

Chapter 14

Defining the Baptismal Covenant

For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy.

-1 Corinthians 7:14-

Covenant Holiness and Roger Williams

John Murray insisted that the import of baptism was the same whether administered to infants or adults. Baptism was "the sign and seal of membership in Christ's body, the church" (1980, 45). Louis Berkov noted, however, that opponents of infant baptism have frequently charged paedobaptists with inconsistency. They have argued that paedobaptists practice "two different baptisms: one for adults on the ground of a profession of faith; and another for children on the basis of their covenant relationship."

Berkov responded,

Both adults and children are baptized on the objective ground that is found in the covenant. The former must first make a confession of faith for the simple reason that they are outside of the covenant, and therefore must confess that they have entered it by faith and conversion before they can receive the seal of the covenant (1932, 2:248-49).

Baptists, however, while they might not hold to "two different baptisms," do hold to *two different salvations*--one for adults on the basis of faith, and another, *without faith on anybody's part*, for infants and children who die in their minority years. This historic Baptist position poses a greater ambiguity than does infant baptism.

Infants are saved by the death of Christ, but not by the Gospel--not by faith. Adults are saved by faith, not from the virtue of faith, but it is of faith that it may be by grace. Infants who enter heaven must be regenerated, but not by the Gospel. Infants must be sanctified for heaven, but not through the truth as revealed to man. We know nothing of the means by which God receives infants; nor have we any business with it (Carson [1853] 1981, 173).

Baptists accordingly are not free from the inconsistency they commonly ascribe to those who practice infant baptism. Beasley-Murray commented on this ambiguity:

The children of Christian parents, nurtured within the fold of the Church, are certainly not outsiders nor "little pagans," though they may be little terrors. But neither are they, in the fullest sense of the term "in the Church" in the sense of members of the Body, that is, *in Christ*. Nor should we regard that as an insult to our children (1963, 372).

The truth of the covenant, as it pertains to the children of Christian believers, was expressed by the apostle Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 7:14 which was prompted by a practical question that arose in the church. Should a spouse, after conversion to Christ, separate from his (her) unbelieving marriage partner? "Will not the saint be defiled, and the 'limbs of Christ' be desecrated by intercourse with a heathen?" (Nicoll 1956, 826). Such a question would quite naturally arise from Haggai 2:11-13, in which impurity is communicated through contact according to the Law of Moses. Paul argued, however, that the purity of the believing spouse overpowered the impurity of the unbelieving spouse so that the marital union was pure and lawful, and therefore, did not constitute a defilement of the marriage (Robertson & Plummer 1911, 142).

Paul was not contradicting his instruction in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 thereby sanctioning the intermarriage of Christians with unbelievers (1 Cor. 7:39). Rather he was simply giving wise counsel to spouses who had become Christian believers after marriage. Continuing the marital union with an unbeliever in such a case was lawful because marriage is God's institution for all mankind. The "holy seed" in such a case is not adulterated as it would be in the case of the willful intermarriage of professing believers with the ungodly as in the time of Ezra (Ezra 9:2; Malachi 2:11; Calvin 1960, 2:1328-29).

If the unbeliever was content to continue the marriage, Paul instructed the believing spouse not to divorce the unbelieving partner;

for the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy (1 Cor. 7:14).

Concerning the above passage, Leon Morris stated,

. . . it is a scriptural principle that the blessings arising from fellowship with God are not confined to the immediate recipients, but extend to others [e. g. Gn. xv. 18, xvii. 7, xviii. 26ff.; 1Ki. xv. 4; Is. xxxvii. 4]. Paul teaches that the sanctification of the believing partner extends to the unbeliever. . . . If the believer's sanctification extended no further than to himself, his children would be *unclean*. The word is used of ceremonial uncleanness, 'that which may be brought into contact with divinity' [AG]. This is an unthinkable position. Clearly Paul regards "*now are they holy*" as an axiom. Until he is old enough to take responsibility upon himself, the child of a believing parent is to be regarded as a Christian. The parent's holiness extends to the child (Morris 1958, 110).

Grosheide insisted, "Paul uses 'sanctified' here as in 1 Tim. 4:5, i.e., more liturgically than ethically."

All those children belong to the congregation. Of course there were many mixed marriages in the beginning. *Unclean* reminds us of ceremonial impurity among the people of Israel. It is the opposite of "holy" and refers to people not connected with the church of God. *But now*: introduces the real state of things. *Holy* used of the children as a group has the same meaning as "sanctified" or as "holy" when used of the people of Israel. So Paul addressed the whole congregation as *sanctified in Christ Jesus* [1:2]. This refers to the life within the covenant and to the right to baptism, but does not imply that each of those holy children will go to heaven [cf. Rom. 11:13f.] (1953, 165).

Samuel Hopkins commented that Paul was not asserting that the unbelieving parent was *holy* in exactly the same sense in which the believer's children were holy.

The believer may live in such a connexion [i.e. marriage], consistent with maintaining a christian character; and the unbeliever may, to such a degree answer the ends of that relation to the believer, as to be improved by the latter to the holy purposes of true religion. Thus the unbeliever is sanctified to the believer, as every kind of food, and every creature of God, is sanctified to such, by the word of God, and prayer [1 Tim. 4:5]. Therefore, the children of such parents are holy: they derive their character from the believing, holy parent, and not from the unbeliever: which would be the case, if the unbeliever were not sanctified by, or to, the believer, in the sense above explained (1811, 2:277-278).

The holiness of which the children of believers partook was a federal holiness issuing in "real holiness" (Hopkins 1811, 2:291). The love and covenantal obedience of the believing parent affected and formed the character of his children in keeping with the promise of Exodus 20:6 (1811, 2:267-268). Hopkins paraphrased 1 Corinthians 7:14 to read "Else were your children unclean; but now they are *saints*" (1811, 2:276).

Jeremias and Wright maintained that Paul was arguing the sanctification of the unbelieving spouse from the analogy of the holiness of the children--the latter a commonly acknowledged fact (Jeremias 1962, 44-46).

Paul's argument moves from the children to the unbelieving spouse. The holiness of the children of a single Christian parent is the acknowledged assumption upon which Paul bases his substantive assertion about this parent's unbelieving spouse, an assertion which clearly does not possess the self-evident validity of what he says about the children (Wright 1987, 40:14).

