

Why I am a Baptist

by Erroll Hulse

My story falls into two parts. The first part describes my personal experience. I am a Baptist by experience. But was that experience biblical? Can my position stand the test of Scripture? The second part, in which I face searching questions, is doctrinal.

Part 1. A personal testimony

I was born in South Africa. My father was Anglican and in the usual way I was christened. My parents did not attend church unless we happened to be on my grandfather's farm for Christmas in which case we attended a Christmas service. This was our alpha and omega of church attendance.

My knowledge of the Bible came through five years of senior education at Marist Brothers, a well-known Roman Catholic School in Johannesburg. I was a boarder for five years from age 12 -17. The government of South Africa legislated that Protestants in Roman Catholic schools be separated from Catholics for religious education. In our class we were required to memorise whole chapters of the Bible. In that class it was implied that the Bible was the very Word of God. There was nothing better therefore than to memorise it. Even though I did not know the gospel this for me was important preparatory work and has helped me from that time to the present.

After matriculation I began a six-year course in architecture in the Pretoria University (Afrikaans language). Apart from an evangelical aunt whose godliness impressed me and who I knew prayed for me, I had not been exposed to evangelical Christians. At university I was soon impressed by the outright manner in which some fellow students witnessed to their faith. One of them befriended me and invited me to the Baptist church. I agreed but insisted that he come first to 'my church'. This was hypocrisy because I never attended; however we went to a local socially acceptable church together. After the service I asked, "Well, what do you think of that?" "Dreadful!" was his response. I then attended 'his church', the Baptist church. This happened to be during an evangelistic campaign led by a Welsh evangelist, Ivor Powell. I responded to the appeal and 'decided for Christ'. But this was deeper than so many decisions that are just a passing emotion. For me this was a transforming faith union with Christ. Follow-up was poor and my faith would have lingered long in the doldrums had it not been for my fiancée who without outside agency had been deeply convicted of sin, turned to the Bible and found peace with God. It was a Saturday night when she told me this. I said, Right, from tomorrow we will attend the Baptist church morning and evening every Lord's Day!" That was in 1953. Forty-seven years later we sustain that practice with the same conviction.

We applied for baptism and church membership. In preparation we were introduced to the basic disciplines of the Christian life: commitment to the weekly prayer meeting, tithing, the importance of personal witness, the dangers of worldliness, and the importance of missionary outreach.

Baptism for us was based on the great commission and on the examples described in the book of Acts. As I look back I see that infant christening did nothing for me. Infant baptism (christening) and believers' baptism are two completely different things. Christian baptism is for those who enter consciously into a faith union with the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. It is an event which calls for an action commensurate with the wondrous change that is wrought in one who is called out of darkness and brought into light. Immersion in water suitably illustrates

union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. Plunging into water is a perfect symbol for the washing away of sin.

It is noteworthy that I while at high school I attended classes and was confirmed. I remember the bishop laying hands on me. He was a large man with huge hands. My understanding of what it was to be saved was nil. It is easy to assent to a few items of Christian doctrine, it is quite another to be challenged about the guilt of personal sin and the necessity to trust in Christ for forgiveness. Multitudes have been confirmed who have no notion of any saving faith in Christ.

I often recall Pretoria Central Baptist Church where I was baptised and think of an appropriate epitaph which could well mark the spot; 'Here lies buried the old unregenerate Erroll Hulse, thankfully never again to appear - and from here rose the new Erroll Hulse to walk in newness of life, a citizen of the New Jerusalem' (see Col 3:2 and 9).¹

In spite of the qualities of the church we felt a lack of teaching particularly in respect to Church history. For this reason, following my graduation, we decided to find work in London which would enable us to study extra-murally at the inter-denominational London Bible College. That was in 1954. It was a time when a theological renewal was under way. From 1954 to 1960 my wife and I benefited from the weekly preaching ministry at Westminster Chapel of Dr D Martyn Lloyd-Jones as well as from the lectures at the London Bible College where there were well-known tutors such as John Waite and Donald Guthrie. But it was the teaching of Principal Ernest Kevan who was also professor of Systematic Theology, that influenced our thinking the most.

During these years of study I experienced spiritual conflict which I will describe under the following headings:

A free-will Baptist or a Reformed Baptist?

