding of the essential and distinctive doctrines of biblical Christianity on the one hand, with the features of developmental psychology which appear to provide valid educational insights, on the other.
The religious development of children is parallel to their intellectual development.

Different Biblical truths should only be introduced at the appropriate age levels.

3.4 The relationship between children and the Church

The questionnaire included reference to the following areas in relation to children and the church: the Lord's Supper or communion, church membership, the practice of dedication or presentation of Christian parents and their infants, provision for children in the worship services and life of the church, and the relationship of believers' children to the church.

3.4.1 Areas of general agreement

3.4.1.1 The Lord's Supper

The vast majority of respondents left unanswered the question concerning a minimum age restriction. Several indicated in
writing that there should be no specific age restriction, since it was not a matter of age or 'adulthood' but of believing response to the gospel, i.e. faith decided the issue. This corresponds to the full response (263 replies) to the assertion 'believing children may be allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper when they are (individually) able to "examine themselves" before participating', where 88% agreed, 7% disagreed and 5% were uncertain. This question is based on 1 Corinthians 11:28 'let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup' and will be considered further in 4.5 in the chapter on children and the Lord's Supper.

Thirteen different respondents had observed children between the age of 7 and 12 participating in the Lord's Supper. While not demanding a 'mature' or adult understanding from children, the responses seem to confirm the general Baptist emphasis on conscious personal faith as a requirement for meaningful participation so that while in general the majority of participants in most congregations would tend to be adults and 'teenagers', younger children who had come to personal faith were also able to participate.

Another area where Baptists in Southern Africa appear to differ from many of their overseas counterparts concerns baptism as a requirement for admission to the Lord's Table. Many of the printed confessions of faith available indicate that participation is restricted to those who have been baptized as believers. Seventy-four percent of respondents, however,
disagreed that 'only those who have been baptized should be allowed to participate, while 20% agreed and 6% were uncertain. In actual practice, while some overseas Baptists have both 'closed communion' and 'closed membership', Southern African Baptists generally adopt a policy of 'open' communion but 'closed' membership' (i.e. full church membership is restricted to those who have been baptized by immersion as believers.)

88%

Believing children may be allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper when they are (individually) able to 'examine themselves' before participating.

7% 5%

AGREE DISAGREE UNCERTAIN

74%

Only those who have been baptized should be allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper.

20%

6%

AGREE DISAGREE UNCERTAIN
3.4.1.2 Baptism

The writer himself has baptized a child aged ten. The questionnaire reported cases of children aged between seven and twelve being baptized in Baptist churches in Southern Africa. While many acknowledged that officially there was no set age limit, some would not consider baptizing any child (even after confession of faith) who was less than eight or ten years old. There were no baptisms at all under the age of six, while only three churches acknowledged that 3%-5% of the total number of baptisms in their congregations were of children aged six to eleven. On the other hand, two churches reported that 70%-75% of their total baptisms over the last five years were of children aged twelve to eighteen. The largest proportion of the membership were generally to be found in the nineteen to thirty age bracket. Once again this contrasts with the position in the United States of America where in 1966, 1146 children under age six and 35,000 children under the age of nine or 9.7% of the total were baptized in Southern Baptist churches; in addition, over 139,000 or 38.6% of the total baptisms were of children aged nine to twelve giving a percentage of 48.3 which means almost half of all baptisms were of children under age thirteen (Ingle 1970:14). By 1988, the percentage of children under nine baptized had increased to 11.8% (Sparkman 1988:1).

3.4.1.3 Church Membership

The vast majority of churches have no minimum age restriction for membership; one church has a minimum age of sixteen while for
another it is eighteen. In addition, eleven churches do not allow members under the age of eighteen to vote at business meetings on matters such as election of leaders, calling of a pastor, purchase or sale of property etc. In Southern Baptist churches in the United States of America, it is more common for children to be permitted to vote although in practice they rarely do since they are usually in other activities during business meetings (Warren & Bevington 1990:9). Only one South African Baptist church indicated that 5% of its members were under the age of ten while thirteen churches reported that between 5% and 15% of their membership were between the ages of ten and eighteen years. Fourteen churches noted that 25% to 45% of its membership were aged nineteen to thirty while eighteen churches estimated that 40-75% of their membership were over thirty years old. The youngest person to be admitted to full church membership for which our questionnaire information is known to be accurate and reliable was eleven at the time. (Although some have claimed membership from the age of nine, it is likely that these could have been more accurately described as 'adherents' rather than full members).

Thus, whereas it is not unusual for Southern Baptist churches in the United States of America to have a significant number of child members under the age of ten, this would still be very unusual in Southern Africa where most young members are at least in their late teens before admission to church membership.
3.4.1.4  

Dedication or Presentation of Christian parents and their infants.

Only 7% agreed with the assertion that 'the practice of "dedication" or "presentation" of Christian parents and their infants should be stopped since there is no specific scriptural authority for it; it is merely a sort of "dry" infant baptism to satisfy parents who feel the need for something to replace infant baptism'; 83% disagreed and 10% were uncertain. Similarly 88% agreed 'that this practice does not contradict scriptural principles and should be arranged where requested by believing parents', while 6% disagreed and 6% were uncertain.

What is the Baptist understanding of the dedication or presentation of Christian parents and their infants? Is it merely a sort of 'dry infant baptism' to satisfy parents who feel a need for something to replace infant baptism? Several biblical passages or themes were suggested as the basis for the practice. The most popular reason given as a basis is Jesus' blessing of the children which were bought to him, together with his declaration 'let the children come to me'. Other biblical motivations include the dedication of Samuel in the Old Testament and of Jesus in the New Testament, and the fact that it both acknowledges the responsibility of Christian parents and creates a pastoral bond between the child and the congregation.

The general support for the practice does not imply, however, that Baptists put it in the same category as baptism or The Lord's Supper. It is not a specific 'ordinance' or command of
Jesus as are these two central ordinances of the church but need only 'be arranged when requested by believing parents', i.e. it is optional not automatic. There is no 'pressure' on the parents to observe the practice; it is acknowledged that there are a significant number of Baptist parents who are not convinced that dedication or presentation is either sufficiently Biblical or necessary, and who do not personally practice it (see 4.2).

The practice of 'dedication' or 'presentation' of Christian parents and their infants should be dropped since there is no specific scriptural authority for it; it is merely a sort of 'dry' baptism to satisfy parents who feel the need for something to replace infant baptism.

This practice does not contradict scriptural principles and should be arranged where requested by believing parents.
3.4.1.5 Worship services and worship activities.

Only one church claimed that 50% of the congregation usually attending the morning services are children under twelve; the majority of those responding had estimates varying from under 10% to less than 30%. Younger children under the age of six are often catered for in a creche or 'junior church' programme running concurrently with the morning service. Another factor influencing Sunday morning attendance is the traditional Baptist pattern of the all-age Sunday School or 'Family Bible Hour' followed by the worship service. Of 161 churches advertising their services in the Baptists Today denominational newspaper, 106 or 66% held Sunday School at a different time from the worship service, while only 55 Churches or 34% held them simultaneously i.e. children would normally attend Sunday School while adults attended the service (Baptists Today September/October 1991:11). In the former case, many children go home after Sunday School without attending the worship service while in the latter, the children are in Sunday School while adults are in the morning service. These variants obviously affect the potential attendance of children.

In response to the statement 'worship should be directed to (cater for) believers and therefore no specific attention to children is needed', 82% disagreed, 10% agreed and 8% were uncertain. The most common way of providing for children was through a short 'children's talk' or address in the earlier part of the service
and by including some points in the sermon for them where possible. Other methods included the participation of children's choirs, Scripture reading by children and the operation of a 'young worshippers league' incorporating the completion of standard worksheets related to the service and the awarding of prizes for attendance. One church has a different worksheet each week which is prepared by gifted artists and children's workers within the congregation and is specially related to the theme of the morning service; all children from Sub B to Standard 5 receive the more simplified 'kid's bulletin' while those in Standards 2 to 5 also receive an additional worksheet which goes into the particular sermon more fully (See Appendix 6). The purpose of these worksheets is not just to entertain or make children feel welcome but to help them to understand and intelligently participate in the worship services.

While virtually all Baptist churches without exception had some sort of Sunday School or Family Bible hour, the larger or more established congregations also have weekly club programmes geared for children of different age groups e.g. the congregation where the writer is presently a member operates four different clubs on a Friday afternoon and evening for age groups ranging from 3 years to Sub A, Sub B - Standard 2, Standards 3 to 5 and for high school teenagers and students. Most churches also arrange special camps, outings and holiday clubs for children and families. While it may be difficult to assess the actual value and practical effectiveness of many of these activities, it is
clear that various attempts are made to cater for children in different ways even though the Sunday services are generally geared to 'believers' who are largely adults.

Worship should be directed to believers and therefore no special attention to children is needed.

3.4.1.6 The relationship of children of believers to the church.

Are children of believers in exactly the same position as children of unbelievers or 'pagans'? G. R. Beasley-Murray, writing somewhere between 1965 and 1970 asserted: 'To maintain that there is no difference between the children of the followers of Mao Tse-Tung in Peking and the children of the followers of Jesus in Philadelphia in their respective relations to the church would be foolish' (Beasley-Murray 1970:130). A large majority of Baptists in Southern Africa appear to concur with Beasley-Murray. Sixty-nine percent agreed that the relationship of the children of believers to the church could be described as follows: 'although not "born again" or "saved", neither are they part of "the world that lies in the power of the evil one"; they are under the tender
care and nurture of the Christian family and the church in hope of their ultimate entry into the life of faith in Christ.' (18% disagreed while 13% were uncertain). The views of Southern African Baptists become less clear, however, when attempts are made to further describe this relationship in other ways (See 4.1).

Although not 'born again' or 'saved', neither are they part of 'the world that lies in the power of the evil one', they are under the tender care and nurture of the Christian family and the church in the hope of their ultimate entry into the life of faith in Christ.

3.4.2 Areas of uncertainty

3.4.2.1 The Lord's Supper

Although, as indicated above, the vast majority of Baptists have no problem with believing children who have at least some measure of Biblical understanding, participating in the Lord's Supper, they are divided over the question whether this requires that all children desiring to participate should be allowed to do so. In response to the statement 'children desiring to participate should not be prevented from doing so as this may discourage them from following Christ or give the impression that the church is only for adults', 47% agreed, 37% disagreed and 16% were uncertain. Some of those who disagreed or were uncertain were no doubt motivated by the realization that when some young
children behave in a certain way, they are often driven by no higher motive than the desire to conform or to be part of a group rather than because of some appreciation of the meaning of that in which they desire to participate. In this case, even though they are clearly innocent of the gross abuses of some of the Corinthian church members described in 1 Corinthians 11, such children may participate 'in an unworthy manner', without 'examining' and 'discerning' (1 Cor 11:27-29). This uncertainty is reflected further in response to the question of who should decide concerning the participation of children - 21% opted for the decision of the child itself, 19% for the parents, 15% for the church leadership, while 40% opted for some or other combination of two or three of these options and 5% were uncertain. This means that in practice the pattern will vary from congregation to congregation. No standard 'law' is laid down and unless the local church leadership has adopted a particular stance on the question, it will normally be decided locally by the parents and/or the child.

Children desiring to participate should not be prevented from doing so as this may discourage them from following Christ or give the impression that the church is only for adults.
3.4.2.2 The relationship of believers' children to the church.

As noted previously, most Baptists apparently recognize that children of believers do have some kind of relationship to the church even when they cannot yet be described as 'born again' or 'saved'. Uncertainty develops, however, when this relationship is described in a way which seems to imply that they automatically enjoy some privileged standing that puts them in a distinct category which cannot be found in Scripture. Thus in response to the assertion 'children of believers have no special relation to the church; they are in exactly the same position as children of unbelievers/pagans', 30% agreed, 59% disagreed and 11% were uncertain. Only 24% agreed that 'children of believers constitute a third group beside unbelievers/pagans and believers' while 48% disagreed and 28% were uncertain. There seems to be a tension here between what may be concluded from Scripture concerning children who have not yet reached the 'age of accountability' when they are able to respond in personal faith and the implication of the various texts such as John 3:18,36; Romans 8:1-11; Galatians 5:16-23 etc., that there are basically only two categories of people in relation to the gospel: believers/unbelievers or those who are either 'in the flesh' or 'in the Spirit'. Alternatively, some would point out that Scripture which is essentially addressed to adult readers or hearers cannot legitimately be directly transferred or applied to young children and therefore conclude that children are in a spiritual category of their own.
Further, although 63% agreed that 'the proper place for the religious life and instruction of children is the home, not the church' while only 12% disagreed and 7% were uncertain, a further 18% insisted that both home and church were important for the religious life and instruction of children. This further option was written in by hand by these respondents. It is therefore probable that more would have opted for 'both' if this had actually appeared on the printed questionnaire as an option in response to the statement.

Children of believers have no special relationship to the church; they are in exactly the same position as children of unbelievers / pagans.

Children of believers constitute a third group besides unbelievers/pagans and believers.
3.5 General Assessment

Is there any discernable pattern in the questionnaire results?

The writer would suggest the following:

1. The Baptist emphasis on the need for conscious personal faith, when applied to questions for which there appears to be a Biblical doctrine, example or application, is a key factor in understanding the following generally agreed views:
   - all children, including those of Christian parents, start life outside the kingdom of God; they must personally enter it by repentance and faith.
   - because faith is not an intellectual achievement but a gift which comes by hearing the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit, even very young children may grasp some of the basic Christian truths and are capable of conviction of sin and faith in Christ.
   - believing children may be allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper when they are individually able to grasp something
of its meaning and 'examine themselves'.

2. There is a certain tension between the concepts of 'corporate solidarity' and individual responsibility which lies behind some of the 'areas of uncertainty'. On the one hand, the individual element demands personal response to the gospel apart from the presence of Christian parents to enter the Kingdom of God. On the other hand, the corporate element is also recognized by most Baptists in certain matters e.g. the conviction that even before 'the age of accountability', children are not morally neutral but inherit a tendency to sin which excludes them from the kingdom. On the positive side, the benefit to children of the corporate solidarity of the Christian home may be seen in the discussion of 1 Corinthians 7:14 in 4.1

3. Where the presence of conscious personal faith cannot be assumed, such as in the case of infants, Baptists then find themselves in an area of uncertainty where they have to account for the spiritual status and salvation of children on other grounds and in other ways; this partially explains why there are contrasting views on certain questions.

4. The 'areas of uncertainty' are especially strong where there is little explicit Scripture teaching on particular topics. A 'theology' then has to be built up on the basis of other accepted Biblical principles and any relevant 'hints' in scripture. (This is a common problem faced not only by Baptists but by all Christians !)

5. Pastors, parents and congregations sometimes face difficult
and sensitive decisions concerning the admission of believing children to baptism, the Lord's Supper and church membership. This is especially so because attempts to assess the 'readiness' of individual children are inevitably subjective. Children do not reach the 'age of accountability' at a set age; their spiritual growth may also vary as much as that of adults!

6. Baptist attitudes to faith development theories vary; most recognize valid insights which help parents and congregations to avoid imposing adult expectations on children's religious experiences; they are, however, reluctant to accept psychological theories concerning children which appear to conflict with biblical principles.
4.1 CHILDREN OF BELIEVERS - DO THEY HAVE ANY SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHURCH?

The questionnaire results in 3.4.1.6 and 3.4.2.2 indicated that many South African Baptists appear somewhat confused concerning whether or not the children of believers have any special relationship to the church. There are probably several reasons for this, including the following.

1. The Baptist concept of the 'gathered church' i.e. a fellowship of true believers only.
2. The Baptist insistence on conscious personal faith as a requirement for meaningful Christian discipleship and church membership (e.g. John 1:12,13 Acts 2:41-42).
3. An unwillingness to allow any special privilege to the children of believers which may also be used as an argument in favour of infant baptism.
4. Various texts such as John 3:18,36; Romans 8:1-11, Galatians 5:16-23 which imply that there are basically only two categories of people in relation to the gospel - believers/unbelievers or those who are either 'in the spirit' or 'in the flesh'. (This of course is the way many Baptists interpret these texts. Since the issue of children is not at stake in these texts, it is an open question whether they can be legitimately applied to a 'theology of the child')

G.R. Beasley-Murray (1970:128-130) notes the following strange
results of this reluctance of Baptists to consider the question of the relation of believer's children to the church.

1. Some Baptists tend to think of 'adult baptism' rather than 'believers' baptism', as though adult baptism were the norm of Baptist life.
2. Some Baptists are more used to thinking in terms of their children's relation to the Sunday School than of their relation to the church itself.
3. Some Baptists seem more concerned to affirm God's pity on the children of the heathen than they are to define God's relation to their own children. (They seek to avoid the implication that God privileges children on account of their parentage).
4. Most Baptists believe that there is a difference between the church and the 'world' as suggested in John 15:18-19, but hesitate to recognize the effect of this difference on the children of believers and the children of people of 'the world'.

In addition, Daniel B. Stevick (1976:106) has observed:
'Baptist parents do not treat their children as exiles from Christ and from grace until they come to adult faith. But godly parental impulse needs to be supported, interpreted, and directed by theology, a theology of the child in the church which, in Baptist circles, appears quite faint.'

A crucial text for our purpose at this point is 1 Corinthians 7:14. Baptists have made little positive use of it until
recent decades, possibly because of some older paedobaptist apologetic based on this verse; paedobaptist scholarship today, however, recognizes that the text and context itself has no direct reference to baptism (Jeremias 1964:48; Pridmore 1977:188; Stander & Louw 1988:57-58). The text itself reads as follows in the New International Version: ‘For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy’.

The context indicates that when Paul made this statement, he had a different interest from ours. He was writing to encourage men and women converted to Christ since marriage, but whose partners did not share their faith, to continue in the existing marriage relationship. The Christian should not consider separation if the other partner was willing to remain, for the power of the Christians’ sanctification or consecration is greater than that of the unbelievers’ lack of holiness. This is demonstrated by a self-evident fact that the apostle assumes all will acknowledge. If the Corinthians’ pre-Christian fear that the unbelieving partner somehow defiled the Christian or the marriage (in a cultic or ceremonial sense), then this defilement would extend to the children. As everybody knows, however, the contrary is true - your children are ‘holy’, they are not illegitimate or unclean. The ‘holiness’ of children belonging to Christian parents is clearly accepted - even when only one parent is Christian.
What is meant by the terms 'sanctified' or 'consecrated' and 'holy' in this context? The passage has elicited considerable scholarly discussion, with nothing close to a consensus. Some have suggested that the 'holiness' of the children or unbelieving partner is received by physical transmission because of the baptism of the believing partner; others have even suggested that the sanctification is transmitted by sexual intercourse with a believer (for some of these views see Beasley-Murray 1976:194-195; Rusling 1960:254). G.D.Fee (1987:299) notes that both the argument and language of this passage are unusual for Paul since in Paul these words normally carry moral/ethical implications and have already been used in 1.30 and 6:11 as a metaphor for salvation itself. Clearly the words cannot carry this force here since the idea that marriage can effect salvation for the pagan partner would contradict other essential Pauline teaching on salvation; such an interpretation is also ruled out by v.16 which states that the unbelieving partner is not yet 'saved'.

G.R. Beasley-Murray (1976:195-196) suggests that in order to understand this text, it is necessary 'to postulate the coalescence of two ideas in Paul's thought here, one fundamentally Jewish, the other fundamentally Christian; the former has made the idea possible, the latter has given it power. The Jewish element has come from the ritual conception of holiness so characteristic of the Old Testament. It is illustrated for us in Romans 11:16, which appears to be the one
other passage in Paul in which the idea is given expression'. Other commentators favouring an understanding linked with Romans 11:16 include Calvin (1960:149); Fee (1987:301); Kingdon (1975:90) and Rusling (1960:253). The analogy then would be that just as Paul hoped for the subsequent coming to faith of unbelieving Israel of his day, so the unbelieving spouse and children are set apart in a special way that will hopefully lead to their salvation in due time (v.16). The second idea is to explain Paul's language by analogy between the two phrases 'in/through the wife' and 'in/through the husband', and the key Pauline formula 'in Christ', suggesting that in each case it is personal relationship that is in view. 'In that case the sanctification of the unbeliever takes place in the fellowship of living with the believer, in the totality of life's exchange that occurs in the marriage relationship. The same would apply to the relationship of Christian parent and child ... if the believing partner is enabled to "save" the unbelieving, that will be solely in virtue of the presence of the grace of God, working through the Christian in the daily sharing of married life' (Beasley-Murray 1976:196). This would mean that the impact and actual operation of the grace of God cannot be excluded from Paul's thought in v.14 - the 'consecration' is thus not only external, legal and ceremonial, but has power to attract the unbeliever to faith in Christ, as is suggested in 1 Peter 3:1-2. The writer has, in his pastoral experience, witnessed several cases of this where the unbelieving partner and children have over the course of a few
years come to faith in Christ after an initial period of resistance, because of the convincing and attractive example of the believing partner. A similar influence will operate in the case of the Christian parent’s ‘sanctifying’ impact on the children; if this is so when only one parent is a believer, how much more so when both father and mother are committed Christians! Thus the essentially Jewish concept is modified by the specifically Christian and personal element. Beasley-Murray’s interpretation has been given at some length because although not supplying an exhaustive treatment of all possible views, it seems the most helpful in explaining the Baptist view of the relationship of the children of believers to the church in the light of 1 Corinthians 7:14.