With tongue in cheek, Wright reasoned that Paul's argument "holds water only if the children, like the unbelieving parent, are unbaptized"; otherwise Paul would have based the children's holiness upon their baptism rather than their Christian parentage (1987, 40:14). Carson had stated the converse of the same argument:

It is impossible to vindicate the baptism of infants from this holiness, without affording equal ground for the baptism of the unbelieving husband or wife ([1853] 1981, 210).

Both Wright and Carson had it backwards. *The children of a believer were not holy because they were baptized; rather they were baptized because they were covenantally holy!* Paul was arguing "holiness" on the basis of the covenant which lay behind paedobaptism. The very fact that Paul could base his argument on a commonly "acknowledged assumption" that *the children were holy* is itself a strong argument that their baptism attested to this fact, i.e., their holy state was universally attested in the church through the practice of infant baptism. That infant baptism was the common practice, and too obvious to require mentioning, better explains why the Corinthians could easily grant Paul his assumption of the children's holiness as the premise in his argument for the sanctification of the unbelieving spouse. As John Murray observed,

It is quite striking that the apostle does not feel called upon to vindicate or establish this truth; it was taken for granted and therefore without argument pleaded as the premise already conceded by the Corinthians (1980, 64-65).

While infant baptism would not have been the ground of the children's holiness *per se*, it could certainly have been the ground for Paul's affirmation of it as his major premise. As Alexander Hislop stated, "Even in the case of infants, who can make no profession of faith or holiness, the administration

of baptism is not for the purpose of regenerating them, or *making* them holy, but of *declaring* them 'holy'. . . " ([1916] 1959, 131). In the case of the unbelieving spouse (particularly the husband), being of discretionary age and not professing faith in Christ, baptism would not have been likely. Consequently, Paul's argument was quite cogent.

Many early church fathers, including Paulinus of Nola, Jerome, Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, and Theodoret, were baffled by Paul's failure to mention baptism in relation to 1 Corinthians 7:14 (Jeremias 1962, 47-48). The reason for Paul's failure to mention it may well be that the baptism of a believer's children was simply assumed, being a universal practice in the apostolic church.

Arguing the *non-baptism* of the children in 1 Corinthians 7:14, Wright noted that Jewish proselyte baptism was *not* given "to children born after the conversion-baptism of parent(s)" (1987, 40:14-15). H. H. Rowley presented essentially the same argument--one which Jewett claimed no Paedobaptist had ever answered:

Not seldom, indeed modern defenders of infant baptism hold that it should be administered only to the children of Christian parents; that is, precisely those corresponding to the children who did not receive the Jewish baptismal rite ["The Origin and Meaning of Baptism," *Baptist Quarterly*, XI (1945, 310ff)] (Jewett 1978, 66).

To recognize a certain correspondence between Christian baptism and Jewish proselyte baptism, however, is not necessarily to argue for its ongoing observance once the Gentile family was initially inducted into the Jewish community. From the Jewish perspective, once Gentiles were part of the Jewish community, only that would apply to their subsequent newborns which also applied to Jewish newborns, viz., circumcision. Circumcision, the covenant sign of the Jewish nation, would be administered to the infant sons, those who were part of the family at the time of initiation, as well as those who would be born into the family subsequent to initiation. And circumcision, however its true meaning had become obscured, prefigured New Testament baptism and similarly attested to the "holy" covenant status of the child of one who possessed the faith of Abraham in keeping with 1 Corinthians 7:14 (Col. 2:11-12).

Grosheide observed that 1 Corinthians 7:14, is a strong testimony to infant baptism. Similarly, the *Expositor's Greek Testament* stated, ". . . it enunciates the principle that leads to Infant Baptism, viz. that the child of Christian parents shall be treated as a Christian" (Nicoll 1956, 827). Henry Alford commented,

. . . it establishes the analogy, so far, between Christian and Jewish children, so as to show, that if the initiatory rite of the old covenant was administered to the one,--that of the new covenant, in so far as it was regarded as corresponding to circumcision, would probably as a matter of course be administered to the other. . . . There is nothing inconsistent with the idea, nor with the practice of Infant Baptism (1958, 2:524-25).

Tertullian regarded 1 Corinthians 7:14 as providing implicit support for the concept of infant baptism:

So there is almost no being clean [or free from sin] that is of heathens. For hence the Apostle says, that of either parent sanctified, the children that are born are holy: by reason of the prerogative of that seed and also the instruction in their education. "Else," says he, "were they unclean." But meaning to be understood thus; that the children of the faithful are designed for holiness, and so for salvation. . . . [*Tertullianus de Animo* c. xxxix., xl.] (Wall [1705] 1889, 45-46).

Tertullian's reference to the "prerogative of that seed" was a scriptural concept (Ezra 9:2; Isa. 6:13). John Murray called the "holiness" of 1 Corinthians 7:14 "the 'holiness' of connection and privilege" (1980, 65).

In rebuking the Old Testament people for offering their children to the pagan idols, God referred to these covenant children as "sons and daughters whom you bore to me" (Ezek. 16:20; 23:37). Clearly the Lord regarded the offspring of his covenant people as *set apart* for him from birth. Their parents had no right to devote them to any god but the true and living God, for they were *holy* because of God's covenant with his people. They belonged to God and to him alone.

Matthew Henry argued that if it were not for the truth of 1 Corinthians 7:14, the children

. . . would be heathen, out of the pale of the church and covenant of God. They would not be of the holy seed (as the Jews are called, Isa. vi. 13), but common and unclean, in the same sense as heathens in general were styled in the apostle's vision, Acts x. 28. This way of speaking is according to the dialect of the Jews, among whom a child begotten by parents yet heathens, was said to be begotten *out of holiness*; and a child begotten by parents made proselytes was said to be begotten *intra sanctification--within the holy enclosure*. Thus Christians are commonly called *saints*; such they are by profession, separated to be a peculiar people of God, and as such distinguished from the world; and therefore the children born to Christians, though married to unbelievers, are not to be reckoned as part of the world, but of the church, and holy, not a common and unclean seed (1706).

The "holiness" of 1 Corinthians 7:14 is a holiness associated with the faith of the believing parent that conquers and overrules the impurity of all unbelievers dwelling in the same household. Baptism does not initiate this holiness, but attests to it and seals it. This holiness is the holiness associated with the Kingdom of which Jesus spoke in Luke 18:16. It "belongs" to these children by virtue of the believing parent, but these children must themselves receive it. Infants embraced by this covenantal holiness must themselves embrace covenant holiness by embracing Christ.