I have never doubted the inerrancy of Scripture nor questioned the Word of God as the final arbiter in every matter of faith and practice. But when my fervent, free-will/Arminian ideas were challenged by the expository preaching of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones and by Principal Ernest Kevan's lectures on the doctrine of man, I disagreed with them. But Scripture is the final arbiter. A study of Paul's letter to the Romans was disturbing - I did not agree with the apostle Paul either! This led to intense spiritual struggle. But the apostle's assessment of fallen man is accurately portrayed in Romans chapters 1-3. I could not deny the truth of total depravity. Man is fallen in all his faculties including his will. His will is in bondage to his sinful appetites. Once that truth fell into place for me, the doctrines of grace fell into place.

From the 17th century there have been two streams of Baptists in England, General and Particular; many of the latter are now called Reformed Baptists. Charles Haddon Spurgeon belonged to the second group. The Baptists of the Puritan era amended the *Westminster Confession* and in 1689 published their own *Second London Baptist Confession*. This was the Confession which Spurgeon republished in 1856, which was made the doctrinal foundation of New Park Street Chapel, later to become the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

The challenge of infant baptism

In 1957 I was asked by Iain Murray to join him in pioneering a publishing house, the *Banner of Truth*, which was based on the Westminster Standards which are Presbyterian and hence paedobaptist. The aim was to republish the works of the 16th-century Reformers and the 16th and 17th-century English Puritans. Here was I, a Baptist, with a leading role in a paedobaptist publishing house! If the Reformers and Puritans were right about the great central doctrines of Scripture and correct in rejecting the contrary Arminian teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, what about baptism? If they were correct in so much why not in the matter of infant baptism?

Working closely with Christians of Presbyterian conviction meant that I needed to have a firm basis for my doctrinal position. In this I was helped by Prof John Murray. In his exposition of the covenant of grace, Prof Murray shows the development of the covenant of grace from Noah to Abraham, to Moses, to David, to Christ.² The decisive issue is the question of the continuity and discontinuity of the covenant and the crucial passage of Scripture is Hebrews 8:7-13.

In the old covenant administration the whole nation was included. It is noteworthy that Abraham circumcised all the males in his household including those bought from a foreigner (Gen 17:27). This represented a considerable

number. We read of 318 trained men in Abraham's household (Gen 14:14) which is more than is customary for a family picnic. The administration of the Abrahamic covenant points forward to the Mosaic covenant made with the entire nation of Israel. In the old the inclusion of all meant inevitably that they did not all know the Lord. Indeed it often seemed that only a remnant knew the Lord; hence they broke that covenant. This led to judgment which came to a climax at the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel both of whom announced the promise of a new and better covenant to come. In the new covenant only those who have the writing of God's law on their hearts are included. The new is a better covenant because all members, from the least to the greatest, know the Lord. Inclusion is not therefore by natural birth. It is by new birth (John 1:12,13). The passing of the old is emphasised in Hebrews (Heb 8:13). It has vanished away. It is no longer the basis of church membership. Covenant teaching, far from weakening Baptist doctrine, actually endorses and strengthens it.³

From 1957 to 1967 I worked full time with the Banner of Truth publishing house. It was midway during that period that I accepted a call to a part-time pastorate of a village church. This work grew and needed a full-time pastor which position I accepted in 1967. Moving into pastoral work called for further clarity in which leading questions require clear answers.

Part 2.

Can the Baptist position stand up to crucial questions?

Have you ever felt that there is something compelling about the case for infant baptism?

No! I have never felt there is a case for baptising infants, not even remotely so. We have brought up four children and I understand well the feelings of parents. I have seen the importance of noting the difference for children born into and brought up in the homes of believers. This privilege is clearly referred to in 1 Corinthians 7:14 where children of believers are described as 'holy'. The advantages of children born into and brought up in a Christian home are enormous. Yet such advantages do not entitle any infant or child to baptism. Each person must come personally into the new covenant relationship with the Lord by repentance and faith. To qualify for baptism each one must personally evidence the testimony of new birth. Each one must be justified by a faith of his or her own and not rely on the faith of parents, however godly they may be.

Baptists are misrepresented in the *New Geneva Study Bible* in an article on page 38 where it is stated that Baptists exclude believers' children from the visible community of faith. That is not the case. Our children enjoy in full the benefits of teaching, worship and prayer within the fellowship of the church and when they come to personal faith they apply for baptism and church membership which will also bring them to the Lord's table. In paedobaptist churches the ordinance of confirmation is invented to bring young people into the privileges of formal membership.

Have you ever felt the weight of argument that so many great Reformers and Puritans have advocated infant baptism?