Although we may not be able to establish exactly what Paul intended in this passage, a number of relevant deductions may be made from the text and context. Baptist scholar S. Hudson-Reed (1987:17-18) notes the following.
1. Neither the partner nor the children are considered to be Christian because of their family relationship to a believer.
2. The Christian is to realize that there is a value which accrues to the partner and children through their relation to him/her. This is not to be taken lightly.
3. The value accrues to the other members of the Christian’s family because of their relationship to the Christian, not because of what they are themselves.
4. Whatever that value may be, it is the same for the spouse and the children.

5. The passage is evidence that the religious faith of the husband and father did not necessarily determine the religious life of the entire family, although the practice did exercise a powerful influence in the ancient world. Christian individual responsibility and not family solidarity are at the root of this particular problem in Corinth which arose because a family had been divided religiously, i.e. 1 Corinthians 7:12-13 indicates that the conversion of the husband did not necessarily lead to the conversion of the wife; some remained unbelievers.

Anglican commentator J. Pridmore (1977:189-191) further observes:

6. Paul makes no distinction here between children born before the conversion of the believing parent and those born after; nor does he distinguish between baptized and unbaptized children.

7. When Paul claims that the children of the mixed marriage are 'holy', he is not saying that they are 'saved', nor that they are morally 'pure'.

8. G.W. Rusling (1960:255) understands the distinction between the children of Christian parents and those of non-Christian parents as 'owing to the specially significant relation with a Christian, God's claim in this instance can be and is directly lodged and asserted ... because it is a life born and entrusted to the care of a believer'.

9. Rusling (1960:255-256) deduces the parental obligation implied
by God's 'claim' on the child - the parent 'has for a few years the opportunity of shaping the child's life. It is salutary for him to remember that parentage, which seems to make a child so much one's own, makes it God's, makes it "holy", and this fact stands against any selfish counter-claim in terms of one's ideas and ambitions for the child. Parental possessiveness always carries dangers with it but in the case of a Christian it may take on a peculiarly serious aspect in conflict with the prior claim which God asserts'.

10. Rusling (1960:253), however, cautions against overoptimistic expectations - 'it would be rash to conclude by analogy from Romans 11:16 that the child and unbelieving partner of 1 Corinthians 7:14 are undoubtedly destined to be saved. Otherwise we should have an excellent argument for (religiously) mixed marriages! But Paul himself did not envisage the inclusion of Israel other than by belief in Christ. Of the Corinthians passage we must assert that it was an objective status not yet (and possibly never) an inward reality to which Paul was referring.

11. It is beyond Paul's scope and intention to follow up all the theological implications and questions raised by attributing a status of 'holiness' to the child or the unbelieving parent. Is the status absolute, or can it be nullified, e.g. if the heathen partner divorced his Christian wife? How may the child forfeit it? If the status once given, becomes absolute, what of its bearing on original sin? Is the status further transmissable
through the child when he/she too becomes a husband or wife and a father or mother even though the child may never have become a believer? Such questions begin to lose touch with what we have already assumed in this passage - the operation of the grace of God through a personal relationship with a Christian.

12. The situation Paul describes in the passage does admittedly raise a difficulty which in the minds of some is similar to that raised by the doctrine of election. If certain people come to a status of 'holiness' solely through their relationship with a believer, it appears that spouses or children not blessed with believing partners or parents do not enjoy that status unless they arrive at it by some other way. Thus Rusling (1960:257) comments: 'Our democratic instincts rebel against the idea that anyone, theologically speaking, should be born with a silver spoon in his mouth. Paul evidently felt no such qualms and if we are to follow him we shall have to get used to language and ideas that have hitherto been foreign to many of us'. On the other hand, Jesus also warned that 'to whom much is given, much will be required' (Lk 12:48) and it must be remembered, as noted in our first deduction above, that neither partner nor children are yet described as Christian or 'saved'; for this to become true of them would require faith in Christ, an opportunity also open to all who will believe, whether or not they may have been privileged to have believing parents or partners.

13. The reference to God's 'claim' on the child of even one believing parent, as noted in our eighth deduction above, is
obviously even stronger when both parents are already believers. One can surely conclude that, generally speaking, the potential impact on the children of a fully Christian home where both father and mother are believers, is greater than that of a partially Christian or divided home, even though the grace of God is not limited by our mechanical or outward expectations.

G.R. Beasley-Murray (1970:132) also notes the following in connection with Paul's teaching in this passage:

14. The relation of such a (partially or fully) Christian family marks it off from the godless world.

15. Contrary to our tendency to draw absolute distinctions between those in the church and those outside of it, Paul suggests that it is possible, through the Christian family, to come within the sphere of the church's blessing without actually being a confessed member. This applies especially to the children of believers.

Beasley-Murray (1970:133) thus describes the relation of believers' children to the church as follows: 'It would seem that the apostolic church viewed the children of Christian parents as standing in a unique relation to the church. They were not regarded as born-again children of God for such an experience must await the opening of the life to Christ in faith. But neither were these children regarded as part of the world that lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19). They were seen
rather as lying under the care of God, in the bosom of the church, committed by the Lord to its tender care and nurture, in hope of their ultimate entry into the life of faith in Christ'. We have already noted in 3.4.1.6 that 69% of Southern African Baptists agreed with this statement, although 18% disagreed and 13% were uncertain. One may therefore tentatively conclude that a majority of Baptists recognize that children of believers do in fact have some special relationship to the church, even if they have some difficulty in precisely describing its nature.

4.1.1 Baptists and the Catachumenate

Does 1 Corinthians 7:14 provide biblical justification for Baptists to institute or re-introduce, on a more formal structured basis, a modern catachumenate along the lines of that practiced in the early centuries of the Christian church? As noted in 1.2.3 the catachumenate included both children and adults who were voluntarily under instruction in the Christian faith with a view to their eventual baptism and acceptance into church membership. They attended worship services but were not allowed to participate in the Lords' Supper. They were no longer outsiders but were under the positive teaching and influence of the church until considered ready for membership.

Baptist scholars who support the idea of a catachumenate (whether for adults or for children of believers or unbelievers) include G.R. Beasley-Murray (1965:151;1970:135-137;1976:373); the various
scholars of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland producing the report *The Child and the Church - a Baptist Discussion* (1966:22-24); S.Hudson-Reed (1987:74); G.W. Rusling (1960:246-250) and D.F.Tennant (1978:23-24). Some of these scholars, e.g. Rusling, base their support for a Baptist catachumenate partly on 1 Corinthians 7:14, while the majority appear to advocate it on the broader pragmatic, pastoral and theological grounds that every local church has its broader circle of contacts with which it has established creative relationships.

Baptist scholar B.Brown (1974:821-823), however, disputes Rusling's theological justification for the catachumenate of the child based on 1 Corinthians 7:14 as follows.

1. The text would equally justify a catachumenate of the unbelieving partners of Christians.
2. It is irresponsible to propose that Sunday School teachers and other church workers can stand in loco parentis in the case of children where both parents are unbelievers, they would be unable to care for them adequately.
3. The catachumenate idea is inadequate precisely because it attempts to relate the child directly to the church; it is the product of modern individualistic thinking since the child is only indirectly related to the church through Christian parents. 1 Corinthians 7:14 has nothing to say about the child's relation to the church; the child's 'holiness' is due to a relationship
with a Christian parent.

4. The church's ministry should not primarily be directed to the child, but rather to the parent who is in fellowship with the church.

The majority of Baptist scholars who support the idea of the catachumenate do not, however, seem to feel that such a rigid distinction between 'family' and 'church' is necessary; the Christian parent is also a member of the body of Christ - the church, and so the 'nurturing' task belongs jointly to both Christian home and the church. While ideally the nurturing task of the Christian home is primary, the present reality demanding this joint responsibility is as follows.

1. In practice both Sunday School teachers and parents often fall short of providing really adequate instruction.

2. The increasing number of single-parent families and homes where both parents are unbelievers make it imperative for the church to assume a greater responsibility in regard to the Christian nurture of children within its sphere of influence. Thus Beasley-Murray (1970:133) concludes 'The responsibility for the unfolding of the spiritual potential of the children therefore rests alike on the parents and the church, just as the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit are felt in the Christian home and in the church. This duality of responsibility and opportunity of home and church to be instruments of the grace of God in the life of the child should be impressed on both parents.
and local church.'

The following should also be noted in connection with Baptist views on the reintroduction of the catachumenate.

1. The catachumenate would not weaken the traditional Baptist principles of the necessity of the new birth and regenerate church membership. On the contrary, its existence and operation is implied by the evangelistic task of the church. 'It is the preparation of the ground in order that the good seed may in due course germinate, take root and flourish in the life of faith. Conversions do not take place in a vacuum but in minds and hearts prepared (over a longer or shorter period as the case may be) by the testimony and teaching of the church' (Baptist Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland 1966:22).

2. The term 'catachumenate' had a more precise use in the early church - for example, candidates were initiated with a ceremony which included exorcism of evil spirits, the signing of the cross on the forehead, the laying on of hands and the administration of salt. Baptists are not suggesting that all the ideas, rites and ceremonies which attached to the early catachumenate were well founded or biblical and are now in need or restoration! A further example is that, as the belief grew that post-baptismal sin would not be forgiven, many felt that it was wise to delay baptism until the last possible moment before death and so remained as catechumens, unbaptized, for the greater part of their lives.
3. In contrast to infant baptism which, apart from other theological motivations is often seen by paedobaptist scholars (e.g. D.M. Baillie 1957:80-82) as the beginning of the process of Christian nurture and education, to be completed at the time of 'confirmation', believer's baptism is the goal of the catechumenate, signifying conversion and the full entry into the privileges and responsibilities of church membership. 'Baptism signifies the transfer from catechumenate to membership' (Tennant 1978:24).

4. On the other hand, the New Testament indicates (e.g. Mt 28:19-20, Ac 2:42) that the teaching of converts was not to end but rather to begin with baptism. Although some would see this function as fulfilled by the all-age Sunday School, others see the need for the pastor to assume responsibility for a prolonged period of post-baptismal instruction in addition to the expository preaching of Scripture at Sunday worship services, i.e. instruction should not cease when the goal of conversion and baptism has been reached. Warren Carr (1963:182) thus suggests that 'a child's baptism ought not mark the final event of his Christian education. Instead it should be an interruption of the Christian education so that the child may respond, personally and accountably, to God's grace which has been presupposed throughout the process. This interruption has to be consciously perceived'.

5. Most Baptist scholars share the educational emphasis of the catechumenate, but warn that the purpose is not merely education in the sense of acquiring intellectual knowledge with a view to
passing examinations in Christian doctrine, but rather Christian nurture, intended to lead to a spiritual awakening and a living faith in Christ in response to the gospel. Without this spiritual awakening, continued religious education is likely to result in legalistic Pharisaism and spiritual emptiness of the kind that was often rebuked by Jesus during his ministry.

6. Two unresolved issues remain: Should there be some ceremony for admission to the catachumenate? Some would see this fulfilled, in the case of infants and young children, in the service of dedication or presentation (see 4.2). This would obviously not apply to older children and adults and so the other issue is whether there is any distinction between children and adults as far as the catachumenate is concerned.

7. Because of some of these problems as mentioned above, together with the lack of clear Scriptural guidelines (we have only 'hints' of the catachumenate in the New Testament), the writer is of the opinion that few Baptist churches are likely to be convinced of the need for any formal or official reintroduction of the catachumenate as a distinct 'order' within the church. It is quite possible, however, to make effective pastoral and evangelistic use of the concept within the church's total ministry even where no structural catachumenate is introduced. It should be remembered that this institution reflected the early church's recognition of two important facts.

a) It acknowledged that some who were not yet members could be in a recognisable and positive relationship with the church.
b) It was a sign of the early church's realization that Christian education was a vital and essential aspect of its ministry.

Those churches which respond appropriately may in due time be expected to reap the long-term benefits of caring for its wider family of adherents in this way.
4.2 THE DEDICATION OF CHRISTIAN PARENTS AND THE PRESENTATION OF THEIR INFANTS

Infant dedication/presentation appears to be a widely accepted practice amongst Baptists, certainly in Australia, Southern Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States of America (according to the standard literature available), if not universally. This does not imply that all Baptists necessarily accept or practice it, since, as noted in 3.4.1.4, a minority are not convinced that it is either Biblical or necessary. It is therefore in no way regarded as an ordinance in the same category as believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper and is therefore optional, according to the outlook of local congregations and especially depending on the convictions and desires of the particular parents concerned. It should also be noted that although some Baptists think only in terms of the dedication of infants, without reference to their parents (e.g. Gillmore 1966: 96,100; Patzia 1984: 69), it is more correct in terms of Baptist theology to speak of 'the dedication of Christian parents and their infants'. This is actually the title of Brian Russell's booklet on the subject (see bibliography). Originally, the service seems to have been primarily a dedication of parents, and the presence of the child was not strictly necessary. However, because the 'commitment of the congregation' (see 4.2.3) to a creative pastoral relationship with the child is regarded as part of the Biblical and theological basis of the service, the absence of the child would tend to make such a pastoral commitment to the
particular child impersonal rather than meaningful.
While some (eg Manley 1969:6) prefer the term 'dedication', others opt for 'presentation'. J. H. Knights (s a:1) explains: 'To dedicate means to separate, or to consecrate. This involves both a choice and an act of committal. Baptists hold that such a choice and committal can only be made by an individual for himself. Parents can, and ought, to dedicate themselves to the sacred task of parenthood, but they cannot commit their baby to anything so far as his relationship to God is concerned. They can and should create such conditions under which it will be easy for the child to make his own decisions, but no act of theirs can alter the child's state before God or set him apart to God'. Thus when referring to 'dedication' in this chapter, the present writer is referring to the dedication of Christian parents to the task of Christian nurture and the presentation of their children to God.

4.2.1 The perceived need for the practice
It has been suggested that if the practice of infant presentation did not exist, it would be necessary to invent it! What are some of these 'felt needs' that the practice seeks to fulfil?
1. Parental concern for the salvation of their own children. The natural and legitimate concern of parents for the salvation of their children is also part of the socio-pastoral background for the paedobaptist practice of infant baptism or christening. This same concern is also felt by Baptist parents. Is infant dedication/presentation then merely a 'dry baptism', a sort of
Baptist equivalent of infant baptism? Brian Russell explains the Baptist understanding: 'What the Lord would have us all do is to earnestly seek the salvation of our children from their earliest days. We are not to think that their future is settled and secured until they for themselves have received by faith God's gift of eternal life through His Son Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that many Christian parents have come to value highly a service in which they can publicly make their vows to God to bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord and seek His wisdom and strength to fulfil their task. This service is commonly known as "The Dedication Service", and although (like marriage) there is no direct Scriptural warrant for such a service it does embody important Scriptural truths and has been a great help to those who have entered it seriously and meaningfully' (Russell: s a a, 2).

2. Popular confusion over the status of believer's children in relation to the church. A survey of one Southern Baptist Congregation in the United States of America indicated that all parents regarded their children as 'part' of the church in some sense; this relationship was variously described as a 'a kind of belonging', 'membership' of the Cradle Roll or Sunday School, 'part of the church family', or a 'student' of the church. Some acknowledged a certain confusion - 'they are in the church but not of it'; 'I think that we have as Baptists been unclear here. We say they are in until they are ten and then they are out (of the church) and they are in later. When they doubt, we say they
are out and then in later. I don't see it that way' (Siler 1967:223-227). If, as the writer has attempted to establish in 4.1, children of believers are in fact in some creative relation to the church, this needs to be expressed more clearly in the worship, teaching and ministry of the church. One ideal context for this is through the service of dedication or presentation, including the pastoral preparation beforehand and the extended ministry to the family in the following years.

3. The Baptist desire to affirm a proper concern for children. In his book Christian Nurture, Congregational scholar Horace Bushnell (1880:24) accused Baptists of rejecting infant baptism because they presume their children will not grow up believers, and that Baptist parents tell their children that nothing but sin can be expected from them! Baptists are therefore anxious to dispel the misconception that a rejection of infant baptism should be understood as implying any carelessness towards the interests of children and their place in the church. One way of clarifying the true position is through the provision of a service of dedication or presentation, with an adequate motivation of the theological and pastoral basis for such a service.

4. Pastoral concern for 'rites of passage'. M.M. Siler (1988:51-52) suggests that we need to recover the power of worship as a major source of pastoral care. Included in what he calls 'rites of passage' is the service of dedication/presentation. Siler proposes three theses:

i) worship events at the transitional points of birth, baptism,
marriage and death are conveyors of effective pastoral care;

ii) worship rituals at the events of birth, baptism, marriage and
death are rites of passage which assist in appropriate separation,
transition and reincorporation;

iii) it is the family that is going through the 'passage'. Such
transitional events are strategic opportunities for ministry since
'More doors open or close naturally between various family members
than can be swung at other times, even after years of agonizing
endeavours' (Friedman 1985:164).

4.2.2 The historical development of infant dedication amongst
Baptists

4.2.2.1 Possible antecedents

a) Jewish practices: Genesis 17:10-14 and elsewhere indicates
that circumcision was the sign of membership of the Abrahamic
Covenant and of the nation of Israel.

Baptists have consistently rejected the implication that baptism
may therefore be administered to children of believers on the
analogy that circumcision in the Old Testament parallels baptism
in the New Testament. K.Wimmersberger (1977:247) has, however,
proposed that infant dedication is the theological correspondent
to the Hebrew rite of circumcision; it is a rite of renewal for
the covenant community. Very few, if any, other Baptist scholars
have ever suggested this connection however.
We have already noted in 3.4.1.4 that several respondents to the questionnaire linked infant dedication with the presentation of Samuel by Hannah (1 Sm 1:24-28) and the boy Jesus by Mary. (Lk 2:22-24). This link is however, extremely doubtful since the rite described here is the redemption of the first-born son from the priesthood by the payment of five shekels (Nm 18:15-16) and also for the purification of mothers after the birth of a child. Luke omits the payment of the redemption fee, probably stressing the spiritual principle of Mary's offering of her first-born to God. Christian parents today similarly recognize that their child belongs to God, but any definite or further link with the modern practice of dedication seems to be stretching the meaning of the passage beyond what it can legitimately bear.

b) Jesus' blessing of the children: Although Jesus' action, together with his general recognition of the importance of children, is vital for our understanding of the relation between Jesus and children, there is once again no explicit basis in this for infant dedication/presentation (nor infant baptism) as a church ordinance. K.R.Manley (1969:3) comments 'it may be consonant with Jesus' attitude but no more can be claimed. Indeed, no one has ever suggested that infant dedication is directed by the Bible'. A.G.Patzia (1984:67) similarly concludes 'Jesus does not establish a rite for infant dedication or baptism by receiving and blessing these children. There is no indication that they ever became disciples ... nothing is said about how to
deal with them in the context of the church.'

c) Other New Testament teaching: The instructions in passages such as 1 Corinthians 7:14 that children of a mixed (believer/unbeliever) marriage are 'holy', that children are to obey their parents (Col 3:20-21) and are to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph 6:1-4) are oriented more towards the responsibility of the home than the church. This would also apply to similar Old Testament passages such as Deuteronomy 6:7 and Proverbs 22:6. Although some of the New Testament passages indicate at least that children were present at worship in these 'home churches', they cannot be said to provide any explicit basis for the practice of infant dedication/presentation. The proposed theological basis will be explored later in 4.2.3.

d) Earlier Anti-Paedobaptists: That the custom of infant dedication began as a Baptist ecclesiastical equivalent of infant baptism cannot be proved: the origins are too obscure for any definite conclusions to be drawn (Manley 1969:2). It does appear, however, that many nineteenth and twentieth-century British Baptists thought of it as 'our' version of infant Christening, under the sociological influence of Congregational and other Free churches with which they shared fellowship and cordial relations (Pitchers 1989:1). Evidence for the practice amongst British Baptists from the seventeenth century onwards is
clear (Patzia 1984:64). In addition, two earlier references include the following.

i) The Paulicians, an early medieval sect of the sixth to twelfth centuries in the Byzantine Empire, amongst several unorthodox views denied infant baptism and substituted some form of infant presentation (Patzia 1984:64). H. Wheeler Robinson suggested that their practice could serve as a model for a Baptist dedication or presentation service, noting that the prayer in M.E. Aubrey's Minister's Manual was based on the Paulician text. The service was normally held eight days after birth and referred to the child as a 'catachumen' (Manley 1969:3).

ii) The Sixteenth-century Anabaptists sometimes observed a form of 'child consecration' which was instituted by Balthasar Hubmeier (1485-1528). Details of the theology and practice of the ceremony have already been described in 1.3.1.