Beasley-Murray regarded the infant holiness of 1 Corinthians 7:14 as analogous to that of the unbelieving Jews whom the apostle Paul designated "holy" on the basis of the believing patriarchs (Rom. 11:16). He understood Paul's words to mean that the child was holy by virtue of the connection with the believing parent (1963, 195-96; Rom. 11:6).

The children are under the sanctifying influence of their Christian father or mother, with all the power for good that that involves. . . where sin abounds grace superabounds (1963, 196-7).

Beasley-Murray of course did not recognize any connection between this passage and infant baptism, but his comments help spell out the meaning of the covenant as it pertains to the believer's offspring. Some of the best insights into infant baptism come from those who do not believe in it! His suggestion that Paul's principle was restricted to the Corinthian church hardly bears refuting (1963, 198-99).

Hanko rightly compared receiving baptism, as the child of believing parents, to receiving a check with God's signature: "Pay to the order of (the person baptized) the sum of salvation." A person could hang the check on his wall, tear it up and throw it in the waste basket, or take it to the bank, endorse it, and cash it (1981, 73-74).

Marcel distinguished between "salvation" and the "promise"; accordingly, children of believers were heirs of the *promise* --not heirs of *salvation*.

These children do not inherit salvation and eternal life. Salvation is not hereditary! They inherit only the promises. It behooves them thereafter to receive the *content* of the

promise by faith and repentance, and thus by regeneration and conversion, and to live a life consecrated to the Lord. Then, and then only, will they be heirs of *the things promised*. The heritage is only communicated to the heir who receives the promise *with faith* (1953, 107-8).

For Marcel, the covenant represented the "possibility" for children to choose freely and consciously between good and evil and of loving and serving their Redeemer, but it also represented God's declaration of his *wish* to be the God of the believer's children (1953, 108-9). Abraham Kuyper, similarly, affirmed the *possibility* of a work of grace in the soul for these children. *All* children of believers were to be considered as comprehended in the covenant of grace--not just in appearance, but in actuality. Though the church or the parents could not know for certain that an infant was regenerated, baptism belonged to infants for whom regeneration was conceivable (Hoeksema 1977, 43-45).

Tragically, the truth of 1 Corinthians 7:14 was somehow overlooked by one Roger Williams who, according to the *Journal* of Massachusetts Bay Governor John Winthrop, founded the first Baptist church in America at Providence. Roger Williams carried the Baptist principle to an extreme. Williams had been indicted by the Massachusetts Bay colony in 1635 for "divers dangerous opinions." Among these "opinions" was his view that a man should not pray with an "unregenerate" person--even if such a person were his wife or child, and that he ought not even to "give thanks" after a meal (Winthrop 1908, 1:154; Spurgin 1989, 27, 29). Had the champion of religious liberty grasped the apostle Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 7:14--he would have been liberated from such a legalistic view.

Roger Williams's idea, however strange to modern ears, was clearly the logical application of the historic Anabaptistic position. Robert H. Fischer noted that sixteenth century Anabaptists scorned the baptism of infants by Zwingli and Luther, as well as the Roman and Eastern churches, regarding it as a "dog's bath" (Bodensieck 1965, 184). Roger Williams, following the Anabaptist position, opted for the analogy of Haggai 2:11-13; in his mind, the *dog's* "uncleanness" was communicated through contact. He failed to observe that Paul argued the reverse in 1 Corinthians 7:14 with respect to the believer's family (Robertson and Plummer 1911, 142). Because "the little vipers" are "clothed with covenant diapers," the children of Christian believers are not "dogs," but "holy."

To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted (Titus 1:15).

The covenant principle, pertaining to the children of the righteous, was attested negatively in an Old Testament passage emphasizing the severity of God's judgment upon a city that had become unfaithful to the LORD.

As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, even if Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness (Ezek. 14:20).

While these words speak of an extraordinary suspension of God's covenant with reference to the believer's offspring (Psalm 103:17), they presuppose the principle to be the ordinary.

Jonathan Edwards and Covenant Compliance

According to 1 Corinthians 7:14, at least one of the parents must be a believer for the sanctifying covenant principle to be operative. It was vitally important to the eighteenth-century New England Congregationalist pastor, Jonathan Edwards, that at least one parent be a confessing Christian believer, and not just a morally sincere person, or one who merely offered intellectual assent to historic Christian doctrine. In his treatise on *Qualifications for Communion*, Edwards tried to reverse the compromising

admission practices of the 1662 Half-Way Covenant which had allowed those adults who were baptized as infants, but who were not yet full communicant members, to have their own children baptized.

The Chelmsford church, in 1656, under the pastoral ministry of John Fiske was the first New England congregation to implement the compromising practice (Fiske 1974, 109 note). Fiske's reasoning can be seen as his statements are placed in the following sequence: (1) "If circumcision or baptism be all the externals of the covenant, then he that is once circumcised or baptized hath fulfilled the whole law as in respect to the external part of it"; (2) "There is nothing besides circumcision or baptism comprehended in the external part of the covenant of grace"; (3) "All in church fellowship or in church covenant and under the covenant of grace, in the very external dispensation of it, are necessarily in the covenant of grace"; (4) "All within the church covenant are church members" (1974, 111-113). Those who were thus constituted *church members* were "privileged with the baptism of their children" though the congregation might lay down further requirements "to satisfy themselves touching their further fitness ere they yield them the liberty of partaking in the Lord's Supper and of voting in church affairs" (1974, 110).

Solomon Stoddard, Edwards's maternal grandfather and pastoral mentor at Northampton, later took matters a step further and admitted "halfway" Christians to the Lord's Table believing the sacrament to be a converting ordinance, and knowing that he would be able to preach to them to that end (Brand 1991, 8-9, 20-21).

Edwards's *Qualifications for Communion* is instructive for the church in two respects: (1) It sets forth biblical qualifications for parents presenting their children for baptism; and (2) It clarifies the covenant status of those who have been baptized as infants, who have attained the age of discretion, but who come short of a credible profession of saving grace, though free from doctrinal heresy or moral scandal.

Edwards stated,

We have no reason to expect his blessing with baptism, if administered to those it does *not* belong to by *his institution* (1979, 1:476).

We have no scripture grounds to suppose, that God will bless the children of such parents as have nothing more than moral sincerity, with either common or special grace. There are no promises of the covenant of grace made to such parents, either concerning themselves, or their children (1879, 1:524).

Restoring the narrative of grace as a requirement for admission to the Lord's Table, and for those having their children baptized, Edwards removed the ground for such negative caricatures of infant baptism as later propagated by Baptist Alexander Carson:

Our opponents found the right of the child on the faith of the immediate ancestor. But if the law of circumcision is to regulate baptism, the posterity of a believer have a right to baptism, to the remotest generations, if all their intermediate progenitors were atheists (Carson [1853] 1981, 230).

Edwards asked,

Who will say, that the individual profession of an ancestor, a thousand or fifteen hundred years ago, is a credible exhibition and moral evidence of the real piety of his present posterity, without any personal explicit profession of any thing about religion, in any one of the succeeding generations (1879, 1:523).

Edwards argued,

I can conceive of nothing reasonably to be supposed as the design or end of a public profession of religion, that does not as much require a profession of honor, esteem and friendship of heart towards Christ, as an orthodox opinion about him; or why the former should not be as much expected and required in order to be admitted to the company of his friends and followers, as the latter (1879, 1:447).

Pierre Marcel denied that "the Church should be persuaded that the candidate is regenerate" insisting that "there is no biblical basis for attributing such prerogatives to the Church" and thus confusing vocation and election, disciples and regeneration.

Nothing at any time authorizes us to refuse a man admission to the Church, except a serious fact which would justify his exclusion from the Church if he were already a member of it (1953, 184).

For Marcel, only heresy or scandal could justify such a refusal. Marcel's position resembled Solomon Stoddard's. Against such reasoning Edwards was adamant. It was imperative that the candidate for admission to the Lord's Table be a *visible* saint-- that he be able to testify, to the satisfaction of a judgment of "rational charity" of the church, that he had already experienced God's saving grace within his heart--

. . . *in the eye of the Church's christian judgment*, because it is properly a visibility to the eye of the public charity, and not of a private judgment, that gives a person a right to be received as a visible saint by the public. (Edwards 1879, 1:435).

The minister in receiving him to the communion of the church, is to act as a public officer, and in behalf of the public society, and not merely for himself, and therefore is to be governed, in acting, by a proper visibility of godliness in the eye of the public (1879, 1:435)

Edwards carefully defined his terms.

The eye which God has given to *man* is the eye of reason; and the eye of a *Christian* is reason sanctified, regulated, and enlightened, by a principle of Christian love (1879, 1:437).

Edwards distinguished between two senses of being "in the covenant": (1) "*Being under the obligation and bond of the covenant*," and (2) "*Being conformed to the covenant and complying with the terms of it*."

Being in the covenant, in the first sense only, did not qualify one for admission to the Lord's Table, or to have his children baptized. Such was the situation of one who had been baptized as an infant but who had remained spiritually unregenerate into his adult years, and, therefore, unable to give a *narrative of grace* (1879, 1:524).

For Edwards, a promise of future submission to the terms of the covenant was insufficient.

God may most reasonably require a proper testimony and profession of love to him; and yet it may also be reasonable to suppose, at the same time, he forbids men to lie; or to declare that they have love, when they have none: because, though it be supposed, that God requires men to testify love to him, yet he requires them to do it in a right way, and in the true order, *viz.* first *loving* him, and then *testifying* their love (1879, 1:473).

"Privileges," Edwards said, "are not annexed merely to obligations, but to compliance with obligations." For Edwards, "the covenant of grace" was a "conditional covenant," and "saving faith" was the "condition" (1879, 1:524). Though the obligations of the covenant were beyond the person's moral ability to attain; the obligation still remained and must be fulfilled before the person would qualify to be admitted to Holy Communion and to have his children baptized.

The promises of God's covenant blessing upon children did not "extend to any but the *seed of the righteous*."

Where are such promises made to the children of unsanctified men, the enemies of God, and slaves of the devil...whatever moral sincerity and common religion they may have? (Edwards 1879, 1:524).

Solomon Williams, Edwards's opponent in the controversy, insisted that "moral sincerity" qualified one for the Lord's Table, and that simply being "born in covenant" represented sufficient evidence of such sincerity--provided there was no contrary evidence of doctrinal heresy or moral scandal. Edwards replied that, as for infants born to believing parents, there was more reason to suppose "saving grace" than moral sincerity without it.

For the Scripture gives us ground to think, that some infants have the habit [i.e., infused or established character] of saving grace, and that they have a new nature given them. But no reason to think, that ever God works any mere moral change in them, or infuses any habits of moral virtue without saving grace (Edwards 1879, 1:524).

Though the adult who had been baptized as an infant, and had failed to give evidence before the congregation of personal saving faith, was not to be admitted to the Lord's Table, he was not to be excommunicated from the church--provided, of course, that he was not guilty of heresy or moral scandal. Edwards's finely-woven reasoning ran as follows:

They are not cast out because it is a matter held in suspense, whether they do cordially consent to the covenant, or not; or whether their making no such profession do not arise from some other cause. And none are to be excommunicated without some positive evidence against them. And therefore they are left in the state they were in, in infancy, not admitted actually to partake of the Lord's Supper (which actual participation is a new positive privilege) for want of a profession, or some evidence, beyond what is merely negative, to make it visible that they do not consent to the covenant. For it is reasonable to expect some appearance more than what is negative, of a proper qualification, in order to being admitted to a privilege beyond what they may have hitherto received. A negative charity may be sufficient for a negative privilege, such as freedom from censure and punishment; but something more than a negative charity, is needful to actual admission to a new positive privilege (Edwards 1879, 1:525).

Such a spiritual state (or lack of it) that Edwards was describing was a kind of a spiritual "no man's land." Such a fence-sitter, however, would likely have become miserable under Edwards's preaching. The Northampton pastor insisted that there was nothing virtuous in a will that, theoretically at least, was neither inclined toward good nor toward evil. Indeed that was the Arminian notion of the freedom of the will. Believing in the Christian doctrine of original sin, Edwards knew that such a theoretical state of ambivalence was a theological impossibility. Indeed, the man whose heart was undetermined was in a despicable state--neither hot nor cold--thus, he was a candidate for being spewn out of the Lord's mouth (1879, 1:65; Rev. 3:16)! Even God's heart was *determined*--resolute with a

motive to his own glory! (1879, 1:71, 74, 98). The effect of regeneration was to fix a man's heart in the same direction. True godliness was, in Westminster terms, "to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever" (WSC n.d., Q. 1). Such a state represented *conformity* to the covenant of grace, and *compliance* with its terms.