4.2.2.2 Baptist practices

The earliest known child dedication amongst British Baptists appears to be that conducted by Thomas Ewins in a combined congregation of Independents and Baptists in 1651. T.L. Underwood (1969:168-169) reconstructs the service as follows: 'He and the child or children and probably the parents came before the congregation. He took an infant in his arms or held an older child by the hand. Prayers and other words were spoken by some of the persons present, the content of which included thanksgiving for the birth of the child and dedication of the child to God.
The name of the child was declared by the parents and perhaps by Ewins as well which name was later entered in the church book.

Another early reference is found in the writings of the General Baptist Thomas Grantham and refers to a simple dedication service taking place in 1678 (Walker 1966:250). The 1753 Covenant of the Westgate (Bradford) church noted: 'As we have given our children to the Lord by a solemn dedication, so we will endeavour through Divine help, to teach them the way of the Lord and command them to keep it, setting before them an holy example worthy of their imitation and continuing in prayer to God, for their conversion and salvation' (Manley 1969:4). Some form of infant presentation was also practiced by certain of the Particular Baptists during the eighteenth century. In his 1787 work Paedobaptism Examined, Abraham Booth (1734-1806) explained and defended his practice of the custom. That some Baptists went further is implied in Booth's rejection of names, pronouncing a blessing and calling the custom a dedication of children. Three observations may be made (Manley 1969:4-5): First, the practice was not universal and procedures varied. Second, Booth's service was held either in a home or the church building, most probably the former. Third, the allegation that dedication or presentation was a Baptist version of infant baptism is vigorously denied. The earliest available Baptist manual of polity and practice in the United States of America called for the practice in 1774 (Wimmersberger 1977:245).
During the nineteenth century the practice became increasingly accepted. This is reflected in the fact that the 1828 revised version of John Rippon's *Selection of Hymns* included hymns suitable for dedication. The posthumous 1844 *Comprehensive Hymnal* included a specific section of hymns for 'Infant Dedication'. Not all approved of the practice, however. One correspondent of the *Baptist Magazine* in 1823 objected that dedication was not commanded by Jesus but was a human invention. Jesus blessed children but his ministers do not have the right; infant dedication savoured too much of infant sprinkling (Manley 1989:5). The individual credited with popularizing the rite was John Clifford (1836-1932), the distinguished Baptist pastor and leader who was renowned for his long pastorate at Westbourne Park in London. Although his services of dedication were held initially in the home, they were later moved to the church building (Patzia 1984:65-66). The practice is today accepted by Baptists in many countries and is also officially recognized in some Baptist Confessions of Faith, such as the 1888 doctrinal basis of the Baptist Union of Victoria, Australia, which states: 'Baptists approve of the presentation of children to God by parents, if thereby they solemnly undertake to train them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, in the home and in the church' (Lumpkin 1973:418). An order of service for infant dedication or presentation is also included in many of the Baptist ministers' manuals or handbooks available today.
4.2.3 The Biblical and theological basis

We have already noted that the dedication or presentation of Christian parents and their infants is not commanded in Scripture and is therefore in no way binding on parents who may not feel the need or desire to observe it. Patzia (1984:66) notes, however, 'the fact that baby dedication arose out of religious, psychological and personal needs leaves many Christians uneasy. After all we are people of "the Book". Surely a rite like baby dedication must be grounded in Scripture...' What are some of the essential biblical truths to which dedication or presentation bear witness? The following are usually incorporated at some point in the service and suggest the broad theological basis.

Thanksgiving for the creation of new life. Children are the gift of God (Ps 127:3; Gn 33:5). Although biologically as human parents we are actively involved in the reproductive process and Psalm 139:13-16 indicates that we are also God's 'works' even before birth, God alone creates each new life (Ps 139:13).

Recognition of God's ownership of children. V.Brandt (1979:4) explains 'We cannot give our child's personal allegiance for him, but we can set goals for his life and influence him towards them. In the Dedication Service we subject our choice of such goals to God's will. We need to do this because, as parents, we are tempted to treat our children as if they were our possessions and try to live out our own unfulfilled wishes through them. The
Dedication Service therefore helps us both to acknowledge that our child's life belongs rightfully to God and also to allow him to have an unobstructed loyalty to Christ.

Redemption. The Report of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland *The Child and the Church – a Baptist Discussion* (1966:32) asserts in the context of the dedication service 'Thanks are also to be offered that the child has been born into a world whose redemption Christ has wrought.' This is not necessarily to assert that all children are in fact already saved by the atonement of Christ, but it is to assert that the redemption won by Christ is freely available to them. While rejecting 'universalism' (the view that all people will ultimately be saved and none will be lost, regardless of their individual response to the gospel), passages such as John 3:16-17; Romans 5:18-21; 1 Timothy 2:4-6; 2 Peter 3:9 and 1 John 2:2 certainly assert the availability of this redemption to all kinds of people, including children. As we have seen in 2.2 and in 3, Baptists will understand this in different ways. Reformed Baptists believe in the salvation of all the elect, including infants dying in infancy (although some would limit this to 'elect' infants and remain uncertain about other infants); some Baptists believe all children are already in the kingdom of God but may by their own conscious sin later put themselves outside of it at the age of accountability; others again believe that children start life outside the kingdom but are nevertheless 'safe' because although
contaminated by original sin they do not have original guilt.

The responsibility of Christian parents. Christian parents believe their children are a trust from God and that one day they will be held accountable for the way they have taught and trained them to fear and serve the Lord, even though they cannot manipulate or arrange their conversion. It is thus not surprising that many have felt that the task of Christian upbringing calls for a definite act of commitment in which certain promises are made. This commitment is specified in the questions which are usually addressed to the parents and which are responded to as a promise in the words 'I/We do'.

The commitment of the congregation. It has already been suggested in 4.1 and 4.1.1 that the children of Christian parents are in a creative relationship with the church; although not yet members, the church has a pastoral relationship to them as informal 'catachumens' with the expectant hope that they will in due time respond intelligently to the worship, teaching, fellowship and love of the church and themselves respond to the gospel. There is thus usually also a 'charge' to the congregation in which they recognize their responsibility both individually and corporately to the parents and child being dedicated or presented.
Prayer for God's blessing. Prayers for the blessing of God (often including the 'Aaronic blessing' in Numbers 6:24-26) on the child, parents and congregation are offered, that He may be pleased to use the faithful efforts of home and church to open the child's heart to the grace of God in the gospel in due time. 'Blessing' in biblical terms denotes something potent and effective. Although Baptists do not believe that a dedication service automatically does something for the child in any magical or mechanical sense, they do fervently believe that 'the prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective' (James 5:16), especially when this involves the prayerful witness of both home and church. Baptists, like Paedobaptists, recognize the prevenient grace of God - that the Holy Spirit often uses the home as a means to conversion. 'Although we can never link the grace of God ex opere operato with any rite, we may yet stress the initiative of God in every person's salvation, and accept the possibility that the devotion and faith expressed in a dedication can be one means used by God. It certainly brings the child into the orbit of the church's inner life and witness' (Manly 1969:2).

4.2.4 Some Baptist variations

As a non-liturgical 'free' church, Baptists reveal as many variations in the practice of infant dedication/presentation as is the case on many other issues. Here are some of them:

a) As already noted, while the majority of Baptist churches do observe some form of the practice, there are some which reject it
altogether, primarily because it is not commanded in Scripture; some parents within congregations that do generally observe it may personally decline to request it. In addition, some pastors have decided to abolish it, some for theological reasons, but others because of the pastoral problems it creates (see 4.2.5).
b) A minority of Baptists may still practice some form of dedication or presentation service in the home of the parents concerned; the majority today seem to believe that 'it should ideally be in the context of worship, and not the home' (Manley 1969:6), apparently mainly because of the need to include the corporate responsibility of the congregation in the Christian nurture of the child.
c) Although the minister/pastor generally names the child, some prefer to allow the parents to do this, thus avoiding suspicion they are in any way 'christening' the child!
d) Does anything happen in the dedication/presentation service? The most widely accepted Baptist understanding of the blessing of children in the service has already been outlined in 4.2.3; what happens flows from the working of God in response to prayer and faithful Christian upbringing, i.e. what happens after the service largely determines the blessing. Southern Baptist scholar Dale Moody, however, appears to view the service as a sacrament which in some way effectively conveys grace. 'Moody regards this rite as an infant blessing wherein charismatic power is communicated to the child that gives him a status unlike those children who were not so blessed' (Siler 1967:246). Similarly, British Baptist
scholar Michael Walker (1981:11) asserts 'The blessing then, is at once a solemn and joyous moment in the service in which, by God's grace, something is given to the infant who is blessed'. Most Baptists regard even baptism and the Lord's Supper as 'ordinances' rather than sacraments (i.e. symbolic only, in the Zwinglian sense); it is therefore highly unlikely that many Baptists would take a 'higher' view of a rite which is admittedly not a Biblical command and so Moody and Walker's view would be a decidedly minority opinion amongst Baptists.

e) We have already noted Wimmersberger's unusual interpretation that 'infant dedication is the theological correspondent to the Hebrew rite of circumcision. In the rite of circumcision children were brought into a special relationship with Israel. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant, a sign of God's steadfast love for his people. Infant dedication in a Baptist church can also be meaningful if it fulfills this function.' This leads to the suggestion that infant dedication may be viewed as a rite of community renewal for Baptist congregations.

f) Baptist churches, in line with the principle of the 'priesthood of all believers', sometimes allow church members other than the ordained pastor to preside at the Lord's Supper and at baptismal services; similarly, others may be appointed to lead or participate in dedication/presentation services. Pastors and congregations have the liberty to involve others in the service as well as to shape the service itself in creative ways.
4.2.5 Evangelistic and Pastoral Ministry in relation to infant dedication

The dedication or presentation of Christian parents and their infants presents, on the one hand, opportunity for both evangelistic and pastoral ministry and, on the other hand, the possibility of pastoral problems if not adequately handled.

It is a great encouragement for a pastor and the church to know that the parents have committed themselves to Christ and the church and that they will continue to do so. The situation is, however, quite different when there are serious doubts about the parent’s spiritual standing and intention to fulfil their vows. ‘Pastors do not want to participate in an act of hypocrisy; nor do they wish to close the door for a subsequent ministry to such parents. Occasionally they are caught between a rock and a hard place. Is there a solution to the problem?’ (Patzia 1984:69).

The present writer has faced the dilemma of having to effectively turn down a request for a dedication service because there seemed no reasonable Christian commitment on the part of either parent; they only wanted to ‘have the child done’! One can imagine the problems this may sometimes create with parents, grandparents and other relatives and friends. Patzia (1984:69) has suggested that rather than practicing ‘indiscriminate’ dedication, or refusing it to parents who are believed to be unqualified, the best option is to delay the dedication until parents feel that they are ready to affirm their vows with integrity. The advantage of this
approach is that the onus is on the parents and not on the pastor; it leaves open the communication between pastor, parents, and church. In line with previous references to the pastoral strategy of 'rites of passage', many pastors have found parents of newly born infants quite receptive to the claims of God upon their lives and willing to make a new start in the church. In this way, dedication becomes an opportunity for rededication rather than alienation. On the other hand, specific cases are sometimes not as easy to determine as Patzia suggests. It may happen that parents 'feel ready' while the pastor is convinced they are not. As noted in 4.2.4 (a), some pastors have abolished the practice altogether because of the pastoral problems it sometimes creates.

Dedication affords an opportunity for evangelistic outreach in at least two ways. Booklets explaining the meaning of the service usually clearly present the need for the Christian commitment of the parents. Russell's booklet The Dedication of Christian Parents and their Infants closes with the question 'Is this not the time whatever the past has been, to get right with God - to accept His gracious offer of forgiveness and of new life through Jesus Christ, so that as a whole united family, your aim will be to obey and serve the Lord?' In addition to this evangelistic ministry around the time of the dedication service itself, there is also a long-term evangelistic ministry to the growing infant and to the parents through the ministry of the
'Cradle Roll', which is seen as a kind of Kindergarten department or extension of the Sunday School, ministering mainly to the parents and their young child/children in the home because of the difficulty of domestic confinement. There are both strengths and weaknesses inherent in the evangelistic ministry of the 'Cradle Roll', however. One of the strengths is the opportunity that it affords for congregational ministry through mothers who visit the homes of expectant or new parents. On the other hand, some of the standard evangelistic literature available is weak in that it 'does not seriously consider the developmental nature of the event of childbirth ... The form of evangelism needs to be more personal and pastoral, seeking to relate a couple's unique experience of parenthood to the saving call of God in Christ' (Siler 1967:239).

There is also a most significant opportunity for sensitive pastoral ministry to new parents because of the changed situation brought about by the arrival of the first child or subsequent children. Some of these changes which on the one hand place additional strains on the marriage and family and on the other hand present an opportunity for personal, family and congregational growth include the following.

1. The infant may be regarded as a trespasser, competing, in the case of the older children, for the affection of parents, or, in the case of the husband, for the affection of the wife!

2. Husband-wife roles change to some extent as the child assumes
the centre of the stage.

3. Because of the influence of infant care on the child's future character, many mothers face feelings of inadequacy concerning their ability to fulfil their maternal responsibility.

4. Parents frequently assume too much responsibility for their children's failures or successes.

5. The couple's former freedom of mobility is drastically restricted by the arrival of the child, and is accompanied by loss of sleep, added housekeeping duties etc.

6. The latter two problems are intensified when subsequent children arrive very soon after the previous births, i.e. when the births are not adequately 'spaced'.

7. The additional pressures on the parents' mobility may lead to indifference towards church attendance and involvement.

Christian counsellor Wayne E. Oates (1966:189) suggests that one of the functions of the Holy Spirit in the life and work of the pastor is 'the creative assimilation of new and strange experiences on the part of individual Christians and the fellowship of believers as a total community of faith'. How may the ministry of the church assist in the creative assimilation of the event of childbirth, so that the changes which must inevitably take place are constructive rather than destructive?

1. The church must take the initiative in extending its ministry into the home of new parents. This will have the additional benefit of helping families to identify the church not so much
with the activities conducted in the church building as with a living, covenanted fellowship.

2. This 'home ministry' will include the development of fellowship groups to discuss relevant questions concerning the Christian nurture of children, exchange mutual support and acquaint new parents with literary resources. This may often be done as a follow-up to the dedication service (if one was in fact held). 'To express the vows is not enough. The parents and church need to explore together how the vows assumed will be fulfilled' (Siler 1967:251-253).

3. In connection with the anxieties referred to in numbers three and four of the 'additional strains' noted above, the teaching ministry during childbirth can assist towards the formation of realistic expectations concerning parenthood. 'Not only should the church emphasize the importance of parental responsibility, but the church should also remind parents that they are not solely responsible for the life of their child. The parents share this responsibility with God, with the larger community, and with the child himself. Undue pressures may be relieved when the parents come to regard themselves as stewards, not possessors, of their child' (Siler 1967:199).

4. One of the most valuable functions of these home support groups is the contact with 'multiparae', i.e. other parents who already have two or more children. New parents may be expected to grow in confidence through contact with such parents (as in Siler 1967:200) finding that 'six out of ten multiparae
reported increased assurance and certainty as they assumed the maternal responsibility for the second or third time.

5. Churches may assist in preventing unnecessary strain on new parents by not expecting too much from them in terms of church attendance and activity over the initial period of readjustment and confinement. A period of gradual re-entry and re-engagement may include baby-sitting so that the new parents can in due course attend services together sometimes and also go out for social occasions and relaxation. This will help avoid frustration, drifting or dropping out of the church fellowship. The essential point to be worked out in terms of pastoral ministry is the creative assimilation of the event of childbirth, whether or not this is specifically linked with a dedication service.
4.3 HOW DO CHILDREN OF BELIEVERS SHARE IN SALVATION?

We have already seen in 2.2 that many Christians, both Baptist and paedobaptist, believe that children dying in infancy are saved. Another most important question is how children of believing parents, who do not die as infants, come to share in salvation. Must they have a specific conversion without which they would have been lost, or are they in some way included in salvation with their parents in a relationship with God or are they saved in some other way?

It is possible to conceive of salvation in unbiblically narrow terms. Biblical scholarship has pointed out the 'holistic' nature of salvation in Scripture as having broad dimensions, as something affecting not only the individual but also extending to the believing community or church which M.Griffiths (1975:36-37) calls 'salvation under construction'; 'salvation' even touches society as a whole, the physical environment and ultimately the entire universe. When referring to the salvation of children however, Baptists usually tend to think in terms of the more personal and 'vertical' aspects of salvation which concerns the individual child's spiritual standing with God and involves such theological questions as the forgiveness of sin, justification, regeneration, adoption etc.

4.3.1 Problems related to the salvation of children of believers

In what aspects of salvation do children of believers share, even
before they come to personal repentance and faith? König (1986:144,158) explains that God's salvation is not limited to a vertical and individual relationship but may be corporately experienced. Salvation somehow 'overflows' the boundaries (vloei as 't ware oor die grense) of individual faith to those who share their lives with believers - their children. Children of believers are included in the covenant, at least in the sense that they share in the blessings of the covenant, such as warm fellowship, the gifts of the Spirit and the preservation of God. Many Baptists would have no problem in accepting this, but would tend to see these blessings as indicating rather that children of believers do share in certain privileges and blessings of being personally related to believers, as explained in the Baptist understanding of 1 Corinthians 7:14 outlined in 4.1; this does not, however, mean that such children are necessarily 'saved'. Most Baptists think of the 'salvation' of children in a more specific and individual sense and would probably feel that 'salvation' here is being understood in too broad or vague a sense. We are clearly in a difficult area here for which we do not have straightforward Biblical answers. König (1986:144), for example, insists that one cannot separate salvation and the church; if children share in salvation, then they are part of the body of Christ. Baptists at this point may possibly 'retreat' by pointing out the distinction between the 'invisible' and 'visible' church, because of their emphasis on the 'believer's church'. Perhaps Beasley-Murray's (1965:153-155) suggestion of
three different 'solidarities' is helpful here. As noted in 2.4, the first two solidarities are the solidarity of humankind in sin with the first Adam and the solidarity in grace with Christ as noted in Romans 5:12-21. Those who are united to Christ through the Spirit form another solidarity which Paul terms the Body of Christ. 'It is when people are united to Christ through the Spirit in the Body that the death and resurrection that were for them become effective in them. Reconciliation, justification, redemption, salvation -whatever the term employed - is in Christ; in him it has all happened, and it is in union with him that it is known, experienced and appropriated. This is the significance of faith-(or conversion) baptism'. Here Beasley-Murray sees no distinction between the children of believers and children in general without this conversion. 'We affirm that infants and little children belong to the reconciled race that is subject both to the powers of sin and death and to the power of holiness and life in Christ. They are not members of the "third solidarity", the Body of Christ, but they are objects of the love of God that would draw them into that solidarity. In the language of 1 Timothy 2:4, he wills that they all should be "saved and come to the knowledge of the truth". But that presupposes a "turning" to him, a "conversion". Even the so-called "holy" children, who live among the people of God where the powers of the new age are known, who participate in worship, and who are the objects of prayer and ministry, need that "turning" to receive the life of the age to come.'
In addition, it is difficult and in some cases impossible to determine whether a child has come to a genuine faith and conversion or to locate precisely when this took place. We note in 4.3.2 that the New Testament contains examples of both 'radical' and 'nurture' models of conversion. However, some extend even the 'nurture' model of conversion within a Christian family to what may be called an 'ongoing' conversion, i.e. there is no definite point of transition from being 'unsaved' to 'saved' but only a gradual growth in grace so that for some children 'conversion' will rather amount to repeated spiritual experiences of deeper insight into the gospel and deeper commitment to the Lord. Further, is it biblically and developmentally correct to attempt to describe the salvation of children in terms of concepts which in the Bible are used for adults and in particular for adults in a missionary situation rather than for children of believers? Other similar questions could be mentioned but it should be recognized that many of them are not only problems for Baptists but also for all Christians.