Berkhof seemed to have had Stoddardism in mind when he repudiated the two-fold concept of the covenant corresponding to the visible and invisible church. To suggest, as Stoddard did, that an adult could be admitted to the covenant in the external sense of doctrinal orthodoxy and freedom from scandal, believing that the internal sense of belonging to the covenant would come later, was an erroneous view of the covenant. Berkov also criticized the New England "half-way covenant" idea of splitting the two sacraments whereby baptism was regarded as the sign and seal of the "external covenant" and communion the sign and seal of the "internal covenant." "It separates what God has put together." Similarly, he dismissed as unscriptural the idea that infant baptism belonged to the "external covenant" and adult baptism to the "internal covenant" (1932, 2:247-48).

Hanko similarly criticized the *outward* covenant concept as hardly distinguishable from the Reformed Baptist position. In his mind, such a concept was really an Arminian view of a mutual covenant between God and man. It made the fulfillment of the covenant, in the *inward* sense, dependent upon man. It represented a *general* offer of salvation but denied the "particular and sovereign character of grace" (1981, 74-75). Heynes's view, so widely accepted in the Christian Reformed Church, reduced the promise to a "possibility"--an Arminian notion according to Hoeksema. Hoeksema insisted that children of the covenant in the "external-historical" sense only, are not really children of the promise (Hoeksema 1977, 13-33).

To be sure, it is no small theological exercise to define the nature of God's covenant with the children of believers. By Hoeksema's standards, Reformed scholar Pierre Marcel would be subject to charges of Arminianism. Following Oscar Cullman, Marcel regarded the position of the child of a Christian believer as "no guarantee of subsequent faith, but a divine indication of its probability." He further insisted that the promises of God were not given to "the posterity of believers as separate individuals, but in a collective sense" (1953, 112). This suggests the *general* offer which Hanko contrasted with the "particular and sovereign character of grace." Peter Martyr's "indefinite promise" (Goode 1857, 187) would fall into the same category.

Hanko described several approaches to the Christian nurture of children reflecting different views of their status: (1) Baptist: Instruct in order to convert; (2) Reformed Baptist: Instruct with the hope that if God elects, the teaching may come back to the child after conversion and profit him; (3) Modified Reformed Baptist: Preparatory grace enables the child to receive teaching though not converted; and (4) Reformed: Instruct knowing that God will make that Word and instruction effective (1981, 96-97).

Within the Reformed tradition John Gerstner distinguished three views of covenant children. *First*, he described John Calvin's view as one in which covenant children are elect and regenerate at birth, observing that Calvin, in seeming contradiction, barred these children from communion until they could "discern the body" (Gerstner 1991-, 2:16; Calvin 1960, 2:1341-53).

Calvin affirmed that the infant offspring was included "by hereditary right" in the covenant "from his mother's womb. . . . For without doubt he counts as his children the children of those to whose seed he promised to be a father [cf. Gen. 17:7]." "But he who is an unbeliever, sprung from impious parents," Calvin maintained, "is reckoned as an alien to the fellowship of the covenant until he is joined to God through faith" (1960, 2:1347). Paul King Jewett argued that paedobaptism linked grace to the blood of the parents and not merely to the Savior's blood. He reasoned that neither church membership nor an inheritance in heaven ought not to be awarded on the basis of birth even if the children of Israel inherited the land of Canaan by birth (1978, 114). When Richard Baxter faced a similar argument in seventeenth-century England, the Puritan Reformed pastor addressed the objection as follows:

. . . when we say that Children are born Christians, or Disciples, we do not make their Nature or birth privileged any cause of it, but God's gift is the cause; and that they be born of Believing Parents, is but [to be those persons whom the Law of Christ judgeth to have interest in the Condition, and so in the Priviledge.] 1651, 15).

It may further be said that the "hereditary right" to which Calvin referred had to be personally appropriated by the child of the covenant, and not despised; otherwise he was rejected for all intents and purposes related to the covenant (Heb. 12:16-17). Possession of the land had always been predicated upon covenant obedience. Though inconsistency may be observed at points in Calvin's view of infant baptism, the Geneva Reformer clearly did not hold to a one-to-one correspondence between the elect children and the children of believers:

In distinguishing the heirs of the Kingdom from the illegitimate and foreigners, we have no doubt that God's election alone rules as of free right. Nevertheless, we see that it pleased him especially to embrace Abraham's offspring by his mercy, and in order to attest that mercy more clearly, to seal it by circumcision. Now the condition of the Christian is exactly the same. For, as Paul argues in that passage that the Jews are sanctified by their parents, so he teaches elsewhere that the children of Christians receive the same sanctification from their parents [1 Cor. 7:14] (Calvin 1960, 2:1337).

It is clear that Calvin regarded God's election as supreme in the matter of covenant children, and it is equally clear that Calvin wanted to give sufficient weight to God's gracious promises to Christian parents concerning their offspring, and particularly since God's decrees, being hidden from men's eyes, do not directly concern them. This need not be regarded as any less consistent than the apostles' habit of addressing the visible church as the "elect" or the "saints" though there were no doubt reprobates among them (Rom. 1:7; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1-2; 2 John 1:1).

The *second* view of covenant children that Gerstner distinguished was that of the Herman Hoeksema school which he described as follows:

Though parents and elders do not know who are elect, and who are not, it seems good to these Reformed theologians to treat them *all* as if they were elect children of God. When the reprobates reveal themselves as "bastards" they are to be excommunicated (1991-, 2:116).

Third, Gerstner noted the position of the Westminster Standards, Scottish-American Presbyterians, and early Congregationalists.

Covenant children are born into the "obligations" of the covenant. They are, when sufficiently mature, to ratify their parents' vows taken on their behalf at their infant baptism. To that end their parents, church, and they themselves, are to "seek" for their second birth and admission to the privileges of the covenant, including "Confirmation": admission to the Lord's Table (1991-, 2:116-17).

Edwards stood with the Westminster Standards:

. . . covenant children have the obligation to seek for the "presence" of faith which, if found, would imply election, regeneration, and eternal life in the cases of those baptized infants who did possess the election of God (Gerstner 1991-, 2:124).

Gerstner contrasted De Jong's position (which reflected Hoeksema) with that of Edwards (which

reflected the *Westminster Confession*):

De Jong believed that "Christian nurture" meant rearing children of Christian parents assuming that they are little saints, until there is evidence to the contrary. Edwards would rear such children assuming that they are little sinners until there is evidence to the contrary" (1991-, 2:115-16).

Edwards did acknowledge that "some infants have the habit of saving grace . . . and a new nature given them" (1879, 1:524). In such a case, the children would need to be nurtured rather than evangelized. Edwards insisted on visible evidence of repentance and faith as a requirement for full membership status and admission to the Lord's table. Where that positive visible evidence was lacking, and a narrative of grace was not forthcoming, Edwards held the matter in suspension--the candidate was not to be admitted to the Lord's Table. On the one hand, neither was the candidate to be removed from the church. He remained a *covenant* member even though coming short of *communicant* membership.

Hanko appeared to adopt the Edwardsean view, as Gerstner represented it, when he asserted "that there is absolutely no Scriptural support" for Dr. Abraham's Kuyper's view that "All children of believers must be presupposed to be regenerate until such a time as they prove otherwise by their walk and life." In fact, he insisted, "Scripture teaches exactly the opposite" (1981, 72). The difficulty of Hanko's maintaining that position was illustrated by his affirmation of the principle of "the judgment of love" in another context:

We are called to judge those within the church of Christ as believers until they give evidence of being unbelievers. Without such a judgment, life in the church is impossible and the love which the saints ought to show to each other is sadly lost. So also do parents look upon their children . . ." (1981, 95).

Obviously, Hanko felt the dilemma which Edwards resolved by withholding judgment until there was either positive or negative evidence that was publicly convincing.

There is a difference between suspending our judgment, or forbearing to condemn, or having some hope that *possibly* the thing may be so, and so hoping the best; and a positive judgment in favor of the person. For having some hope, only implies that a man is not in utter despair of a thing, though his prevailing opinion may be otherwise, or he may suspend his opinion. Though we cannot know a man believes that *Jesus* is the *Messiah*, yet we expect some positive manifestation or visibility of it, to be a ground of our charitable judgment (Edwards 1879, 1:435).

That "life in the church is impossible" without such a "judgment of love" as Hanko proposed seemed to be axiomatic in the case of Jonathan Edwards, however, at least on the surface of things. Because of his firm insistence upon the "narrative of grace" as a requirement for a person's admission to the Lord's Supper, as well as for having his children baptized, the New England pastor was fired after 23 years of ministry at Northampton.

Edwards's position is the most explicitly *evangelical* of the three views Gerstner presented. Furthermore, as Gerstner has carefully defined his terms, there can be no refutation. Who would dare to insist on biblical grounds that there is a promise that guarantees that "*all* children of believers are elect and regenerate" (1991-, 2:124)? Apparently Calvin would not, for in his *Commentary* on Acts 3:25, the Geneva Reformer stated,

I grant, indeed, that many which are the children of the faithful, according to the flesh, are counted bastards, and not legitimate, because they thrust themselves out of the holy progeny through their unbelief" (1981; Crampton 1993a).

Commenting on Deuteronomy 29:10, Calvin stated that the children of believers are "bound to God under the same obligations under which their parents laid themselves" (1981; Crampton 1993a).

To be sure, no such promises exist "that *all* children of believers are elect and regenerate." There are no promises that override God's election decrees, on the one hand, or that negate God's command for covenant compliance on the part of the child, on the other hand. To suggest the contrary would be to suggest that God is divided against himself.

That a holy God would bind Himself and still have it in His "power" to break that promise *is* blasphemy to the Puritan mind (Gerstner 1991-, 2:88).

Promise or Possibility?

It is just as erroneous to pit God's promises against his own Sovereignty, as it is to pit the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty against the promises of God. In our theological constructions, we must beware of allowing our conception of Divine Sovereignty to eclipse or obscure the promises pertaining to the believer's offspring. While there are no promises that challenge God's Sovereignty, there are indeed promises revealed for the sake of the elect respecting the salvation of their offspring.

"The Redeemer will come to Zion,
to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,"
declares the LORD.

"As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD. "My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever," says the LORD (Isa. 59:20, 21).

All your sons will be taught by the LORD,
and great will be your children's peace (Isa. 54:13).

These promises are simply the prophetic extension of the original covenant promise given to Abraham:

"I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you" (Gen. 17:7).

These are not merely "general possibilities," nor even "probabilities"--they are particular promises addressed to God's people. They are "flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times" (Ps. 12:6).

Your promises have been thoroughly tested,
and your servant loves them (Ps. 119:140).

The Sovereign God has issued them. The Father has decreed them (Acts 2:39; cf. 1:8), the Son has secured them (2 Cor. 1:20), and the Spirit of God sovereignly applies them to the hearts of the elect (1 Cor. 12:11). And the saints are to rejoice in them: "I rejoice in your promise like one who has found

great spoil" (Ps. 119:162). From that perspective, they are not "general possibilities" or "probabilities." The Bible calls them *promises*.

The Sovereign God has decreed these promises to work faith in the hearts of his elect--and he is faithful to them.

The LORD is faithful to all his promises,
and loving toward all he has made (Ps. 145:13b).

Scripture admonishes Christians to believe them, and commends those saints in the past who held fast to them even in the face of conflicting evidence (Rom. 4:18-21; 11:39). Christians are given them in order to "participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires" (2 Pet. 1:4).

The promises were given for appropriation by faith as the spoils of Christ's victory for the church (Isa. 53:12). They are received at the point the Father is satisfied with the believer's obedience (Heb. 10:35-36). The promises are specific. God's response to his elect's faith in these promises may be an immediate "Yes," "Wait," or "I have something better for you" (John 11:23-26; Hab. 2:3; 3:16-18; Heb. 11:13-16).

There is a sense, however, in which the promises are *general, indefinite*, and have been given to the church *collectively* rather than to individuals. Louis Berkov stated, "The promises of God are given to the seed of believers collectively and not individually" (1932, 1:278).

God undoubtedly desires that the covenant relationship shall issue in a covenant of life. And He himself guarantees by his promises pertaining to the seed of believers that this will take place, not in the case of every individual, but in the seed of the covenant collectively (Berkov 1932, 1:276).