4.3.2 Baptist perspectives

If the Anglo-Catholic tradition somehow sees salvation as something children share in directly through the sacraments of the church, and other paedobaptists believe that children of believers share in salvation indirectly through corporate solidarity with the faith of the parents and covenant promises, how do Baptists understand the position of believers' children?
1. Few Baptists would accept the idea that by virtue of birth within a Christian family or within the Christian community, the child may be regarded as 'saved' and 'Christian' without the need for a personal response of faith. Baptist scholar R.L. Honeycutt (1970:34) suggests that the application of Old Testament covenant theology to the Christian church would imply, amongst other things, that a child's decision concerns whether or not he/she will repudiate the faith into which he/she was born and nurtured, not whether that faith will be 'accepted'. This is probably correct; however, in the light of God's 'progressive revelation' in Scripture it should be noted that by the New Testament era, one of the requirements for the office of elder was 'having children that believe' (Titus 1:6) - this suggests something stronger and more specific than mere 'non-repudiation'. 2 Timothy 3:15 also notes that although Timothy was raised in a believing home (2 Timothy 1:5) and knew the Scriptures from childhood, the purpose of the Scriptures was to make people wise 'for' or 'unto' salvation through faith in Christ, i.e. salvation is not biologically inherited. (Matthew 10:32-39 and Luke 12:51-53 indicate that households may be divided over allegiance to Christ). Honeycutt does not actually advocate leaving out the New Testament teaching in formulating a theology of the child but that Baptists should not become heretical like the Marcionites by radically severing the Old Testament revelation from Christian scripture. The question then concerns how the Old testament picture should be understood in the light of the New Testament
teaching already outlined above.

2. Reformed Baptists insist that a child is saved on just the same basis as are adults, through the sovereign, powerful and efficacious grace of God' (Kingdon 1975:94). This is usually based on the election to salvation of those who believe.

3. Although children of believers have the advantage of growing up with the privilege of a Christian home and nurture, this does not automatically or necessarily lead to their salvation. (Kingdon (1975:98) asserts 'if we are consistent Calvinists we can be no more certain of the election of our children than of the children of unbelievers'.

4. Some Baptists such as Brown (1974:812-815) attempt to answer the question in terms of a later weakening of the sense of family solidarity after New Testament times. 'Such an issue was totally irrelevant when the sense of family solidarity was so strong. The child could not be viewed apart from the context of the household. In fact, the notion of a separate religious status for the child had no meaning until, in the second century A.D., a weakening of family solidarity in society in general brought about a more individualistic outlook. Then one discovers, for example in Irenaeus, the beginning of what might be called "a theology of the child". So long as the child was regarded as an integral part of the Christian family, no question would arise about his religious destiny. This was bound up with the salvation of the family as a whole: it was mediated by the parents. But when the unity of the family became religiously less important, some assurance was
needed about the child's personal salvation ... children are found, not in the church's membership, but within the Christian family ... Children not yet baptized were not considered as "outsiders". Even children of a mixed marriage were not thought to be unclean, i.e., those with whom true believers do not associate. All children from families associated with the local church were regarded as "holy".

5. We have already noted in 2.2 and 2.4 that many Baptists regard all children, whether of believers or unbelievers, as either 'in the kingdom' from birth until they specifically reject Christ, or, on the other hand, as outside the Kingdom but yet 'safe' because although affected by original sin, they do not have original guilt imputed to them until some later 'age of accountability' when they consciously sin and reject the gospel.

6. Most Baptists, whether 'Reformed' or 'Arminian', would also concur with Kingdon's (1975:99) further statement that 'our view of children in relation to the church is of vital, practical importance. We treat our children as if they were unconverted until we are satisfied that they are.'

7. Paedobaptists e.g. König (1986:124-134) sometimes rightly point out that not all details of the New Testament pattern of conversion and baptism can legitimately be applied today because historically some aspects could only apply in a) the missionary situation of the New Testament era and b) since the New Testament only covers a brief historical period, a different situation would apply later when the 'norm' of 'first generation'
Christians disappeared and 'later generation' Christians became the normal pattern, i.e. children and adults will become Christians from within the expanding Christian community rather than being 'converted' out of paganism. M. Jeschke (1983:66-70) acknowledges that Baptist, Mennonite and other 'believer's churches' have misread the intention of the New Testament by imposing only one of the New Testament 'models' of conversion on their children today, i.e. the 'radical' Pauline-type conversion of Acts 9, rather than the Timothy-type 'nurture' model as reflected in 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15 (see further in 4.4.1 and 4.4.4). Jeschke (1983:66-69) affirms that 'the situation of children of the community of faith is different from that of the sinful world. According to God's purpose it is intended to be different ... the recognition of this fact does not lead logically to infant baptism ... the grace of God is, of course, big enough to rescue the worst of sinners, as the apostle Paul exulted. Yet thankful as we are for that fact, we are thankful for a still more ultimate grace of God - namely, that it is possible to save people from entering upon a sinful life in the first place. The cycle of sinful lives need not be repeated. Once saved, sinners can and should by the grace of God nurture their children (and, indeed, any and all children they can reach and influence) in the life of the kingdom so that these children may appropriate the life of faith for themselves when they reach the age of discretion. We can claim, then, that alongside of the impressive and conspicuous pattern of dramatic crisis conversion
and baptism that dominates the New Testament, the Scriptures offer a second pattern, less sensational and yet representing a higher ideal. It is the pattern of nurture in Christian principles from childhood, nurture in the "discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). And this pattern is recognizably present in both Old and New Testaments, even if the apostle Paul type of dramatic conversion and baptism usually receives more prominence in much of popular Christian consciousness. For the children of believers then, conversion will often take the form of a personal appropriation and ownership of their heritage of faith - the faith in which they have been nurtured. In this way, even though conversions may not be outwardly dramatic, they must still involve this personally owned faith as indicated in John 1:11-13.

8. Jeschke (1983:70-71,107-108) further points out that 'faith is not genetically determined; not all children of Christians themselves ultimately choose faith, and children of non-Christians can certainly be nurtured in the Christian way. Moreover, the Christian nurture even of children of Christians is more than the influence of the home alone. It is a ministry of the church as a whole ... While there is a reciprocal relationship between the biological family and the spiritual family, the spiritual family remains primary. The biological family does not produce the spiritual family, nor does the spiritual family simply coincide with the biological family ... But the Christian community does provide a different environment, different
relationships, influences, and usually (in the great majority of instances) a different spiritual outcome. So we can, and should expect most of the children of Christians to become Christians themselves. We may summarize the above details by emphasizing that whatever benefits and blessings the children of a Christian home may enjoy, Baptists believe that salvation is not inherited by the children of Christian parents but must normally at some point, be personally received by faith (other than in the case of children dying in infancy, mentally retarded people etc). Brian Russell's comment is again relevant here: 'We are not to think that their future is settled and secure until they for themselves have received by faith God's gift of eternal life through his son Jesus Christ.'
4.4. BAPTISM AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP OF CHILDREN

Introduction

Baptists face at least two major theological questions in relation to the baptism and church membership of children. The first one concerns the age at which the baptism of a believing child is appropriate, while the second concerns whether baptism is necessarily the doorway to church membership, or whether church membership may be separated from the question of baptism. (This is not only a question for children, but also for adults).

Beasley-Murray (1966:105) notes that while the answer to the first question is more difficult, the answer to the second is clear: 'the time for joining the Church is baptism. There is no theological or Scriptural justification or practical necessity for postponing Church membership after that event. To be baptised into Christ is to be baptized into his Body; and to be accepted by Christ into his church, but not by the local church in which one is baptized, is an impossible idea'. For Baptists, baptism is not a question of 'adult' vs. 'infant' baptism, but of believer's baptism. Thus Beasley-Murray (1966:107) goes on to affirm: 'There is no theological bar to a child with faith being baptized. In a secularist world that is loaded against a life of faith in God there is much to be said for taking the yoke of Christ in early days. There is no "proper age for a declaration of faith", if by that is meant a standard age at which to be baptized and join the Church. The age for a declaration of faith is the time when one has a faith to declare, and that varies immensely'. We have already noted in 3.4.1.2, however, that the practice of some
Southern Baptists in the United States of baptizing even pre-school children has not been followed in South Africa where the baptism of even pre-adolescent children is still relatively uncommon. Why is the baptism of believing children then in practice sometimes a difficult issue for Baptists?

Our consideration of faith development in 2.3.2.3 and child evangelism in 2.4.4.2 has shown that the Baptist principles of believer's baptism and regenerate church membership raise major questions in relation to the appropriate age for the baptism and church membership of children. Although there may appear to be some overlap, the importance of this issue for Baptists will show why it is now also necessary to consider this question again from the perspective of pastoral practice in the church. The discussion in 4.4.1 to 4.4.4 will show why the actual issue for Baptists is the tension between the practical difficulty in following New Testament principles of profession of faith in Jesus as the only condition for baptism and church membership, and the equally important concern to ensure that such 'professions of faith' are comparable in character though not in circumstances with those recorded in the New Testament. Once this difficulty and tension is understood, the differing statements of Beasley-Murray, Carr and Hull in 4.4.3 will not be interpreted as indicating that Baptists are confused about the appropriate age to baptise but rather that they are attempting to face up to, rather than to avoid, the even more difficult task of assessing when genuine faith is present in particular cases.
4.4.1. Possible reasons for the trend to baptism at a younger age

1. T. George (1986:47-48) links the trend to the sociological development of Baptist churches in the modern era: 'the pattern of early child baptism reflects an evolution of southern Baptists from a sectarian denomination towards what church historian E. Glenn Hinson has called a "Catholic phase of our history". We are no longer a struggling, persecuted sect. We are the majority in the fastest growing region of the United States, the sun-belt... By baptizing younger and younger children who may have a love for Jesus, and may even be able to make some elementary profession of faith, are we not moving toward a position of infant baptism without confirmation?'

2. Some (e.g. Chafin 1963:168-169; Halbrooks 1983:181-183; Hendricks 1989:28; Sparkman 1988:1) have suggested that evangelistic strategy is largely to blame; as the number of adult converts joining Baptist Churches has dropped, churches have sometimes turned to children, especially to those in the Sunday School. In the United States of America especially, pastors and evangelists commonly feel pressurized to engage in 'high pressure' evangelism of young children because their 'success' is often evaluated primarily in terms of the number of people added to the church rolls during their ministry.

3. The fact of 'second-generation Christians' has been an unavoidable historical fact since the passing of the first generation of New Testament times. This has been noted by M. Jeschke (1983:13,66-71), L.C. Ratliff (1963:1-2) and J. Reiling...
While most Baptists would agree with the original intention of the well-worn cliche 'God has no grandchildren, he only has children', Baptists also have to recognize that the situation of children of the church (or children of Christian families) is different from those who become believers in a missionary situation, coming to faith out of a totally non-Christian culture and society. While Baptists do not accept that this difference warrants the paedobaptist response of infant baptism, there is a recognition of the difficulties involved with a direct imposition of the 'crisis conversion' model of New Testament baptism, upon children of the church. Through the process of 'Christian nurture' (which is an alternative 'model' of conversion also found in the New Testament), such children may be more likely to respond to their Christian heritage at an earlier age, without necessarily first going through a period of rebellion and becoming 'hardened sinners' living in 'the world'.

4.4.2. Objections to the baptism of preadolescent children

1. Developmental: One of the major objections to the baptism of pre-school children in particular, but also to a lesser extent of all pre-adolescent children, is whether or not children of such a tender age are really ready for the kind of faith commitment and discipleship that believer's baptism demands. Ratliff (1963:5) links 'accountability' to 'disciple-ability' and concludes that those children incapable of becoming disciples of Jesus are not to be granted baptism; Christian developmental psychology recognizes the validity of children's religious experiences at the various
stages but asks 'are we making of childhood decisions more than they were meant to be theologically?' and warns of the danger of baptizing children 'before they are ready emotionally, cognitively and socially' (Sparkman 1988:4).

2. Theological and psychological: Sparkman (1988:4-6) suggests that by lowering the age of baptism, Southern Baptists are altering the meaning of believers baptism as Baptists have understood it historically. With reference to Beasley-Murray's (1976:361-362) exegesis of baptism in 1 Peter 3:21 as 'an appeal to God for a clear conscience', he asks, 'can a ten-year old child for example really experience what Beasley-Murray understands the New Testament to mean by the requisites to baptism?' Patton (1978:29-31) warns of the danger of baptism without regeneration: 'one cannot look into a heart or mind to determine when a person has been genuinely regenerated. Baptists can, however, exercise caution at the point of urging or promoting activities which may evoke responses because of external pressure but which lack genuine spiritual awareness and the presence of real faith. Obviously, many children have a sense of "loving" Jesus, since they are taught to love their mother and father. While this type of love exists, is it enough to serve as the basis for baptism?' Although the danger of superficial response is obviously also present in the case of adults, pastoral experience indicates that it is even more likely in the case of young children.

3. The pastoral application of Baptist theological principles: It is difficult to assess the beliefs of young children (Hendricks 1989:28). The writer has baptized a child aged ten, being
satisfied that the motive for baptism was not pressure from Christian parents but a genuine desire to express faith in Christ. Reiling (1965:211) explains why it is often difficult to assess the faith of children: 'As soon as the church has a history and the family situation arises, there is a very real sense in which the children may share in the faith of the church before being members, and then faith is experienced as togetherness before it is known as personal call and response to it. And we do well to remember that the Holy Spirit is at work in both stages, in whatever order they may occur. It is also theologically true that faith as togetherness precedes faith as personal experience, because the church precedes individual believers, not in the sense that they are born into it but that they are reborn and baptized into the Church'. It is therefore important to distinguish between faith as mere 'togetherness' and faith as 'personal call and response' before baptism. A.D. Macrae (1967:14) warns that baptism 'without response of faith, is invalid, and we should be very careful not to baptize young people who have not experienced conversion, simply on the ground of their age. If we do, we have not baptized them at all, and they and we may face acute embarrassment when they come to faith'. (Macrae's warning could refer to the situation in some old-established, traditional Baptist congregations where over the decades and centuries, baptism has become increasingly linked in the popular mind with chronological age, e.g. sixteen, rather than with personal faith and conversion, rather like the situation in some Anglican circles in the past where 'confirmation' normally took place around age
twelve). This is linked with the other major pastoral objection to premature baptism— that of the 'drop-out rate' when these children are older. Patton (1978:30) therefore suggests that one reason for the high rate of teenage 'drop-outs' is that of premature believer's baptism before actual regeneration. 'The only way for one to have assurance and to feel rightly related to Christ and his church is through regeneration'. (This objection could admittedly, also be applied to those who 'drop-out' after being baptized as adults, if they were not regenerated).

4.4.3. Arguments in favour of baptism at a younger age

Beasley-Murray (1970:138) does not specify any minimum age for baptism but appears to allow for the baptism of at least some children before adolescence. 'We should also beware of underestimating the ability of a growing child to respond to the gospel and to grasp the essential significance for life'. This is also coupled with the insistence that there should be ongoing catechetical classes, both before and after baptism; doubtful cases may be postponed until there is confidence of their fitness for baptism.

Warren Carr warns that in the case of children instructed in the church through Christian education over many years, it would be unwise to postpone baptism until adolescence or later maturity because such people would probably have become religiously structured to be sinfully proud of their 'theological faith' and 'legalistic goodness', as was the case in some ancient Judaism.
(Ingle 1970:139). Carr is saying that too much Christian education before baptism can lead to false pride, as if baptism is granted as a reward for theological achievement.

W.E.Hull (1980:167) suggests that for believing children who have come to personal faith in the context of a Christian home or congregation, baptism in the middle years of childhood, say between nine and twelve, is a witness to both the Old Testament emphasis on parental influence and to the New Testament emphasis on personal decision. It is 'in true paradox - a testimony both to the solidarity of the child within the family of faith and to the freedom which the child is now beginning to feel to affirm that solidarity for himself or herself ...a situation not exactly paralleled within either the Old or the New Testament, thus calling for a creative response to the truths found in both. In the pattern which I have advocated as normative, baptism may be understood as the mid-point of a "salvation history" that spans all of childhood, gathering up the prevenient grace operative even before birth (Gl 1:15) and anticipating the autonomous faith achieved only in adulthood (Eph 4:13-15)' . While many Baptists would not necessarily feel that it is biblical or necessary for baptism to have 'to witness to the shaping role of inheritance in the process of spiritual formation', there is a lot of sense in Carr's approach, provided that it does not result in the idea that baptism is only to be expected at a particular age, i.e. child rather than infant baptism; the emphasis must be on believer's baptism. Further, Helder's observation (see 4.5.2), in the context
of children's participation in communion, may be equally valid in
the context of baptism; various social trends have accelerated
the rate at which children mature and grow up, so that the late
teens may no longer be a realistic 'average' age for the baptism
of believing children who have already had to face major personal,
social and moral decisions at a much earlier stage than in
previous generations.

4.4.4. Positive suggestions concerning the baptism of children

1. There is obviously a great need for caution on the part of
Baptists in the matter of the baptism of children. In a
significant historical article, D.F. Wright (1987:22-23) has
suggested that the historical origin of the practice of infant
baptism may have been in an extension of child believer's baptism
downwards in age to allow 'baby baptism'. As Patton (1978:31)
has objected 'If the practice among Baptists today leans toward
the baptism of four year olds, will it be to three next year, and
if to three, why not to two?' Similarly, K. Chafin (1963:162),
commenting on the baptism of 'primary' Sunday School children,
asserted: 'If this trend continues it will not be an unusual
thing for preschool children to be joining churches on transfer of
membership'. Some may feel that any reference to age is
inappropriate in a church professing believers' baptism. The
point here, however, is not chronological age but that the trend
towards the baptism of such very young children could indicate a
drift in the direction of infant baptism because of family

362
pressure rather than believers' baptism following a personal response to the gospel.

2. Romans 6:1-4 indicates that by the time of the writing of the Roman letter, the apostle Paul expected the Roman Christians to have had a certain basic understanding of the meaning of their baptism. This does not mean, however, that a full understanding of baptism is necessary before being baptised; this should come through the on-going teaching which converts would receive after reception into church membership (eg Acts 2:41-42). Baptists do believe, however, that the baptisms recorded in the New Testament indicate a definite response to the gospel message, i.e. faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour for the forgiveness of sin (see point 3 below). Pastoral discernment is therefore necessary when considering any request for baptism, whether from adults or from children. It would seem, however, that because of the tendency of some younger children to request baptism for superficial reasons such as 'hero worship' or 'gang response' or because of concrete 'external' understanding at the earlier stages of their cognitive development (see 2.3.1), the need for pastoral discernment is even greater when considering the baptism of young children. This will involve personal contact with the child as well as with parents and Sunday School teachers etc. Children's specialist Cos H. Davis (1990:89) points out that when a child says 'I want to be baptized', it could indicate either an interest in some religious commitment, a desire to do what friends have done, or some genuine understanding of baptism as an act of obedience and an expression of faith in Christ (See p. 89-94 of Davis' book for practical
3. Sometimes young people who were baptized as children in Baptist churches later seek rebaptism because they say they were 'pushed into baptism prematurely and then later felt cheated out of the chance to be baptized at the point in their lives that actually marked their entrance upon a personally owned faith' (Jeschke 1983:136). Acts 8:37 indicates genuine belief in Jesus as a requirement for baptism, but since it is not found in the earliest manuscripts it may only reflect early post-New Testament baptismal practice. Why is it that in spite of apparently false professions of faith such as Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8:9-24, no requests for baptism are recorded as having been questioned or turned down? Acts 8:30-35 suggests the basic biblical message must be understood; Acts 10:47 also refers to having received the Holy Spirit before baptism. It has already been suggested in 2.3.2.3 that the different social context of the New Testament generally meant that 'nominal Christianity' was not as serious a problem as in our modern context so that baptism more often really did coincide with a living faith in Christ. This means that today it may often be necessary to look for biblical faith before simply following the outward biblical procedure of immediate baptism. 'To baptize where faith is not present is to violate the truth of grace, because it is to baptize where grace has not been realized'. The opposite danger would be to postpone baptism so long after the first signs of faith that it 'ceased to be a living sign and has instead become merely a retrospective report' (Jeschke 1983:55-59).
4. We have already noted the need for ongoing instruction following baptism. Beasley-Murray (1970:138) explains: 'Baptism should not be regarded as the conclusion of Christian instruction, but rather as the pivotal point, the initial event which gives meaning to it all. It is the point to which the prior training and instruction move and for which they exist. It is the occasion from which they move forward, as the believer who has entered onto his birthright in Christ seeks to grow in grace, in knowledge, in responsible living, and in the service of Christ in the church and the world'.

5. A mechanical approach which links believer's baptism with the arrival of the mid-teenage years should be avoided. Just as some paedobaptists arrange 'confirmation classes' around age twelve, so some Baptist parents may adopt the attitude 'you're sixteen now - it's time for you to be baptized!' 'As a result baptism too often becomes a sign, not of spiritual life, but only of ethnicity and social-moral respectability' (Jeschke 1983:98).

6. It is also important to give sufficient time for the actual conducting of baptismal services, whether of children, youth or adults. The 'quickie' or 'mass production' approach should be avoided. If baptisms are 'squeezed in' at the end of a 'normal' morning or evening service, we should not be surprised if much of the meaning and importance is lost to the candidates so that they may come to see baptism as only a trivial event in their lives. Baptist congregations do not make weddings only a ten-minute interlude in the services; surely a person crossing over into spiritual life merits at least as much attention as a wedding.
This is not to plead for an exaggerated sacramentalism; it is rather to insist that enough time is taken to celebrate believer's baptism in a way that does justice to its importance.

4.4.5. Children and Church Membership

We have already seen in 4.1 that in a Baptist church, children of members are not regarded as members, but rather as those who are in a 'creative' relationship with the church, until they arrive at a personally owned faith. There are two basic questions relevant to the admission of believing children to full church membership.

Firstly, there are inconsistencies in Baptist practice concerning the relation between baptism and church membership. (This of course affects both children and adults). Although some Baptists have maintained a close connection between the two, there has been a parallel tradition which has separated baptism and church membership. This is certainly the general position in Southern Africa and in other countries where British Baptists have had a significant influence. 'Baptism is not seen as an act of initiation into the life of the church but of the individual standing alone before his Lord. The Church is there to witness and to rejoice but not to receive or to share corporately in the act. Several booklets from previous generations have emphasized this personal aspect of baptism. So much has this been so that a large number of people baptized in Baptist churches are not made members of the church, or if they are only much later' (Matthews 1976:27). W.M.S. West (1960:29-30) notes that 'Some church
constitutions make it possible for people to be baptized at the discretion of the minister, without any reference to the church meeting, which may then, or at a future date, be asked to decide about the suitability of that person for church membership. It is doubtful, in the extreme, whether this reflects the practice of the Apostles'. The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith (Evangelical Press 1974:50) describes baptism as being 'engrafted' into Christ. West concludes: 'It is fairly clear that for them this signified linking with the fellowship of the church, as well as appropriating the benefits of Christ's life, death and resurrection. In the light of all this we need to ask ourselves seriously whether baptism unrelated to church membership is either scriptural or according to Baptist History and Principles.'

The causes of this separation seem to include the following.

1. The influence of John Bunyan, author of 'Pilgrim's Progress' in the seventeenth century. Although personally preferring the baptism of believers only, he refused to allow the issue of believers vs. infant baptism, or the mode of baptism (whether by immersion, affusion or sprinkling), to become a source of division amongst evangelical Christian believers. This tended over the years to lead to a separation of baptism and church membership in Baptist practice, in the interests of 'maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph 4:3).

2. In the nineteenth century the 'new methods' of interdenominational evangelism popularized by Charles Finney and evangelists such as D.L. Moody tended to make 'coming forward' in response to the evangelistic invitation the standard way of
publicly declaring commitment to Christ rather than baptism. Because of the interdenominational context of such evangelistic missions, the 'divisive' question of baptism was avoided. Many Baptists were involved in these missions and this tended to separate baptism and church membership in their thinking.

3. In the modern 'ecumenical' era of the late twentieth century, Baptists are usually more aware of the need to maintain good pastoral relationships with other pastors and Christian denominations. When people from paedobaptist churches come requesting believer's baptism, Baptist pastors are usually anxious to avoid charges of 'sheep-stealing' and do not insist that these people join the Baptist Church. Such people may then go back to their own church and remain in active membership there without becoming a member of the church in which they were baptized.

Both adults and children are affected by the separation of baptism and church membership. However, it appears that in the case of baptized children, the 'gap' between the two may often be longer. Because membership is not automatic, but has to be applied for and approved by the existing membership, baptized children may choose to postpone application for membership until later maturity. Matthew (1976:26-27) notes that an increasing number of Baptists now try to express in worship the unity of gospel, faith, baptism and membership by observing baptism and church membership together. Baptism is thus seen to be a joint action on the part of God, the believer and the community of Christian faith. Beasley-Murray (1970:140) also urges that every baptismal service
should be concluded with the Lord's Supper, which has the effect of marking the importance of the entrance of the convert into the membership of the church and its privileges.

Secondly, there are practical problems to be faced when children are received into church membership. According to the 1987 Statement of Baptist Principles, the principle of congregational church government means that 'a constituted church meeting is, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the highest court of authority for the local church; and that each individual member has the inalienable right and responsibility to participate fully in the life and government of the church, including the appointment of its leaders' (Baptist Union of Southern Africa 1987:164). Is it appropriate, however, for pre-adolescent children, who may lack proper understanding of the issues involved, to have the privilege of voting on all church matters, including such strategic matters as calling a pastor, the purchase/sale of property, election of leaders, the church budget and matters of discipline? Ingle (1970:150-151) gives an example of the kind of problem which may arise: 'Members of a large family who never attended mid-week services had obviously been "canvassed" (concerning the calling of a pastor) to be present and vote the "correct" way. Three of the children, all under twelve - yet members of the church, showed their ballots to their parents for a verification that they had voted properly'. It is for this reason that a number of Baptist churches in Southern Africa have restricted the 'voting rights' of members under the age of sixteen or eighteen. For example,
Clause 6(e) of the Trust Deed and Constitution of the Trinity Baptist Church in Port Elizabeth, as amended in 1987, reads as follows: 'There shall be no age restriction to membership, however, members under the age of 18 years will not be eligible to vote or to stand for the offices of elder or deacon. Such non-voting members should be excluded from the membership count for quorum purposes' (Trinity Baptist Church 1959:2).

We have already noted in 3.4.1.3 that in Southern Africa, the youngest child (for which our information is known to be reliable) to be admitted to full church membership was eleven at the time; in a few cases, children aged as young as seven were baptized, but apparently only admitted to church membership some years later. A recent survey of Southern Baptist churches in the United States of America showed that children were involved in the following ways: as voters in business meetings; givers of money; musicians in the church; worship leaders; participants in mission projects and as stimulants for enthusiasm among older church members.

The Child and the Church (Baptist Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland 1966:45), however, urged rather that 'the emphasis at this stage should be on how the Church can nurture them in Christ, rather than on what they can do for the church. No one should expect of them a mature understanding of the business before church meetings, but they should be given every encouragement to attend these meetings so that they may increasingly become aware of and play their part in church affairs...Spiritual wisdom is not dependent on length of years.
Having accepted these young people as members of the Body of Christ who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, we must act accordingly to the theological principles underlying the church meeting and seek to bring together the whole fellowship to be led by the Spirit to discern the mind of Christ. This, we believe, points to the need for some form of post-baptismal training, which should include the equipping of young members for their responsibilities in the business of church meetings'.

It does appear, however, that in most Baptist churches in Southern Africa, the 'business' of church members' meetings has remained very much an adult affair! It seems we still have a long way to go in attempting to involve young members in the business of the church if we are truly to 'seek to bring together the whole fellowship to be led by the Spirit to discern the mind of Christ'.
4.5. CHILDREN AND COMMUNION

Introduction

The question of children's participation in the Lord's Supper has attracted much interest in recent decades. The following are some reasons why Baptists also cannot avoid the issue.

1. Modern perceptions of the status of children. It has been suggested that in medieval society, the concept of 'childhood' did not exist. This does not imply that children were unloved, neglected or ignored but rather that by the age of seven they were often regarded as mini-adults who were deprived of any special status and were expected to adhere to adult standards. From the seventeenth century especially, Western Europe acknowledged pre-adolescence as a special period of development. The churches of the Reformation attempted to accommodate their new concept of childhood with regard to the sequence of the sacraments and the age requirement for reception, partly under the influence of the Protestant reformers and partly under the influence of the great humanists such as Erasmus (De Molen 1975:49-51). We have already seen in 2.3. how in the twentieth century, developmental psychology has made its impact concerning the 'faith development' of children. Where possible, children are not to be excluded but allowed to participate, at their own level of understanding, in the worship and life of the church, including the Lord's Supper.

2. Current developments in other Christian churches: The Greek Orthodox Church has for centuries practiced both infant baptism and infant communion. In the Roman Catholic Church, children's 'first communion' usually took place after confirmation at age
seven, although a few Catholic congregations have delayed the age of confirmation until later. Until recently, most paedobaptist Protestant churches have not admitted children to the Lord's Supper until after 'confirmation' or 'reception into full membership' which is sometimes the occasion for a personal confession of faith or is itself regarded as a confession of faith. The normal age of such confirmation varied from about twelve to the late teens, or the 'age of discretion' when those baptised in infancy would personally and responsibly 'confirm' their own faith. Recent publications by Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian and various Reformed sources (see 4.5.2) indicate however that the traditional position is changing in favour of admitting children to communion before confirmation. This is being motivated on exegetical, theological and pastoral grounds which will be considered later.

3. Baptist developments: Three major trends are forcing Baptists to consider their approach to children's participation in the Lord's Supper.

(a) The incorporation of the supper into the main worship service: until recent decades, communion was in some ways an 'afterthought' rather than a central focus in many Baptist services. Usually held monthly, it was often 'tacked on' at the close of a normal morning or evening service. This provided a 'break' between the two parts of the service which gave non-members and those who did not wish to share in communion, the opportunity to leave. It is today more common in Baptist churches for the Lord's Supper to be fully integrated with the preaching of
the word so that those who are visitors and non-members may share in the communion. A reminder is given that the supper is intended for believers but no 'examination' is held; it is usually left to the individual to decide whether to partake of the elements or not. Those who are uncertain may simply let the elements pass them by without themselves eating and drinking.

(b) Although 'open' communion is less common amongst Southern Baptists in the United State of America, it is the general practice in the United Kingdom, South Africa and many other countries. This means that a general invitation is given to all Christian believers to participate, whether Baptists or from other denominations. This opens the possibility that some children, whether with or without accompanying parents or other adults, may respond to the invitation.

(c) Baptists today are generally less isolated from other Christian churches than in the past. There is increasing interdenominational fellowship and ecumenical contact on an academic, leadership, congregational and individual level. This means that Baptists are to some extent also influenced by theological trends in other churches. In addition, although many Baptist confessions of faith around the world specify that the Lord's Supper is a privilege of the baptised (i.e. believer's baptism by immersion), this is not the case in South Africa, the United Kingdom and some other countries. We have already noted in 3.4.1.1 that 74% of Baptist respondents in South Africa did not link admission to the Lord's Supper with baptism. The current position is perhaps best described in the joint statement of the
evaluation group appointed by the Baptist World Alliance and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches: 'With regard to admission to the Lord's Table both Reformed and Baptists have no unified thinking as to the participation of children of Christian parents. Theory and practice vary so much on this point that serious consideration ought to be given by both traditions to this issue (Cressey & Wagner 1982:5).

4.5.1. Children and the Lord's Supper: a brief historical survey

F.J.Clasen (1990:148) notes that the reason why the churches' practice on admission to communion has varied throughout the centuries is possibly because the New Testament gives no direct answer to the question concerning who may be admitted. The response to whether infants and children may be admitted has varied from a definite 'yes' to a decisive 'no'. Such answers have almost always been coupled to a dominant theological perspective which in turn was influenced by the events and developments of church history.

The first explicit reference to child communion (as opposed to infant communion) is found in the Apostolic Constitutions, dating around 380 A.D. (Beckwith 1971:28). An earlier reference in the writings of Cyprian of Carthage (approximately 250 A.D.) seems to refer to infants (who had to be carried) taking the bread and wine (Clasen 1990:149-150). Beckwith (1971:28) therefore concludes that it is likely that children received it also. The writings of Augustine (fourth to fifth century) apply John 6:53 as

375
Referring to the elements of the Lord's Supper so that even infants must eat the sacrament or they will not have life. On the one hand, C.L. Keidel (1975:301) asserts that historians overwhelmingly support the view that infant observance of the Lord's Supper was widespread in the early church; on the other hand, Beckwith (who opposes the admission of children to communion) asks, 'why, then, is there no evidence of the communion of children until the middle of the third century, unless it was a later development?' (Beckwith 1971:29). These two somewhat different conclusions perhaps illustrate Clasen's point in the opening paragraph above!

During the middle ages, child communion was common in both the Eastern and Western church until about the eleventh century. With the development of the teaching of transubstantiation, however, communion was served less frequently to church members and largely withheld from children. The elements were seen as so sacred that many feared either dropping or spilling them (Brand 1976:37). Although the Eastern (Greek Orthodox) Church continued to practice infant and child communion, the Western Church moved towards the idea of training before participation from the 'age of discretion' and so communion was only to begin for children aged seven or older. It was also reasoned that since infants received all that was necessary for salvation in baptism, they were not in danger of losing their salvation if they waited until the age of discretion before partaking of the eucharist (Keidel 1975:303). For the Roman Catholic Church, the age of seven for communion was
re-established by Pope Pius X in 1910 (Clasen 1990:152-155).

Although the Reformation restored the cup (participating in the wine) to the laity or congregation, communion continued to be withheld from children, due to the Reformer's emphasis on the close link between knowledge and faith. A close link was thus also seen between catechetical instruction and confession on the one hand and communion on the other. Some scholars (e.g. De Molen 1975:55; Clasen 1990:156) suggest that the Western Church, both Catholic and Protestant, have 'intellectualised' Christianity and that the Reformers generally reflected the late medieval emphasis of faith and discernment as a necessary, subjective prerequisite for participation, influenced especially by the thought of Thomas Aquinas. Under the further influence of pietism (with its stress on personal conversion and assurance of salvation), rationalism and increasing secularization, greater emphasis, it is alleged, was laid on conscious, personal faith for admission to communion (Clasen 1990:157-158). This of course tended to exclude younger children, especially when a fixed age for confirmation or church membership was laid down.

4.5.2. Some current motivations for children's communion in Protestant churches today

Although some such as Lutheran scholar E.L.Brand and Reformed scholar C.L.Keidel appear to advocate both infant as well as child communion, most paedobaptist scholars distinguish infant and child communion and only support admitting the latter. Several
motivations for children's communion have recently been advanced.

1. The initiatory force of baptism: To postpone the participatory inclusion of children into the Christian community obscures the meaning of baptism and even creates a separate and indefensible category of 'infant' baptism which has a different initiatory force from that of 'adult' baptism. This implies a division in the given unity of Anglican understanding of baptism as incorporation into Christ (International Anglican Consultation 1986:188-195). Lutherans, who have traditionally validated infant baptism partly on the grounds of community faith, now also assert that failure to apply this similarly to the validity of infant communion could be used as an argument against infant baptism (Brand 1976:38-41). A recent statement of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa on the subject of children's communion claims 'children are made members of the Church by baptism' (Dimension September-October 1992:5).

2. The interpretation of some passages in 1 Corinthians:
1 Corinthians 11:27-29 which became a 'proof text' for catechetical examination before communion has nothing to do with admission to communion but rather with how it must be worthily celebrated. In the light of the insensitive treatment of the 'have-nots' in 1 Corinthians 11:22, children may also be seen as part of the oppressed, hungry, powerless and disenfranchised of the world. They must be accepted on equal terms in the church. In 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, the apostle Paul sees the eucharistic fellowship as a source of unity not division. This should also apply to families. The inclusion of children therefore poses a
far-reaching question about just how inclusive the church really is (Senn 1983: 222-226).

3. **The understanding of God's grace:** To look for 'evidences' of conversion before permitting children to come is the way of 'conditional grace' and 'legal repentance'. It is paradoxical to assert that communion is a 'means of grace' and yet to insist that children must show 'signs of grace' before they be given this particular 'means of grace'.

4. **Social, psychological and educational motivations:** Children may suffer feelings of rejection if excluded from the communion. We are at different levels in our faith understanding which does not relate to age, and these levels can change in us many times during our lifetime. This makes setting a certain age for participating, if participating requires a certain level of pre-understanding, an impossibility. Children are educated at a much faster pace than even one generation ago. We should not underestimate our children when dealing with their faith. Many children are sufficiently capable of taking communion 'in remembrance of me' from age 5 to 7 in that they are able to 'relive in their minds and emotions, the awesome, saving display of God's personal love for them in Christ's atoning death' (Helder 1987:13). Clasen's thesis (1990:212-217), written in the context of the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk in South Africa showed that amongst the sample of Standard Five children who themselves participated in the survey, almost 50% wanted to be allowed to take communion at an earlier age. These children appeared to have a reasonably basic, adequate understanding of the
meaning of the Lord's Supper.

5. The analogy between the Passover and the Lord's Supper: On the basis of Exodus 12:4 'each one according to the mouth of his eating', Keidel (1975:307-308) concludes that the physical capability of eating was the only requirement for inclusion of Israelite babies and children and so the Lord's Supper should now be given to baptized infants and children naturally capable of eating it. Calvin, however, understood Exodus 12:26 to teach that the Passover feast was to be eaten only by those old enough to inquire into its meaning; Anglican scholar R.T. Beckwith (1971:17-29) argues that in New Testament times only those who had reached the age for the fulfilling of the commandments (normally thirteen) were required to observe the Passover. Reformed scholar H. Visee (1986:14-15) notes that few adults understand the many doctrinal issues concerning the Lord's Supper and suggests that rather than demanding an unreasonable level of knowledge, the Supper can rather be a teaching tool in line with the question and answer pattern for the Passover in Exodus 12:26-27 (see Spurgeon's view of this approach in 1.4.2).

Not all paedobaptists are in favour of children's communion. Beckwith (1971:17-29) sees a baptized infant as a potential Christian only; the inward effects of the sacrament are not to be expected in isolation from the ministry of the word and faith. B.E. van Soest (1987:209-211) of the Reformed Church of America stresses that personal confession of faith is more necessary than ever today because of the need for clarity of choice against
merely civic religion, nominal Christianity and the blurred distinction between the Christian and the non-Christian. Matthew 24-26 also indicates that the institution of the Lord’s Supper was preceded by extensive instruction of the disciples. Whatever view is taken of ‘discerning the body’ in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, a capacity to understand and comprehend is implied.

Baptists would concur with some of the verses expressed in point 4 especially but would differ significantly from many of the views expressed in points 1 to 3.

1. Baptists would agree that, in terms of the New Testament pattern, there seems to be an inconsistency when children are ‘incorporated’ into the church by baptism yet communion is withheld from them (as noted in 1.3.2.2); they would, however, identify the source of the problem not as that of withholding communion from children but rather the practice of baptizing any other than believers. Linked with this is the general Baptist view of baptism and the Lord’s Supper as ‘ordinances’ rather than ‘sacraments’. The Anglican statement referred to in point 1 seems to imply that the outward act of water baptism in and of itself incorporates into Christ, regardless of the presence or absence of faith on the part of the baptized. Baptists believe that baptism cannot in itself incorporate into Christ unless it is accompanied by personal faith in Christ and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. (In the past, one reason for the insistence in paedobaptist Protestant churches on a confession of faith before participation in communion was that it was intended to give
reasonable evidence that this incorporation into Christ had in fact personally taken place in particular cases). They therefore withhold both baptism and communion until a credible profession of personal faith may be made.

2. Baptists would recognize the validity of many aspects of the views concerning the passages in 1 Corinthians as noted in this point, but would still assert that since children are not under discussion in 1 Corinthians, the question of their inclusion or exclusion would have to be determined in relation to other biblical passages (see also 4.5.3). In particular, the unity of the eucharistic fellowship in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 cannot legitimately be interpreted in a way which contradicts the recognition of divisions within families over individual allegiance to Christ as taught in Matthew 10:21, 34-37 and in 1 Corinthians 7:12-14.

3. In looking for a credible profession of faith, Baptists are not setting up a legalistic standard which turns God's grace into 'works'. It is not a question of 'how well are you performing as a Christian?' but rather has the grace of God been received?, has the Christian life begun? One cannot be indifferent to the grace of God. To be effective, the grace of God must be received, even though its practical outworking takes a lifetime (see also 3.5.4 on the question of God's grace).

One may reasonably conclude from the above summary that the question of the admission of children to communion is a very 'live' issue in most 'mainline' Protestant churches, especially amongst those in leadership and to some extent amongst the
'grassroots' membership also. Before attempting to formulate a Baptist approach to children's communion, some exegetical guidelines from 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 are considered.

4.5.3. Some exegetical highlights in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 with special emphasis on v 27-29

1 Corinthians 11:27-29 has, especially since the Reformation, been a key passage concerning admission to the Lord's Supper:

'Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself'. (N.I.V.)