This is the sense described in Romans 3:1-2 in which the "oracles of God" were committed to the Jewish nation as a whole and which distinguished them from the nations around them (Deut. 4:7-8). For the most part, however, the promises did not benefit them, for they were not combined with *faith* (Heb. 4:2).

The promises are general in the sense that they are addressed to the visible church as a whole--for the most part, they do not have the individual names of Christians attached to them! There were no specific promises that Jonathan Edwards, in particular, would be saved; though there were promises of sufficient weight to encourage his parents to trust God for his salvation.

The promises are set forth in such a way as to require faith for their fulfillment. When faith is lacking, they do not cease to be promises and degenerate into "possibilities" or "probabilities," just as the unbelief of the Jewish people did not turn the "oracles of God" into something of lesser certainty. To suggest such a notion would be to embrace a Bultmannian conception of the Word of God, i. e., that the Scripture only "becomes" the Word of God in the existential encounter of faith (Ladd 1967, 47-49). On the contrary, the apostle wrote, "Let God be true, and every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4), and "It is not as though God's word had failed" (Rom. 9:6).

God's promise may appear to be "general and indefinite" in that no name is attached to it as it stands in written form. In the case of the elect children, however, by the special illumination of the Holy Spirit, the promise is applied with striking particularity and definiteness. In their case, it may even seem that their own names *were* attached to the promise as God's hidden decree is spiritually translated into their conscious experience.

Jonathan Edwards was not averse to the term "indefinite promises"; yet he insisted that they

extended to "the *seed of the righteous*" [and to no others!] (1879, 1:524).

And we find many promises, all over the Bible, made to the righteous, that God will bless their seed for their sakes. . . . The baptism of infants is the seal of these promises made to the seed of the righteousness; and on these principles, some rational account may be given of infant baptism . . . but there are no promises of God's word to the seed of morally sincere men and only half Christians (Edwards 1879, 1:524).

The Psalmist affirmed, "The LORD is faithful to all his promises" (145:13c) after praying in the preceding line: "Your dominion endures through all generations" (13b). His prayer of faith in verse 4, "One generation will commend your work to another," echoed the original promise given to Abraham:

I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you (Gen. 17:7).

Gerstner stressed, as Edwards had, the importance of the child's compliance with the terms of the covenant.

Today the Reformed church tends simply to say that "all children dying in infancy are elect." Blandly ignoring that in "Adam all died," they disregard the fact that his progeny must be born dead and *cannot be believed to be elect until there is evidence* of it via regeneration [Eph. 2:1-10] (Gerstner 1991-, 2:119).

Louis Berkov, cautioned, however, that

. . . in emphasizing the significance of the covenant as a means to an end, we should not stress exclusively, nor even primarily, the demands of God and the resulting duty of man, but especially the promise of the effectual operation of the grace of God in the heart of man. If we stress the covenant responsibilities only or excessively, and fail to give due prominence to the fact that in the covenant God gives whatsoever He demands of us, in other words, that his promises cover all the requirements, we are in danger of falling into the snare of Arminianism (1932, 1:278).

Edwards was well aware that God gave what he demanded of man, if he was elect, but he was also aware that God demanded what it was impossible for the natural man to give. On that basis he insisted on the qualifications for Holy Communion. Edwards pointed out that Solomon Stoddard himself had maintained

that God commandeth natural men without delay to *believe* in Christ: and yet he always held, that it was impossible for them to believe till they had by a *preceding* act submitted to the *sovereignty* of God; and yet he held, that men could never do this of themselves till humbled and bowed by powerful convictions of God's Spirit. Again, he taught that God commandeth natural men to *love* him with all their heart: and yet he held, that this could not be till men had first *believed* in Christ; the exercise of love being a fruit of faith; and believing in Christ, he supposed not to be not within the reach of *natural* ability.

Edwards argued,

Now, must it needs be thought [unjust?], notwithstanding all these *unreasonable* things, that God should *command* those whom he has nourished and brought up, to honour him by giving

an open testimony of *love* to him; only because wicked men cannot *testify* love till they *have* love, and love is not in their *natural power*? And is it any good *excuse* in the sight of God for one who is under the highest obligations to him, and yet refuses him suitable honour by openly *testifying* his love of him, to plead that he has no love to testify; but on the contrary, has an infinitely unreasonable hatred? (Edwards 1879, 1:473).

Berkov warned against the division of the sacraments in terms of an *external* and *internal* covenant. The child who is baptized into the external *obligations* of the covenant and does not yet comply with its terms, to be sure, is under a covenant of works. While he may not qualify for the *privilege* of the Lord's Table, he must certainly be regarded as being under the *advantage* of the covenant as the Jews were according to Romans 3:1-2, and even more so under the blessings of the New Testament. Consequently, Scripture regards him as "holy" (1 Cor. 7:14). His covenant *advantage*, however, will do him no eternal good unless and until he is able to manifest compliance with the demands of the covenant (Acts 17:30; Heb. 2:1-3; 4:1-2; 11:6). Neither can the promises concerning the offspring of the elect be considered applicable where there is not a full parental compliance (Isa. 59:20; Gen. 18:19).

Paul King Jewett, however, did not concede that Edwards had resolved the root of the problem. To abandon the halfway covenant corrected the *abuse* of infant baptism; it did not, in Jewett's judgment, deal with its *cause*. For the Congregationalists even of the Edwardsean school continued to defend infant baptism on the basis of external privilege after the Old Testament analogy. Jewett could not allow for the ambiguity posed by an infant being brought into the visible church, without visible evidence of repentance and faith (1978, 119, 241-242). While he acknowledged that children often brought grief to their parents and teachers whatever view of baptism their parents held, Jewett considered it a "theological surd" to baptize them on the basis of their physical birth to Christian parents (1978, 241).

Jewett's idea that infant baptism is based solely on physical lineage was a misconception and a misrepresentation. Tragically, many parents who have their children baptized share the same misconception to their own peril and the peril of their children. Jewett's relentless concern for the *purity* of the church is honorable, and the danger of hypocrites gaining access to the church's ranks through the practice of infant baptism due to the spiritual negligence of parents and the congregation is ongoing. We must beware lest

before three generations have passed that community will have lost its spiritual zeal and its evangelical experience as its distinctive Christian features fade (Bridge & Phypers 1977, 67).