Amongst all the Reformers, this was an important passage. The capacity to judge was seen to be beyond the capability of infants and children. Calvin, for example, specifically excludes infants because the participants were required to examine, prove or search themselves (Institutes IV:16:30). The Westminster Confession of Faith and the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith which is based on the Westminster Confession, refers to 'worthy receivers'. As mentioned previously, many Reformed churches up to the present time normally require a profession of faith following catechetical instruction before children are admitted to the Lord's Table. Because of the recent trends towards the admission of children to communion at an earlier age, and because of pastoral problems arising out of fear of taking communion 'unworthily', the passage
has become a 'storm centre' of interpretation in both scholarly and popular debate. The passage is also significant because the Pauline account of the institution of the Lord's Supper appears to be the earliest account available since it is practically certain that it was written before the earliest of the canonical gospels.

Commentators who favour the admission of children to communion or who do not believe that it necessarily requires a profession of faith before being admitted have correctly pointed out that the passage does not specify who may be admitted to the Supper but rather how it must be observed in a worthy manner. N.M. Pritchard (1980:59) has pointed out that anaxios (unworthy) in v.27 and 29 refers particularly to the abuses prevailing at Corinth and should not be given a wider, more moralizing interpretation than that.

What was the Corinthian abuse? Verses 17-22 indicate that the meal, which according to 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 was supposed to celebrate the oneness of Christians, whom Christ has received, had instead become an occasion where the social differences were accentuated rather than overcome by the celebration of the Supper. (The 'have-nots' of v.22 may have been slaves or workers who did not own their own homes; this could have meant that they were not totally free in the use of their time but were subject to their owners or employers. Verse 33 possibly suggests that they sometimes arrived later than the others at the agape or love-feast, to which worshippers normally brought their own food. They were either unable to bring their own food or found that by

384
the time they arrived, the 'haves', instead of sharing with them, had already finished eating all the available food). This amounted to a denial of the reality of the gospel, of its power to break down all barriers, which should result in the harmonious oneness of believers as outlined in 1 Corinthians 12.

What does it mean to participate 'unworthily'? Fee (1987:560-562) notes 'Unfortunately, this adverb was translated "unworthily" in the KJV. Since that particular English adverb seems more applicable to the person doing the eating than to the manner in which it is being done, this word became a dire threat for generations of English-speaking Christians...The problem lies with the imperative "Let a man examine himself/herself", which along with v.27 has been the cause of untold anxieties within the Church... Since they will be "examined" by God at the End — indeed, their present illnesses are part of that "examination" in the present — they should test themselves now as to their attitude round the Table, especially their behaviour round others at the Table... Although this does not lay a heavy dose of self-introspection on believers, as v.29 will make plain, it does raise proper caution about casual participation at this Table by those who are not themselves ready to come under obedience to the gospel that is here proclaimed'.

What does it mean to 'discern the body' in v.29? In the light of the overall theme of the passage and the immediate context of v.27, there are two main possibilities: Morris (1966:164) asserts
'there it will mean distinguishing the Lord's Supper from other meals, i.e. not regarding it as like any other meal'. Others (e.g. Clasen 1990:139; Fee 1987:563) point out that the context including 10:17, 12:13 and the whole thrust of the passage suggests that this refers to the church, the body of believers, as the body of Christ. Although the King James Version adds both 'unworthily' and 'of the Lord' in v. 29 while the N.I.V adds only 'of the Lord', textual critics point out that both terms are absent from several important early manuscripts. It seems likely that they were not part of the original text but have crept in as an assimilation to v. 27 (Metzger 1971: 562). Of the various commentaries studied, the most adequate assessment seems that of Fee (1987:564) in which he combines the two possible views outlined above: 'The Lord's Supper is not just any meal, it is the meal, in which at a common table with one loaf and a common cup they proclaimed that through the death of Christ they were one body, the body of Christ; and therefore they are not just any group of sociologically diverse people who could keep those differences intact at this table. Here they "must discern/recognize as distinct" the one body of Christ, of which they all are parts and in which they all are gifts to one another. To fail to discern the body in this way, by abusing those of lesser sociological status, is to incur God's judgment'.

Does the self-examination of v. 28 exclude children? Keidel (1975:323-325) suggests that, in some contexts, phrases such as 'whoever' (v. 27), 'a man' (v. 28) and 'anyone' (v. 29, 34) are
unlimited in application, while in others they can not be universally applied. An example would be 2 Thessalonians 3:10 'If anyone will not work, neither let him eat'. If, in this verse, 'anyone' is unlimited, then infants, the crippled, weak and elderly would starve! Keidel thus asserts that the range of application in 1 Corinthians 11 remains an open question unless some other part of Scripture throws light on the matter, and that the warnings in the passage are specifically addressed to the adult members of the church alone; he concludes in favour of the participation of baptized infants and children in the communion. While recognizing the validity of Keidel's 'range of application' argument in the case of 2 Thessalonians 3:10, most Baptists would feel that indeed, in Keidel's own terms - some other parts of Scripture throw light on the matter:

1. The instruction to observe the supper 'in remembrance of me' (v.24), appears also in many early and important manuscripts of Luke 22:19, which, in the context of the Last Supper where Jesus instituted the regular observance of the meal, is basic and general, not focussing specifically on the abuses at Corinth of which probably only some of the adults had been guilty. The implication is that while not all participants (if they are children) may be able to 'examine themselves', all participants are expected to eat and drink 'in remembrance of me'.

2. This remembrance, taken together with the whole drift of the passage including such concepts as 'discernment', 'self-examination', 'worthily', etc, imply a preparation of which small children are generally incapable.
3. We have already noted earlier Van Soest's suggestion that the extensive instruction by Jesus in the upper room at the Last Supper does suggest a pattern for **disciples**, even if this original institution is not to be taken as the ultimate model for its general observance today.

Self-examination or the testing of 'worthiness' by others?:

Pritchard (1980:60-70) contends, on linguistic and contextual grounds, that 1 Corinthians 11:28 does not provide scriptural warrant for **others** to test anyone's worthiness to share in communion. Pritchard even suggests the possibility that unbelievers may have sometimes attended worship at Corinth, including the Lord's Supper. This reasoning, which is too detailed to reproduce here, is based on a comparison of 1 Corinthians 14:23-25 and a 'liturgical' interpretation of 1 Corinthians 16:20-24 where it is suggested that Paul's **anathema** in v. 22 is similar in effect to the statement of 1 Corinthians 11:28 which demands self-examination before participation, i.e. a warning to the congregation, including any unbelievers present, against careless participation in the Supper. It is well-known that one of the main outward excuses for the ejection of the godly eighteenth-century preacher, theologian and revivalist, Johnathan Edwards, from his pastorate in Northampton in the New England States of North America was his refusal to admit those he believed to be unregenerate or morally unworthy, to the Lord's Table. There are good reasons to believe that Edwards may have acted correctly in this matter given the circumstances of the particular
situation; the emphasis of Paul’s exhortation in 1 Corinthians 11:28 is, however, on self-examination rather than on 'testing' by others. Thus C.W.Parnell (1980:67) explains 'It's not the Church’s task to examine the people who attend and to see if they are worthy. That’s the task of the individual who comes to the Table. The church’s task is to repeat the words of the Bible ...Perhaps, then, our South African Baptist practice of putting the onus on the individual to examine himself, as Paul did, rather than letting church or pastor do the examining, is the right way. The punishment can surely be left with God Himself if He considers it necessary, as He actually did in the case of the Corinthians’ serious misbehaviour at the Lord’s Supper'.

4.5.4. Baptist responses to the admission of children to communion

D.F. Tennant (s a : 3-4) explains how historically, children tended to be excluded from the Lord’s Supper in Baptist churches. 'In the Reformation period the break was made by the Radical Reformers and our own Baptist Ancestors with their emphasis on a normative pattern of conversion, i.e. first hear the gospel, make a mature and personal response to it in repentance and faith, be baptized, admitted to membership of the Church and then receive communion. On these grounds children were denied the sacrament because they were not ready to hear the gospel and make a mature response to it ... the Sunday School movement was seen as a separate unit from the church and the preparation ground for children. They were to be taught the faith in Sunday School until
the age of understanding, when they would embrace it for themselves, be converted and baptized. Then, after church membership, they would participate in Holy Communion.

It is important to give doctrinal basis for both the admission and non-admission of children to the Lord’s Supper. First, the idea of belonging to the church. Is communion, as a symbol of the body of Christ, a means of belonging, or is this primarily determined by something else? Baptists would emphasize the sequence of Acts 2:41-42 - response to the gospel message, baptism, being ‘added’ to the church so that one then belongs, and only then, communion. While some would understand baptism itself, including infant baptism, as incorporating into the church (e.g. in 1 Corinthians 12:13), Baptists believe that baptism cannot in and of itself achieve this but only the actual operation of the Holy Spirit in the new birth in believing response to the gospel (which baptism, amongst other things, symbolizes). Thus, communion is only appropriate for believers; this would, however, allow admission to believing children.

Second, the nature of the Lord’s Supper itself. For some, the Lord’s Supper is a sign of conversion, the seal after the event, an outward sign of an inward change. Others see it as a means of conversion, grace and continuing growth in Christ. If the former is seen to be the dominant force, then infants and young children will not be admitted, but if the latter, then who can deny them? Baptists clearly take the former view. The remaining question,
however, concerns the age at which believing children may be admitted. We have already seen that participation must not be passive or thoughtless but requires remembrance (Lk 22:9) and, generally, requires self-examination and discernment.

Third, the question of God's grace. Baptists have always differed about whether baptism and communion are ordinances (i.e. symbolic only) or sacraments (in which God acts in some way). M. Walker (1988:128-133) has pointed out that 'During the nineteenth century, attitudes towards the Lord's Supper amongst English Baptists underwent a marked shift from the predominant Calvinism of the previous two centuries, to a theological amalgum of Zwinglianism and a radical suspicion of sacramentalism'. C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892), for example, held to a more Calvinistic view of the Lord's Supper and believed in the spiritual presence of Christ in the Supper, while John Clifford (1836-1923) stood with those who were to the radical left of Zwingli, who understood the Supper as symbolic only, a memorial of the death of Christ who could not be physically present in the Supper because he had ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven. If communion is a sacrament, should children be denied the grace of God which operates through it? While the majority of modern Baptists worldwide seem to be largely Zwinglian rather than Calvinistic in their view of the Lord's Supper, even those holding the Calvinistic view of a spiritual presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit do not believe that this operates apart from faith. This means that Baptists generally do not believe that any
significant blessing is withheld from children who may not yet be ready to participate in the Lord's Supper, especially in the light of the greater danger of thoughtless, casual participation which may otherwise result.

4.5.5 Baptists and the possible criteria for admission to communion

B. Haymes (s a,1) has noted that in answer to the question 'who may receive the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper?', different branches of the Christian church have given different answers which have been shaped not only by theological principles but also by the particular historical context. For the sake of clarity, the different answers may be summarised under four basic headings. The four are not mutually exclusive, i.e. most churches often hold to some or other combination of two or more of these criteria; they may also be held on different theological grounds. They are:

1) the baptized; 2) the holy people of God; 3) all who know and love the Lord Jesus and 4) all who will may come.

1. The baptized

This practice has a long history, from the early centuries up to the present, and includes those who practice believer's baptism only as well as those who also baptize infants. In the Greek Orthodox Church, baptized infants receive communion as babes in arms. Others who practice infant baptism argue that baptism and, at a later stage, confirmation, together constitute Christian initiation and that only after the total process is complete, should the bread and wine be received. (We have noted, however,
that the trend in many churches seems to be towards seeing
baptism, including infant baptism, as the only necessary
incorporation into the church, and hence the motivation for
children to take communion at an earlier age). Some Baptists,
including the seventeenth-century General Baptists and the 'Strict
Baptists' in England and most Southern Baptists in the United
States of America today, tend to restrict admission to communion
to those who have been baptized by immersion as believers.
Although among the Southern Baptist Convention it is not unusual
for children as young as five or six to be baptized as believers
and so admitted to the Table, Baptist congregations in most other
countries have tended to be a teenage and adult fellowship of
believers. The difficulty of making baptism the only and
essential requirement for admission to communion is seen in
Haymes' (s a,3) question 'Is the requirement of a specifically
religious act as a necessary condition for attendance at the
Lord's Supper in keeping with the Gospel of Grace the supper
proclaims? If "necessary" here means something "legal", then the
argument is open to all the objections that Paul brought against
those who advocated circumcision in Galatia'. As we have noted
in 3.4.1, 'open communion' is the general practice in Southern
African Baptist churches. All Christian believers, whether
baptized or unbaptized (such as members of the Salvation Army and
Society of Friends ('Quakers') who do not themselves normally
practice baptism or communion in their own context at all, are
thus invited to participate. This would also mean, at least in
theory, that children old enough to respond to such an invitation,
may possibly do so unless a particular local congregation had a
definite policy against this or unless they are prevented from
doing so by their parents.

2. The holy people of God

Many Christians, including a significant number of Baptists stress
that, for whatever reason baptism is necessary, it is not in and
of itself a sufficient ground for receiving the Lord's Supper.
There is also a stress on self-examination and purity along the
lines of Paul's exhortation in 1 Corinthians 11:27-32. Although
the early Puritans and Separatists saw the church as a fellowship
of individual believers, the Lord's Supper was also seen as a
church ordinance, which was celebrated corporately, as against
individualism. Some Baptists have maintained a strict
discipline, maintaining that communion was only for 'members in
good standing'. This usually included both moral and theological
elements. A balance needs to be kept here between two extremes.

Haymes (s a, 4) comments 'If it is the case that only the morally
upright and acceptable can come to the Lord's Table, then few
indeed will be there. It is the glory of the Gospel that sinners
are accepted as sinners ... But is it for persistent unrepentant
sinners?' In 1 Corinthians 5 Paul indicates that there is a need
for discipline within the Christian fellowship. It is also true,
however, that 'moral purity' is not just an individual matter -
the context of the Corinthian abuse in 1 Corinthians 11 indicates
that it is possible for a whole congregation or parts of a
congregation to celebrate communion with no regard for the 'have-
nots' and so fail to 'discern the body'. Similarly one has to
ask how much (or how little) doctrinal content is necessary to be recognized as a Christian. Although we are not saved by our theologies but by grace through faith, yet without some minimum content, our faith literally has nothing in it, since it is the object of our faith that distinguishes it from mere 'positive thinking'. To participate in religious ceremonies without any understanding of their meaning may be to make empty gestures. On the other hand, we need to 'let grace remain grace so that those who cannot pass their own examinations, let alone ours, can still come in repentance, hope, desire and such faith as they are given' (Haymes 5).

3. 'All who know and love the Lord Jesus'
The invitation to communion in Baptist churches in Southern Africa and the United Kingdom is often given in terms such as 'all who know and love the Lord Jesus, of whatever church you may be a member'. Often no reference is made to baptism or church membership at all, and the decision on whether to participate or not is left to the individual conscience. There are two strengths in this position:
(a) It affirms that it is the Lord's Table and depends on Christ rather than on fallible rules made by the church.
(b) It breaks down denominational and ecclesiastical barriers by affirming the essential oneness of believers in Christ, i.e. it has positive ecumenical implications. The danger of the position, however, is that it may undervalue the church and be reduced to a selfish piety that fails to 'discern the body'.
Although faith in Christ is personal and individual, it is not
solitary and individualistic. Thus a proper tension between the personal and corporate dimensions must be maintained in the concepts of church and salvation.

4. All who will may come

In this fourth basic approach, the invitation is extended to all present, without any reference to baptism, church membership or even any firm Christian belief at all. This view has the advantage of proclaiming that the liberating grace of God in Christ is not only intended for those already in the church but is also available to those still outside of it. Haymes warns, however, 'But the danger is in the possibility of this being heard as cheap grace, of a receiving without giving, of discipleship and salvation without sacrifice and judgement'. Christians differ on the question of whether communion may be seen as a 'converting ordinance'. Although the writer knows of at least two people who were spiritually awakened and came to believing faith in Christ during communion services, these services were also accompanied by the evangelistic preaching of the Word. There is no reason why the 'teaching tool' of the Lord's Supper cannot be used as an opportunity to 'proclaim the Lord's death until he comes' (1 Cor 11:26). It is doubtful, however, whether this 'effect' is the primary intention of the service of communion. The broad, general invitation certainly offers a very reduced theology of communion which has the danger of giving a false sense of security to the uncommitted.

Baptists who practice 'closed' communion (admitting only those
baptized by immersion as believers) usually practice a combination of the first two criteria, while those practicing 'open' communion usually have in mind some combination of the first three criteria. It is the writer's impression that very few Baptists would be happy to invite the unbelieving and uncommitted to the Table, even though they may use the communion service to present the gospel to those who are not yet believers. No Baptists would observe 'infant communion' and apart from churches of the Southern Baptist Convention in the United States, it would be relatively unusual for very young children to participate in communion.

4.5.6. Strengths and weaknesses of some current arguments for admitting young children to communion: A Baptist pastoral perspective

T. Turner (s a,2) asserts: 'Genuine insights about children and their development, when pursued so that they reach conclusions about taking Communion, have been allowed to take too large a place and are denying the equally valid insights about personal faith and response resulting in baptism and church membership and life commitment'. Turner, a British Baptist pastor speaks from pastoral experience as one who has followed the debate about children's communion, gaining much and changing much through it. He has, however, stopped short of allowing pre-adolescent children to actively partake of the elements and gives four main reasons:
1. Concern for worship
Churches which have taken the presence of children seriously, have gained immeasurably. Children have a sense of wonder, mystery
and joy in worship that is often sadly absent in the adult. Our adult worship is sometimes too intellectualized. The price to be paid, however, will be too high if children are allowed to shape one of the central acts of worship, which is communion, because it can result in a watered-down and undemanding worship. 'A child brings a dimension of basic awe and wonder, a sense of the numinous. But a child can rarely, if ever, experience the intense spiritual passion arising from a deep sense of sin forgiven, nor the element of self-sacrifice and aspiration which is an important component of adoration - which is the basic ingredient of personal and corporate Christian experience. Whether or not the average member of a congregation has this intense experience every week is beside the point ... Part of a child's nurture is to be within a truly worshipping community, but we must offer them authentic worship, not a distortion or a children's version' (Turner s a, 3). Turner is convinced by personal experience and observation of children that a truly biblical experience of communion can only be entered into at a level of maturity and understanding.

Most Baptists would accept the results of Clasen's survey (see 4.5.2.) in the context of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, that many in the Standard Five catechism class were ready for intelligent participation in communion. Such children would probably be aged from eleven to thirteen, i.e. on the threshold of adolescence or 'teenagers'. For children who are much younger than this, however, Turner's assessment would seem to be nearer
the mark: 'To allow a child to take communion with the belief that the child is already experiencing what communion is about, is not only to lessen the significance of communion but to forge habits of mind in the child which he will have to unlearn at a later date. Taking bread and wine means entering into the meaning of the Lord's death for us. Anything less than this is to fail to discern the Body (1 Cor 11:29). Because we are about worship we should be glad to give children as large a place as they are capable of filling. But we must never allow this new discovery so to control our worship that it lowers the heights to which we should always be seeking for it to rise' (Turner s a,4).

2. Concern for the child

Baptists, partly because of their emphasis on believer's baptism, have sometimes been more prone than others to undervalue childhood and to fail to have an adequate theology of childhood. As already noted in 2.3.1, developmental psychology has indicated the importance of the first years of life in the formation of character. Turner maintains, however, that although a child can make a response appropriate to its age, some responses are inappropriate at some ages. 'The whole force of the researches to date is that the child can be taught Biblical material and religious concepts too early ... It is inappropriate to receive communion before a particular stage of development' (Turner s a,5). Turner then suggests rather that puberty, the time of the full emergence of sexuality, with its close associations with personal identity, is the generally accepted period of life at which it is appropriate to begin to take communion because then a person is
ready to consider the claims of Christ and make a response of
surrender and commitment, leading to baptism, church membership
and the meal of this committed community. Turner therefore seems
to follow the approach of Ratliff as outlined in 1.4.3. We have
already noted in 2.3.1, however, that the earlier conclusions of
some faith development theorists, that children are unable to
grasp many biblical concepts until proper cognitive thinking has
been developed, have had to be modified in the light of the less
cognitive, more experience-oriented research of Montessori,
Cavalletti, Roux and others. This means that younger, pre-
adolescent children may have valid religious experiences,
including some understanding of the meaning of the Lord's Supper
which may therefore make it appropriate for such children to
participate in communion. The great difficulty, of course, is
that of testing such subjective experiences of children; although
in some ways the same difficulty would also apply to adult
experiences, adults are usually able to articulate their
experiences in more recognizable, biblical terms. Turner
explains further that a child gains by having a picture of
adulthood which contains dimensions and experience which are yet
to be discovered. Children are not discouraged by having to
wait. More damage may be done by not allowing them to be
children and expecting them to grow up too quickly (Turner s a,6).