Jewett's expressed regard for the church's purity, however, raises an important question: Where in Scripture is the admission of the children of believers to the church ever regarded as the cause of its impurity? To put the question another way, how can the receiving of those whom the apostle designates "holy" contribute to the church's impurity? Arguably, Jewett's view unwittingly portrays Jesus as divided against himself, since the church is his body and he embraced and welcomed the little ones as part of his church.

As a general rule, adults are to blame for the church's impurity. When the hearts of the fathers are turned to the children, it follows as a general rule that the hearts of the children are turned to the fathers--indeed that is the baptismal rule (Mal. 4:6)! The outstanding examples of children contributing to the breakdown of the church's purity are cases in which fathers have been derelict with respect to their parental duty, and where the hearts of the parents have been unfaithful to God at some point (1 Sam. 3:13-14; Psa. 78:5-8).

The management of their households by the church's elders has an important bearing upon the

church's purity (1 Tim. 3:4-5, 12; Ps. 25:12-13; 128:1-3). This in no way contradicts God's decrees (1 Sam. 2:25). The danger of hypocrites coming into the church, however, is not a paedobaptist problem but a *spiritual* problem. Surely that is the message of Psalm 78 which attributes the intergenerational breakdown of Israel to "a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God" (vs. 8). While the Baptist system may allow for a more democratic entry, it cannot guarantee a purer church (as Alexander Campbell observed [Mackay n. d., 81]).

If infant baptism is understood as a *covenant transaction*, the engagement of the heart of Jesus Christ with the hearts of the believing parents, as well as with those of the congregation, then it can only be purifying in its effect on the church. The antipaedobaptist mind-set generally allows no such covenant engagement of hearts on behalf of the infants. All too often there is a lack of focus, if not a callous indifference, concerning the infant's spiritual needs, because parents resign themselves to wait until the child is old enough to make his own decision. Where there is little or no concept of the family government as a converting ordinance, the parent relies primarily upon the pastor or the youth director to "get the child saved!"

The prophet Joel reminds us that God's remedy for the spiritual malaise of the *ekklesia* did not include barring infants from its membership:

Blow the trumpet in Zion,
declare a holy fast,
call a sacred assembly.
Gather the people
consecrate the assembly;
bring together the elders,
gather the children
those nursing at the breast.
Let the bridegroom leave his room
and the bride her chamber.
Let the priests, who minister before
the LORD,
weep between the temple porch
and the altar.
Let them say, "Spare your people,
O LORD.
Do not make your inheritance an
object of scorn,
a byword among the nations.
Why should they say among the
peoples,
"Where is their God?" (Joel 2:15-17).

Care must be taken to preserve the unity of the sacrament of infant baptism so as not to deny its *internal* aspect prior to the demonstration of the visible evidence in terms of the public profession. Marcel was right when he affirmed that "in the covenant regeneration and baptism cannot be disassociated from each other" (1953, 222). Yet he encroached upon the unity of the sacrament when he said,

The sacraments are not efficacious as means of grace--that is to say, they are not signs and seals of the covenant of grace--except so far as adults are concerned, for those who receive

them with faith (1953, 48).

By limiting the efficacy of the sacraments to believing adults, Marcel severed the theological connection between the promise of the regeneration of the child and the actual regeneration--a connection which had been affirmed in the *Westminster Confession*:

The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's will, in his appointed time (WCF 1946, XXVIII, vi).

Edwards recognized the efficacy of the baptismal covenant in the case of infants when he acknowledged them to be the "proper subjects of baptism" and "in some sort members of the Christian church," and that "some infants have the habit of saving grace . . . and a new nature given them" (1879, 1:434, 524).

John Calvin preserved the unity of the sacrament of infant baptism when he stated,

Christ's embrace [Matt. 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17] was the true token of adoption, by which infants are joined in common with adults, and that abstaining from the Supper for a time does not prevent them from belonging to the body of the church (1960, 2:1356).

Edwards's effort to preserve the unity of the covenant showed his penetrating understanding of the Sinaitic covenant.

It is *supposed*, that those who have externally (*i.e.* by oral profession and promise) entered into God's covenant, are thereby obliged to no more than the external duties of the covenant: which is not the true state of the case. They who have *externally* entered into God's covenant, are by external profession and engagements entered into one only *covenant of grace*, which the scripture informs us of; and therefore are obliged to fulfill the duties of *that* covenant, which are chiefly *internal*. The children of Israel, when they *externally* entered into covenant with God at mount Sinai; promised to perform all the duties of that covenant, to obey all the *ten commandments* . . . which principally at least are *internal* duties (1879, 1:473).

His effort was an exercise in biblical logic.

I know the distinction made by some, between the *internal* and *external covenant*; but, I hope, the divines that make this distinction, would not be understood, that there are really and properly *two* covenants of grace; but only that those who profess the one only covenant of grace, are of two sorts. There are those who comply with it *internally* and really, and others who do so only *externally*, that is, in profession and visibility. But he that externally and visibly complies with the covenant of grace, appears and professes to do so really. . . . But it is with the *covenant*, as it is with the call of the gospel: he that really complies with the *external* call, has the *internal* call; so he that truly complies with the *external* proposal of God's covenant, as visible Christians profess to do, does indeed perform the inward condition of it. But the New Testament affords no more foundation for supposing two real and properly distinct covenants of grace, then it does to suppose two sorts of real Christians (1879, 1:443).

While Edwards had insisted upon the testimony of the operation of God's saving grace as a qualification for a parent presenting his child for baptism, his protege, Samuel Hopkins, recognized that even true believing parents could

in one instance or more, be faithful in performing their promised duty to their children, and their children be made partakers of spiritual blessings, in consequence of it; yet these children, though true believers, and interested in the blessings of the covenant themselves, may so neglect their duty to *their* children, as not to keep covenant, as it respects them; and consequently their children be deprived of the blessings of the covenant; and so the covenant, and the succession of blessings, from parents to children, be broken and cease (1811, 2:297).

Covenant accountability must be impressed upon each new generation of parents, and at every stage, and further insisted upon by the congregation. John Sartelle related how his father, a Christian minister, would ask an additional question of those parents bringing their second, third, or fourth child for baptism: "Have you so kept the vow you made before God with your previous child that you can take this vow with a sincere and clear conscience?" (Sartelle 1985, 20) Whether they realize it or not, parents wield an enormous spiritual influence over the lives of their children. The Psalmist compared children to arrows in a quiver and the father to a warrior (Ps. 127:4-5).