3. Concern for the family

Parents today are concerned to do things as a family. We have
already noted in our exegesis of 1 Corinthians 7:14 that there are
valid biblical grounds for recognizing that the children of
believers do have a somewhat different relation to the Christian home and indirectly to the church than the children of unbelieving parents. To claim, however, on the basis of this text or because of the need for family unity, that the family should therefore all take communion together is to attempt to make these ideas bear too much weight. There are also practical difficulties - the ideal picture of the nuclear family is far from typical of the average family attending worship services today. One Baptist congregation in the Cape Town suburbs recently discovered that more than half of the children ministered to in Sunday School and in weekday youth activities came from divorced homes or 'single parent families'. Many children come from homes where either one or both parents are not believers and so usually only one, and sometimes neither, are present with them at services. Some are brought by grandparents. This makes it difficult in practice to operate as if the nuclear family were typical. In addition, it would be difficult in practice to decide which children should be allowed to take communion. The Baptist way of serving communion to the seated congregation raises difficulties which do not arise in churches where the people come forward to be served by the pastor or priest. In a situation where large numbers of children are present, some of whom have been declared 'ready', and others not, there is at least a likelihood that the latter will follow the lead of the former and children will simply take communion mechanically, as the plate passes. To prevent this happening, measures would have to be taken which would result in more division and difficulty, and the isolation of certain families,
leading to feelings of rejection, which would also destroy the whole concept of the church as a family. (The other alternative, of allowing all children of all ages to participate, would be even more unacceptable to Baptists and many other Christians!).

4. Concern for the Gospel

Baptism and the Lord's Supper symbolize key aspects of the gospel. In communion, human need is expressed, the redemption and resurrection in Christ recalled, fellowship with the risen Lord promised and the renewed life of individual believers and the congregation offered in surrender and service. It is no exaggeration to assert that the spiritual health of the church is to some extent linked with its understanding of the Lord's Supper. If this is so, any changes made in the observance of communion will in due course have far-reaching effects on the lives of Christian individuals and congregations. Taking full part in communion is not simply a matter of chronological age but of ability to appreciate the death of Christ and respond to it. This involves an awareness of need, of one's human inability, blindness, lostness, of being a sinner rather than merely having committed certain sins. It involves understanding of the person of Christ, his work of reconciliation, of voluntary surrender to Christ and willingness to follow in his ways in future. This is not to exalt the primacy of the intellect or to deny the power of the Holy Spirit to 'lead into all truth' (John 16:13). This approach recognizes that a spiritually growing teenager of fifteen, who has been a believer from the age of ten, would probably have a deeper biblical understanding of the meaning of
the Lord's Supper than a thirty year old adult who has only been a believer for a few months. Involved, therefore, in the decision to admit pre-adolescent children to communion are decisions affecting the Baptist understanding of the gospel, of church membership, and of the concept of the 'gathered church'.

4.5.7. Summary and proposals
Every alternative approach to children's participation in the Lord's Supper seems to have its strengths and weaknesses, a rather frustrating situation for those who prefer a very precise theology with no loose ends but a conclusion arrived at not only by academic study but also by practical experience. How then may we summarize the Baptist approach?

1. Baptist attitudes to the participation of children in communion is determined by the same principles that determine Baptist attitudes to baptism - that of the believer's church or 'regenerate membership'; just as baptism is for believers only, so the Lord's Supper is for believers only. The need for conscious personal faith therefore means that no Baptists would be in favour of infant communion as it is presently practised in the Greek Orthodox Church; communion is also not for very young children who cannot yet clearly indicate personal faith in Christ nor at least some understanding of the meaning of the Supper.

2. The position of 'closed communion' Baptists is certainly logical and in some ways easier to control - the Lord's Supper is a privilege of baptized believers only. In some Southern Baptist churches it is not uncommon for children under six to be
baptized as believers (Ingle 1970:14), although some have protested that this is almost becoming a form of 'infant baptism' practised by Baptists. These baptized children would then be admitted to church membership and to the Lord's Supper, usually in that order. It would seem to follow that if such children were 'ready' to voluntarily confess their faith in baptism, they would also be able adequately to 'remember' the Lord in his death, at the Table. However, as already indicated in 4.5.6, many Baptists would be unhappy about pre-adolescent children taking communion and so the American trend to baptism and communion at a younger age, has tended not to be the pattern in most other countries.

3. The position of 'open communion' together with the practice of leaving the question of participation to the individual conscience, which is the general view in Southern Africa, means that the participation of young children is possible, even if relatively unusual. Pastoral wisdom and sensitivity is needed on the part of pastors and parents in helping children who may be 'ready' to participate. This could be done by:-

a) preaching and teaching about the meaning of the Lord's Supper;
b) personal counselling with parents and children concerned;
c) the adoption of a general policy or guidelines by local congregations, following study and discussion between the leadership and membership, of the biblical and practical issues outlined in this chapter. This is particularly important and could make the handling of the question of children's communion a means towards the spiritual maturity and unity of the congregation rather than a source of conflict and confusion.
4.6 THE CHILD IN THE CHURCH: CONCLUSION

Two key principles have influenced the Baptist approach to the place of the child in the church - the need for conscious personal faith and the claim to be following New Testament church practice. On the one hand this has led all Baptists to reject infant baptism, yet on the other hand Baptists differ amongst themselves on such questions as whether children of believers have any special relationship to the church, how the children of believers share in salvation, the age at which baptism and church membership of children is appropriate and whether unbaptised children (or adults) may participate in the Lord's Supper. Baptists share the difficulty faced by all Christians on this issue, that many of these questions are not directly addressed in the New Testament but only 'incidentally' mentioned and sometimes not at all. This means that theological conclusions will be guided primarily by prior theological principles which are regarded as essential. Baptists cannot escape the task of doing theological work on particular issues - 'to follow the New Testament pattern' is not always as easy as it sounds.

1 It may be necessary to choose between being biblicistic and being biblical; the former approach may, for example, lead to the baptism of all little children who claim to accept Christ or 'love Jesus', the latter approach may lead to the conclusion that baptism is linked to responsible discipleship and is therefore not necessarily appropriate at too early a stage.

Similarly, although there is no explicit biblical command for a 'dedication' service, many Baptists feel the practice is
scripturally and theologically sound.

2 Some questions cannot be decided by simply following one biblical principle; sometimes differing biblical principles need to be held in tension. For example, to practise 'closed communion' may appear to follow Acts 2:41-42 but it may also be akin to the Galatian or Judaistic heresy of making something other than faith in Christ alone the basis of Christian fellowship, and so other Baptists practise 'open communion' which would allow the possible inclusion of younger children in communion.

3 Some inconsistencies amongst Baptists have more serious implications e.g. the separation of baptism and church membership which, in New Testament practice, seemed to go together, and the imposition of only the 'radical' or dramatic Pauline type conversion model among children of the church to the neglect of the equally valid Timothy type 'nurture' model of conversion.

4 The exposition of 1 Corinthians 7:14 in 4.1 has indicated both the biblical basis and the practical wisdom of seeing children of believers as standing in a creative pastoral relationship with the Christian family and church. Churches which regard such children as in precisely the same position as 'pagans' fail to see their responsibility in this regard while those churches which respond positively may in due time be expected to reap long-term benefits from a right approach to such children.

5 The place of the child should be seen as one of nurture in home and in church, a state of becoming, awaiting the dawning of a personally-owned faith which may then be expressed in baptism and church membership.
5. APPENDICES

1. 1924 Statement of Belief
2. 1987 Statement of Baptist Principles
3. 1990/1991 Questionnaire Results
5. Chart indicating ministry to children in relation to the concepts of 'innocence' and 'accountability'
6. Samples of Children's Worksheets
APPENDIX 1

STATEMENT OF BELIEF; BAPTIST UNION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

PASSED IN ASSEMBLY AT DURBAN IN SEPTEMBER, 1924

1. We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments in their original writing as fully inspired of God and accept them as the supreme and final authority for faith and life.

2. We believe in One God, eternally existing in three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3. We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten by the Holy Ghost born of the Virgin Mary and is true God and true man.

4. We believe that God created man in His own image; that man sinned and thereby incurred the penalty of death, physical and spiritual; that all human beings inherit a sinful nature which issues (in the case of those who reach moral responsibility) in actual transgression involving a personal guilt.

5. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, a substitutionary sacrifice, according to the Scriptures and that all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood.

6. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus, His ascension into heaven and His present life as our High Priest and Advocate.
7. We believe in the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

8. We believe that all who receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith are born again of the Holy Spirit and thereby become children of God.

9. We believe in the resurrection both of the just and the unjust, the eternal blessedness of the redeemed and the eternal banishment of those who have rejected the offer of salvation.

10. We believe that the one true Church is the whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit; that the local Church on earth should take its character from this conception of the Church spiritual and therefore that the new birth and personal confession of Christ are essentials of Church membership.

11. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ appointed two ordinances - Baptism and the Lord's Supper - to be observed as acts of obedience and as perpetual witnesses to the cardinal facts of the Christian faith; that Baptism is the immersion of the believer in water as a confession of identification with Christ in burial and resurrection and that the Lord’s Supper is the partaking of bread and wine as symbolical of the Saviour’s broken body and shed blood, in remembrance of His sacrificial death till He come.
APPENDIX 2

STATEMENT ON BAPTIST PRINCIPLES : BAPTIST UNION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA : PASSED IN ASSEMBLY AT CAPE TOWN IN OCTOBER 1987

PREAMBLE : We as Baptists share many areas of our faith with other members of the professing Christian Church. These include a belief in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; in the supreme Lordship of Jesus Christ as Head of the Church; and in the Bible as the inspired Word and as the final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

There are however areas of principle and practice where we as Baptists make distinctive emphases arising out of our understanding of the Scriptures. It is to clarify these that the following statement is made.

We, as Baptists believe in:

1. The CHURCH as the whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

The local church, being a manifestation of the universal church, is a community of believers in a particular place where the Word of God is preached and the ordinances of Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper are observed. It is fully autonomous, except insofar as it binds itself through voluntary association.

2. BELIEVER'S BAPTISM is an act of obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and a sign of personal repentance, faith and regeneration; it consists of the immersion in water into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. The principle of CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH GOVERNMENT, namely, that a constituted church meeting is under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the highest court of authority for the local church; and that each individual member has the inalienable right and responsibility to participate fully in the life and government of the church, including the appointment of its leaders.

4. The PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS, by which we understand that each Christian has direct access to God through Christ our High Priest, and shares with Him in His work of reconciliation. This involves intercession, worship, faithful service and bearing witness to Jesus Christ, even to the end of the earth.

5. The principle of RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, namely, that no individual should be coerced either by the State or by any secular, ecclesiastical or religious group in matters of faith. The right of private conscience is to be respected. For each believer this means the right to interpret the Scriptures responsibly and to act in the light of his conscience.

6. The principle of SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE in that, in the providence of God, the two differ in their respective natures and functions. The Church is not to be identified with the State nor is it in its faith or practice, to be directed or controlled by the State. The State is responsible for administering justice, ensuring an orderly community, and promoting the welfare of its citizens. The Church is responsible for preaching the Gospel and for demonstrating and making known God's will and care for all mankind.
APPENDIX 3


1. For a breakdown of the various categories of respondents, and statistics relevant to the interpretation of the questionnaire results, see 3.2 of the thesis. For an analysis and interpretation of the results together with illustrative diagrams, see the whole of chapter 3. As an explanation of the three basic categories of result used in chapter 3, please note the following.

a) 'Strongly agree' and 'agree' in the questionnaire were added together to give a total for 'agree' in the diagrams.

b) 'Disagree' and 'strongly disagree' were added together to give a total for 'uncertain' in the diagrams.

c) The percentages for 'uncertain' and 'no reply' were added together to give a total for 'uncertain' in the diagrams.

While statistics given for the replies to the questions requiring a response on a five-point scale were based on a full response of 263 replies, responses to the other questions were much lower; the actual number of replies received in each case is noted after each question.

SECTION A : QUESTIONS CONCERNING BAPTISM

How is baptism practiced in your congregation/ministry?

2.1 candidates are baptized as soon as possible after profession of faith = 6%
2.2 baptism is preceded by one or more brief baptismal classes = 62%

2.3 each request for baptism is individually assessed and then baptism follows without formal instruction = 7%

2.4 period of formal instruction before baptism = 6%

* combination of two or more options = 19%

Abbreviations for six point-scale of responses:
1 = strongly agree 2 = agree 3 = uncertain 4 = disagree
5 = strongly disagree 6 = no reply

3.1 the time interval between personal faith and baptism makes no difference, provided baptism follows faith and does not precede it. 1 = 36.7% 2 = 40.8% 3 = 2.7% 4 = 15.2% 5 = 2.7% 6 = 1.9%

3.2 baptism should take place as soon as possible after personal faith. 1 = 33% 2 = 45% 3 = 5% 4 = 9% 5 = 4% 6 = 4%

3.3 the biblical significance of baptism is seriously weakened when it does not coincide with faith 1 = 64% 2 = 23% 3 = 4% 4 = 5% 5 = 1% 6 = 3%

3.4 Estimate what percentage of the total number of baptisms over the last five years in your congregation took place within one month after profession of faith (103 replies)
0-25% = 67 churches; 26-50% = 9 churches
51-75% = 8 churches; 76-100% = 19 churches

413
- six months after profession of faith (153 replies)
  0-25% = 54; 26-50% = 50; 51-75% = 28; 76-100% = 21

- one year or longer after profession of faith (145 replies)
  0-25% = 68; 26-50% = 33; 51-75% = 19; 76-100% = 25

4.1 God always responds to human action in baptism
  1 = 15.5%; 2 = 38.5%; 3 = 15%; 4 = 17%; 5 = 6%; 6 = 8%

4.2 any blessing or action of God in baptism depends on the faith
  of the one baptized
  1 = 25%; 2 = 31.8%; 3 = 7.7%; 4 = 22.7%; 5 = 6.8%; 6 = 8%

4.3 baptism is a witness/testimony to what has already happened
  1 = 68%; 2 = 27%; 3 = 1%; 4 = 2%; 5 = 0%; 6 = 2%

5.1 baptism is essential
  1 = 33%; 2 = 31%; 3 = 4%; 4 = 22%; 5 = 4%; 6 = 6%

5.2 baptism is important
  1 = 54.5%; 2 = 38%; 3 = 1%; 4 = 0.5%; 5 = 1%; 6 = 5%

5.3 baptism may be discarded altogether (as e.g. in the
  Salvation Army)
  1 = 1.5%; 2 = 3.4%; 3 = 2%; 4 = 23.8%; 5 = 61.3%; 6 = 8%

6.1 baptism has no necessary connection with church membership
  1 = 9.5%; 2 = 27%; 3 = 3%; 4 = 33.5%; 5 = 22.8%; 6 = 4.2%

6.2 we should only baptize those who will also become members of
  our local congregation
  1 = 2.7%; 2 = 8.7%; 3 = 2%; 4 = 56.1%; 5 = 28.2%; 6 = 2.3%

6.3 we should baptize believers without insisting on membership
  in our own congregation, provided the candidates are in active
  membership with some other Christian congregation, even though
this may not be a Baptist church.

1 = 14.4% 2 = 57.8% 3 = 7.3% 4 = 14.4% 5 = 2.3 %
6 = 3.8%

7.1 the youngest child I/our church has baptized was approximately .... years old at baptism.

Total replies = 20. (Age 7 = 1; 8 = 2; 9 = 3; 10 = 6;
11-15 = 8)

7.2 I/our church would not consider baptizing any child, even after personal confession of faith, who was less than ... years old

only 9 replies (Age 6 = 1; age 10 = 3; age 16 = 1; 'no age limit' = 2)

7.3 relative proportions of children, youth and adults baptized in my ministry / our congregation over the last five years (or less if a new pastor/congregation)

Total replies = 11; age 6-11 (3% = 2 churches; 5% = 1 church) age 12-18 (5-20% = 5 churches; 30% = 2 churches; 40% = 1 church; 50% = 1 church; 70% = 2 churches) age 19-30 (20-25% = 4 churches; 40% = 3 churches; 50-80% = 4 churches) age 31 and older (10-20% = 4 churches; 30-45% = 4 churches; 50% = 3 churches)

What proportion of the total number of baptisms in your ministry /church over the last five years may be described as falling into the following categories:

8.1 new believers with no connection to any Christian church, converted to Christ through the ministry of our local church
Total replies = 15 (12-20% = 7 churches; 30-50% = 6 churches; 60-70% = 2 churches)

8.2 new believers who may have had some outward connection with another Christian church but who have now come to personal faith through the ministry of our local church

Total replies = 15 (10% = 6 churches; 20-25% = 3 churches; 40-60% = 4 churches; 90-100% = 2 churches)

8.3 believers from paedobaptist churches who have come to baptist convictions

Total replies = 8 (nil = 3 churches; 10% = 3 churches; 15-20% = 2 churches)

8.4 regular adherents or children and family of existing church members who have come to personal faith

13 replies (5-30% = 7 churches; 40-50% = 3 churches; 70-100% = 3 churches)

9.1 our church has 'closed' membership (i.e. restricted to believers who have been baptized by immersion)

22 replies

9.2 our church has 'open' membership (i.e. baptism by immersion is not an essential requirement for membership)

no replies

10.1 The mode of baptism (i.e. immersion, pouring or sprinkling) is not important, provided only believers are baptized

1 = 4% 2 = 11.5% 3 = 2% 4 = 37% 5 = 41% 6 = 4.5%

10.2 Immersion is the only proper Biblical mode of baptism for the following reasons:

416
Total replies = 34

a) The meaning of the Greek word *baptizo* = 9 replies
b) The symbolism of Romans 6:2-4 requires immersion = 8 replies
c) Baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:38-39 = 3 replies
d) Obedience in following Christ where baptism appears to have been by immersion (Matthew 3:13-17) = 5 replies
e) 'Biblical'/‘Scriptural’ - no texts given = 6 replies
f) Historical practice of early church; archaeological evidence (e.g. design of baptistries) = 3 replies

SECTION B : CHILDREN AND THE CHURCH

11.1 Children should only be allowed to participate in the Lord’s Supper if they are over ... years old

Only five replies; age 6 = one; age 12 = three; age 13 = one

11.2 Believing children may be allowed to participate in the Lord’s Supper when they are (individually) able to ‘examine themselves’ before participating.

1 = 21%  2 = 66.8%  3 = 3.4%  4 = 5.5%  5 = 1.5%  6 = 1.9%

11.3 Children desiring to participate should not be prevented from doing so as this may discourage them from following Christ or give the impression the church is only for adults.

1 = 13.3%  2 = 33.6%  3 = 11%  4 = 29.7%  5 = 7.6%  6 = 4.6%

11.4 The question of children participating in the Lord’s Supper should be left to the discretion of

a) the child himself/herself  21%
b) the parents  19%

417
c) the church leadership 15%
  uncertain 5%

11.5 only those who have been baptized should be allowed to participate
1 = 6.5%  2 = 13.4%  3 = 4.2%  4 = 51.5%  5 = 22.6%  6 =1.5%

11.6 the youngest child I have observed participating in the Lord's Supper in our church was approximately
Total replies = 15 (Age 7 = 2; age 8 = 3; age 9 = 1; age 10 = 3; age 12 = 4; age 14 = 1; age 16 = 1)

12.1 our church has no minimum age restriction for membership
Total of 13 replies

12.2 our church has a minimum membership age restriction of ...
years
Only two churches replied; one had an age restriction of 16, the other of 18

12.3 our church has no minimum membership age restriction but children under the age of ... years are not permitted to vote at members meetings on matters such as election of leaders, calling of a pastor, property etc.
Twelve churches replied; one had an age restriction of 16 for voting; eleven had an age restriction of 18 for voting.

12.4 relative age distribution of present church membership in our congregation:
Total replies = 19
Only one church indicated that 5% of its present church membership was under age 10.

**Age 10-18:** no members of this age = 4 churches; 5% = 3 churches; 10% = 6 churches; 15% = 4 churches; 20% = 1 church; 30% = 1 church

**Age 19-30:** 10-20% = 4 churches; 25%-35% = 9 churches; 40%-45% = 6

**Age over 30:** 40%-50% = 6 churches; 55-65% = 8 churches; 70-75% = 5

12.5 the youngest person to be admitted to church membership in our congregation was ... years old at the time

Total replies = 8 (Age 12=2; age 14=3; age 15 = 1; age 16 = 1; age 21 = 1)

13.1 the practice of 'dedication' or 'presentation' of Christian parents and their infants should be dropped since there is no specific scriptural authority for it; it is merely a sort of 'dry' infant baptism to satisfy parents who feel the need for something to replace infant baptism

1 = 1.5% 2 = 6% 3 = 5.7% 4 = 46.3% 5 = 36.5% 6 = 3.8%

13.2 this practice does not contradict scriptural principles and should be arranged where requested by believing parents

1 = 33.2% 2 = 54.5% 3 = 2.2% 4 = 3.8% 5 = 1.9% 6 = 4.2%

13.3 number of couples and their infants dedicated/presented in our congregation over the last five years ...

Total replies = 7 (8 couples = 1; 10-19 couples = 2; 20-29 = 2; 30-39 = 2)

13.4 I believe dedication/presentation is Biblical because:

.................................................................

Total replies = 23
Jesus blessing the children = 13

It acknowledges Christian parental responsibility as e.g. in
Proverbs 22:6 = 3

The dedication of Samuel in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New
Testament = 4

Other reasons = 3

14.1 What percentage of the congregation usually attending your
Sunday morning services are children under 12? ........ %

Total replies = 17 (Under 10% = 4 churches; 10-20% = 4 churches;
20-29% = 6 churches; 30-39% = 2 churches; 50-59% = 1 church)

14.2 Sunday school and morning service in our church are held

a) at different times = 20
b) simultaneously = 3

Total replies = 23

14.3 We seek to involve children in worship services by:

Total replies = 15

a) a 'children's talk' = 4 churches
b) including some points in the sermon for them where possible =
   5 churches
c) participation of children's choir = 1 church
d) provide activity worksheet related to the service and the
   sermon = 1 church
e) other (explain) = 4 churches

14.4 Worship should be directed to believers and therefore no
special attention to children is needed

1 = 3.8%  2 = 5.7%  3 = 3.8%  4 = 49%  5 = 33.4%  6 = 4.1%
15.1 Our church provides for children through:
Total replies = 22
a) Sunday School/ Family Bible Hour = 2 churches
b) Weekly club programmes - no reply
c) Special camps, outings and holiday clubs - no reply
\[ a + b + c = 14 \text{ churches} \]
\[ a + c = 6 \text{ churches} \]

16.1 At what age do you believe you were truly converted to Christ? ... years
Total replies = 27
age 3-4 = 3; age 9 = 3; age 11 = 4; age 12 = 1; age 13 = 5; age 14 = 2; age 16 = 1; age 17 = 2; over age 20 = 6)

16.2 Roughly what percentage of the active membership of your present congregation would you estimate to have been converted before the age of: 8 yrs; 8-12 yrs; 13-18 yrs
Total replies = 9

Before age 8
0-5% = 7 churches; 10% = 1 church; 20% = 1 church

Age 8-12
0-5% = 5 churches; 10% = 1 church; 20% = 1 church; 25% = 1 church; 40% = 1 church

17.1 Children of believers have no special relationship to the church; they are in exactly the same position as children of unbelievers/ pagans
1 = 5.3% 2 = 24.8% 3 = 4.9% 4 = 39.3% 5 = 19.8% 6 = 5.7%
17.2 children of believers constitute a third group besides unbelievers/ pagans and believers

1 = 1.9%  2 = 21.7%  3 = 18.3%  4 = 35.9%  5 = 12.2%  6 = 9.9%

17.3 although not 'born again' or 'saved', neither are they part of 'the world that lies in the power of the evil one' they are under the tender care and nurture of the Christian family and the church in hope of their ultimate entry into the life of faith in Christ

1 = 17.6%  2 = 51%   3 = 8.8%  4 = 12.2%  5 = 5.7%  6 = 4.6%

17.4 the proper place for the religious life and instruction of children is the home, not the church

1 = 27.7%  2 = 35%  3 = 4.5%  4 = 10.6%  5 = 1.9%  6 = 2.3%

both home and church = 18% (this option was added by respondents dissatisfied with the 'conflict' between home and church)

SECTION C: CHILDREN AND GOD

18.1 all children start life outside the kingdom of God; they can only enter it in the same way as adults (by repentance and faith)

1 = 45.2%  2 = 33.8%  3 = 5.7%  4 = 6.8%  5 = 2.5%  6 = 5.9%

18.2 the presence of a Christian parent establishes right standing with God

1 = 6.1%  2 = 10.3%  3 = 3.4%  4 = 42.7%  5 = 31.7%  6 = 5.7%

18.3 the presence of a Christian parent creates privilege, not right standing

1 = 17.4%  2 = 57.5%  3 = 6.8%  4 = 11%  5 = 3.4%  6 = 3.8%
18.4 all children belong to God and are in 'the kingdom', until
they definitely reject Christ
1 = 2.3%  2 = 15.6%  3 = 12.6%  4 = 34.7%  5 = 27%  6 = 7.7%

18.5 none of the above. Explain your understanding of the
spiritual status of children .........................
(No replies significantly different from the above received)

19.1 the Bible is silent concerning infant salvation, we cannot
speculate concerning the salvation of children dying in infancy
1 = 9.5%  2 = 37.8%  3 = 17.9%  4 = 21%  5 = 6.9%  6 = 6.9%

19.2 since repentance and faith are essential to salvation, we
cannot speak of infants being 'saved'
1 = 8%  2 = 39.2%  3 = 18%  4 = 20%  5 = 4.2%  6 = 10.4%

19.3 children dying in infancy are not saved on the basis of
their personal faith, but on the basis of:
  a) the loving character of God = 4
  b) their personal innocence (they have not yet consciously
     sinned) = 3
  c) the atonement of Christ for all = 1
  d) their election to salvation = 1
  e) their parents' faith = 1
Total replies = 25

In addition the following combinations were selected:
a + b = 4;  a + c = 1;  a + b + c = 7;  a + b + e = 1;
a + c + d = 2;  a + e = 1

20.1 infants and young children are sinless or morally neutral
1 = 5.3%  2 = 12.4%  3 = 11.7%  4 = 40.7%  5 = 21.5%  6 = 8.3%
20.2 sin cannot be inherited but only personally and consciously committed

1 = 5.3% 2 = 21.9% 3 = 5.3% 4 = 29.7% 5 = 27.5% 6 = 9.9%

20.3 infants and children are 'innocent' rather than sinless; all human beings inherit a tendency to sin

1 = 17.2% 2 = 55.3% 3 = 3.8% 4 = 9.5% 5 = 7.6% 6 = 6.5%

20.4 we are not merely born sinners, but are also all guilty sinners from birth

1 = 18.4% 2 = 38.3% 3 = 11.5% 4 = 20.3% 5 = 4.6% 6 = 6.9%

20.5 physical death (eventually) is already the penalty for our sin in Adam; spiritual death (separation from God/condemnation) only follows from our own personal sin

1 = 12.2% 2 = 42.1% 3 = 8.8% 4 = 19.5% 5 = 10.3% 6 = 6.9%

21.1 children may be regarded as innocent until they reach the 'age of accountability'

1 = 10.6% 2 = 39.5% 3 = 15.2% 4 = 21.3% 5 = 7.6% 6 = 5.7%

21.2 as this is not a Biblical concept we need not be concerned with it

1 = 3.4% 2 = 11.3% 3 = 16.6% 4 = 43.8% 5 = 10.9% 6 = 14%

21.3 most children reach moral accountability by the age of ... years

Total replies = 18

ages 3 = 1 4 = 2 6 = 2 7 = 2 8 = 1 9 = 1 10 = 1
12 = 2

'Varies according to the particular child' = 5

424
21.4 children can only be regarded as accountable to God once they are individually able to grasp and accept the basic truths of the gospel

1 = 12.5% 2 = 51% 3 = 12.9% 4 = 13.3% 5 = 4.2% 6 = 6.1%

22.1 the religious development of children is parallel to their intellectual development

1 = 2.7% 2 = 24% 3 = 16.7% 4 = 40.3% 5 = 7.6% 6 = 8.3%

22.2 faith is not an intellectual achievement but comes by hearing the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit

1 = 38.5% 2 = 51.5% 3 = 1.5% 4 = 3% 5 = 5.3% 6 = 5.3%

22.3 different Biblical truths should only be introduced at the appropriate age levels

1 = 5% 2 = 4.9% 3 = 10% 4 = 30% 5 = 5% 6 = 8%

23.4 it is futile to attempt to teach abstract concepts such as 'God', 'sin', 'forgiveness', 'salvation' etc., to very young children

1 = 2.3% 2 = 8.4% 3 = 5.3% 4 = 56% 5 = 20.7% 6 = 7.2%

22.5 Baptism for young believing children is appropriate when:

Total replies = 24

a) he/she is able to acknowledge 'I love/trust Jesus' = 4

b) when there is credible evidence of true conversion = 8

c) when there is evidence of a deeper understanding of the gospel = 4

d) when there is evidence of fully developed spiritual life = 1

combinations: a + b = 5; b + c = 1; a + b + c + d = 1

425
23.1 even very young children are capable of conviction of sin and faith in Christ
1 = 28.5%  2 = 53.2%  3 = 7.2%  4 = 3.8%  5 = 8%  6 = 6.5%
23.2 evangelism of young children is necessary because children, like adults, are lost and spiritually dead outside of Christ
1 = 35.2%  2 = 53%  3 = 3.4%  4 = 1.9%  5 = 0.4%  6 = 6%
23.3 evangelism of young children is necessary because they are born in the kingdom of God and remain in it until they voluntarily opt out
1 = 1.1%  2 = 1.5%  3 = 1.5%  4 = 39.5%  5 = 49.4%  6 = 6.8%
23.4 evangelism of young children is unwise because it may create division in unbelieving homes; evangelism should be directed only to adults and families
1 = 1.1%  2 = 2.3%  3 = 0.8%  4 = 37.1%  5 = 51.7%  6 = 6.9%
Every child has the right

1. To affection, love and understanding.
2. To adequate nutrition and medical care.
3. To free education.
4. To full opportunity for play and recreation.
5. To a name and nationality.
6. To special care if handicapped.
7. To be among the first to receive relief in times of disaster.
8. To learn to be a useful member of society, and to develop individual abilities.
9. To be brought up in a spirit of peace and universal brotherhood.
10. To enjoy these rights regardless of race, colour, sex, religion, national or social origin.

Tear Fund (The Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund), while endorsing these rights, believes that:

11. In addition, every child should be given the opportunity to establish a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

- from J. Inchley: *Realities of Childhood*, London: Scripture Union 1985, 34-35
a. The New Testament pattern: adult converts come through baptism from the world of unfaith into the community of faith.

b. Children of the church are privileged to be able to move from innocence into an owned faith upon reaching the age of accountability without passing through a period of estrangement from the church.

c. Children who grow up under the influence of the world of unfaith tend to move into an adult life of unbelief.

d. It is possible for non-Christian influences upon children of the church to draw them into the world of unfaith.

e. It is also possible and most desirable for the church to reach out toward children of unbelievers and to bring many of them together with children of believers from innocence to faith without their going through a period in adult life of estrangement from the community of faith.

APPENDIX 6 (a)

The 'Kid's Bulletin' is given to all children from Sub B to Std 5 (1991: Goodwood Baptist Church, P.O. Box 182, Goodwood 7460) These children's worksheets are completed during the morning worship service.

KID'S BULLETIN

NAME: ___________________________

DATE: ___________________________

The service is usually seen in two halves - the time when we worship (Adore & Praise) God, and the time when we listen to God (through His Word).

Genesis 18:19

1. First song: What did Jesus show us about God?

2. 2nd song: Complete this name for Jesus: Son of ________

3. What does our 4th song say Jesus enables us to be? (see picture)

chocolate  1. Which ice-cream would you choose?

strawberry

vanilla

2. We make choices all the time. Write down some of the other things we have to choose between.

3. We also have to choose between right and wrong. Say which of these things are right or wrong.

1. I'm not going to talk to Sarah any more.

2. Mum, I won't spend some of her change.

3. Did you do this?

4. She found a

DON'T FORGET! then

294
The Children’s Worksheet is given to children from Standards 2 to 5, in addition to the ‘Kid’s Bulletin’.

(1991: Goodwood Baptist Church, P.O. Box 182, Goodwood 7460)

**CHILDREN’S WORKSHEET**

**NAME:** ____________________________

**DATE:** ____________________________

**Hi Welcome to Church!**

Use your Bible to find the verse on the top of the Bulletin. Now write the verse in the space provided.

**Today’s Bible Readings:** __________________________________________

**Pray quietly for the service**

**Which words didn’t you understand?**

Find out what these words mean!

**What was said in the service that had special meaning for you?**

**What were the main points of the sermon? (The sermon is that part of the service when the pastor teaches us something from GOD’S Word)**
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY


Baker, D L 1976 Two Testaments, One Bible, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.


Barrett, C K 1962 A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans
1968 A Commentary on the First Epistle to
the Corinthians. (Black's New Testament
1978 The Gospel According to St John
(Second Edition), London: SPCK

Baxter, J S 1968 The Other Side of Death, Illinois:
Tyndale.

A Commentary, Oxford: Basil Blackwell

Beasley-Murray, G R 1965 A Baptist interpretation of the place
of the child in the church, in:
Foundations 7, 146-150
1966 Baptism Today and Tomorrow, London
Macmillan.
1970 The Child and the Church in: Children
1976 Baptism in the New Testament, Exeter:
Paternoster

Beckwith, R T 1971 Age of admission to communion, in:
Beinert, W 1991 Who can be saved? in: Theology Digest 38:3, Fall 1991, 223-228

Berkouwer, G C 1971 Sin. (Studies In Dogmatics series), Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.


Boice, J M 1975 The Gospel of John Vol 1, Grand Rapids: Zondervan


1983 The Gospel of John, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans

434
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher/Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brueggemann, W</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td><em>Genesis: Interpretation — A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching.</em></td>
<td>Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burden, J &amp; Deist, F</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td><em>Kom ons doen Bybelstudie.</em> Pretoria: Acacia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byrne, B</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>'The Type of the One to Come' (Rom 5:14): Fate and Responsibility in Romans 5: 12-21,in:<em>Australian Biblical Review</em> 36, 19-30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1979 The first epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians. (Calvin's Commentaries series, translated by J W Fraser). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.


436
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coffer, J M (Jr)</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>A Theological and Psychological Interpretation of the Experiences of the Pre-school Child. M Th Thesis, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, USA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooley, C E</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Ministering to Children in Temperament Crises: One Perspective, in:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Southwestern Journal of Theology 33:3, 31-34.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranfield, C E B</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>The Gospel According to Saint Mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Vol.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(International Critical Commentary series), Edinburgh: T &amp; T Clark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagner, G</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cullmann, O</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Baptism in the New Testament (Tr by J K S Reid), London: SCM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Edinburgh: T.&amp;T. Clark Ltd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Epistle of Paul to the Romans. London: Hodder & Stoughton

Child Evangelisation, in: Christian Education Journal 3 No2, 5-13


Romans 1-8 (Word Biblical Commentary Vol 38), Dallas, Texas: Word.

The Spiritual Effects of Divorce on Children. M.Th thesis, University of South Africa.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fenton, J C</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td><em>St. Matthew</em> (SCM Pelican Commentaries),</td>
<td>London: SCM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher/Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Griffiths, M</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Cinderella with Amnesia – a practical discussion of the relevance of the church</td>
<td>London: Inter-varsity Press.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Publisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haldane, R</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td><em>Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans</em></td>
<td>London: Banner of Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haymes, B</td>
<td>[s a]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Admission to Communion,</em></td>
<td>London: Baptist Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

445
Hoecksema, H  

Holbrook, C A  

Honeycutt, R L  

Hull, W E  

Inchley, J  
1985  Realities of Childhood, London; Scripture Union

Ingle, J (ed)  

International Anglican Consultation  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title and Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeremias, J</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries (tr D Cairns). London: SCM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson, A R</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God, Cardiff: University of Wales Press.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasemann, E</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Commentary on Romans (tr.by G.W.Bromiley),Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baumgartner, W</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Bondgenoot en Beeld - oor die wese van die mens en die sonde (Gelowig Nagedink - Deel 4), Pretoria: N G Kerkboekhandel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kraus, H J</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Psalms 1-59: A Commentary (tr by H C Oswald), Minneapolis: Augsburg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louw, J P</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>A Semantic Discourse Analysis of Romans Vol 1 Greek Text, Department of Greek: University of Pretoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title and Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macrae, A D</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Christian Baptism, Glasgow: Baptist Union of Scotland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title and Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td><em>Dimension Sept/Oct 1992</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of S A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moller, F P</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td><em>Die Sakrament in Gedrang</em>, Braamfontein: Die Evangelie Uitgewers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>The Epistle to the Romans. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moule, C F D</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon (Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary). London: Cambridge University Press.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nida, E A &amp; Louw, J P et al</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td><em>Style and Discourse</em>, Cape Town: Bible Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norgaard, P</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td><em>Baptism and the Child</em>, Brighton, England: Baptist World Alliance Commission on Doctrine and Inter-Church Co-operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nygren, A</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td><em>Commentary on Romans</em> (Tr. by C C Rasmussen), London: S.C.M.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


454
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[s a] Let the Children Come to Me,</td>
<td>Cape Town: Scripture Union (ronoed notes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pridmore, J</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Of Such is the Kingdom,</td>
<td>in: Crusade September 1973 and October 1973, England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(separately published copy of article).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>The New Testament Theology of Childhood,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Originally written as a university thesis in 1967. ISBN 0 956500 08)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Privately published by Ron Buckland 121 Bathurst Street, Hobart,</td>
<td>Tasmania 7000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince, J</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Whose is the Kingdom?</td>
<td>London: S.U.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratliff, L C</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Discipleship, Church Membership, and the Place of Children Among Southern Baptists: An Investigation of the Place of Children in a Baptist Church in view of Christ's Teachings on Discipleship and the Baptist Doctrine of the Church, D Th, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridderbos, H</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td><em>Aan die Romeinen</em> (Commentaar of Het Nieuwe Testament), Kampen: N.V.U.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title and Details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[saa]</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Dedication of Christian Parents and their Infants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schaeffer, F A</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Death in the City, London: Inter-Varsity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schwartz, H</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Early Anabaptist Ideas about the Nurture of Children in: Mennonite Quarterly Review 47:2 April 1973 102-114</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

457

Scott, R 1984 Philosophy of Spiritual Formation. Missions Administration dissertation, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, California USA.


Siler, M M 1967 The Ministry of a Southern Baptist Church to families at the event of the birth of a child. D Th Thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, USA.

1988 Rites of Passage: A Meeting of Worship and Pastoral Care, in: Review and Expositor 85, 51-61.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louw, J P</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Publisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walls, A F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>London: Tyndale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone, B</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Personal letter to G G Miller.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stott, J R W</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Men Made New. An Exposition of Romans 5-8.</td>
<td>Inter-Varsity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straton, H H</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Original Sin and the Modern Scene, in: Encounter 17 Autumn 1956,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong, A H</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>Systematic Theology, Valley Forge: Judson.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swanepoel, F</td>
<td>[s a]</td>
<td>Being a Christian in All Spheres in the New South Africa (Actuality program), Pretoria, C B Powell Bible Centre, UNISA.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvester, N W H</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Current Issues in Children's and Family Evangelism, Scripture Union.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>London: Tyndale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>London: Tyndale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


July 1982 Anabaptist Theologies of Childhood and Education (1) The Repudiation of Infant Baptism in: *Baptist Quarterly* 29:7, 293-307

October 1982 Anabaptist Theologies of Childhood and Education (1) The Repudiation of Infant Baptism (continued), in: *Baptist Quarterly* 29:8, 356-373.


October 1984 Anabaptist Theologies of Childhood and Education (2) Child Rearing (continued), in: *Baptist Quarterly* 30:8, 348-366.


[s a] *Children and Communion*, London: Baptist Union.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Torrance, J B</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Some Theological Grounds for Admitting Children to the Lord's Table, in: Reformed Review 40:3, 200-205.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turner, G A &amp;</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>The Gospel According to John (The Evangelical Commentary on the Bible)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mantey</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Rapids, Eerdmans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Book/Article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visee, G</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>May - and Must - our children partake of the Lord's Supper?, in: Christian Renewal (1986 published in four parts: a) March 17, 10-13 b) April 7, 14-16 c) April 21, 10-12 d) May 5, 12-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bevington, J M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title and Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaver, D</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>The Exegesis of Romans 5:12 Among the Greek Fathers and its Implications for the Doctrine of Original Sin: The 5th -12th Centuries, in: St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 29 No 2 and 29 No 3, 133-159 and 231-257.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams, N P</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams, G H &amp;</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mergal, A M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson, G B</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Romans – A Digest of Reformed Comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witvliet, T</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>A Place in the Sun – An Introduction to Liberation Theology in the Third World, (tr J Bowden), London: SCM.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wright, N T  1986  The Epistle of Paul to the  
Colossians and to Philemon (Tyndale  
New Testament Commentaries),  
Leicester: Intervarsity/Eerdmans.

Ziesler, J  1989  Pauls Letter to the Romans (T P I  
New Testament Commentaries), London:  
S C M.