No! I have always seen infant baptism as the antithesis of believers' baptism. If a baby is baptised when that child comes to faith baptism as a believer is nullified. Therefore it is antithetical. Our Lord designed baptism of believers as a powerful testimony. That must not be nullified. Infant baptism and believers' baptism are antithetical because they proceed on different grounds. Infant baptism is only for babies of believers and proceeds on the basis of descent and covenant status. Believers' baptism is for all men and women of every race under the sun and proceeds on the basis of repentance and faith.

Perhaps the most influential work on infant baptism is that by John Calvin found in his *Systematic Theology (Institutes of the Christian Religion)*. My edition is in two volumes with total of 1734 pages translated by Ford Lewis Battles and edited by John T McNeil. Calvin devotes 56 pages to baptism. In the first five he touches on what baptism signifies but is not systematic in getting to grips with the great commission which requires that all those disciples are to be baptised and how that works in the book of Acts. He then devotes 50 pages to a defence of infant baptism in which his arguments are weak. He resorts to bullying and abuse, bluster and invective. He belittles and ridicules those who hold to believers' baptism. He accuses Baptists of slandering Christ and of shameful untruth in pointing to the fact that infant baptism was unknown in the early years of the Church (see note 9 re. Stander and Louw) and accuses us of wickedness in withholding baptism from our infants (page 1341). He suggests that the Lord punishes the arrogance of those who disagree with his (Calvin's) reasoning (page

1332). Calvin declares that we who disagree with him are raving insane! (page 1338). Finally he takes on the weakest advocate of baptism in the person of Servetus who was burned alive as a heretic in Calvin's Geneva. He refutes Servetus in six pages. This is pointless since Servetus is feeble. What counts at the end of the day is exegesis of Matthew 28:15-20; Hebrews 8:7-13; Romans 6:1-10 and Colossians 2:11,12 in the context of the new covenant. It is these passages of Scripture that decide the issue of baptism.

It is needful to put in a good word for John Calvin. Anyone reading Calvin's section on baptism will think, "Why should I put up with this vilification and this convoluted reasoning?" However the poverty of this section contrasts with the rest of his writing in *The Institutes* which is excellent and mostly free of invective and bullying.

Calvin's argument that the baptism takes the place of the circumcision has prevailed with generations of Presbyterian denominations. I am not a Barthian but I do understand why some have so much respect for Karl Barth who had an exceptional grasp of the 16th century Reformation. Barth pointed out that Calvin is exceedingly unclear in his reasoning on baptism and resorts to scolding. I admire Barth's eloquence when he says:

'Do I deceive myself when I suspect that the real and decisive ground for infant baptism, beginning with the Reformers and continuing to the present day, very simply is this: Men at the time would not renounce, for love of money, the existence of the Evangelical Church in the form of the Constantinian *corpus Christianum*, and they will not today under any circumstances and for any price, give up the contemporary form of the People's Church? When the Church breaks with infant baptism, People's Church, in the sense of a state church or a mass church is finished.'⁴

Since Calvin's day generally speaking paedobaptist authors are constrained by the text of Scripture to concede ground. Thus in his book *Baptism not for Infants*, Oxford graduate Thomas E Watson works his way systematically through the doctrine of baptism citing 69 paedobaptist authors to establish the case for believers' baptism.⁵

I have been inspired and influenced by the testimony of the Anabaptists of the 16th century who suffered terribly for their faith. They were unreliable in a number of ways but, in their grasp of the nature of the New Testament Church and their rejection of the sacral (national) nature of the Church advocated by the Magisterial Reformers, I believe they were correct. Ulrich Zwingli moved clearly in the direction of the 'gathered church' concept and led his followers in that way. Sadly however, he then drew back when it became apparent that it would be impossible, without severe persecution, to follow the gathered church principle.

What about the covenant argument? In the old covenant provision was made for babies. How can this be missed in the new covenant?

Jeremiah's statement is central because it highlights the relationship between the old covenant and the new. Jeremiah's words (Jer 31:31-34) are quoted in full in Hebrews 8:8-12, and in part in Hebrews 10:16-17. His words are also referred to by our Lord in John 6:45 where he says, 'They will all be taught by God.'

The following salient facts emerge:

1 *The new covenant is an unbreakable covenant.* The very reason why God established this new covenant with his people is because they broke the old one (v. 32). The covenant as administered to Abraham and to Moses was breakable. 'Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant' (Gen 17:14). 'They broke my covenant' (Jer 31:32). Deuteronomy chapter 28 describes the curses threatened on Israel if she broke the covenant. But the new covenant cannot be broken by the covenantees because they are all in union with Christ. One in union with Christ might backslide and sin but he will be recovered and persevere. 'He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion' (Phil 1:6).

2 *The new covenant is made with believers only.* This of course is the reason why the new covenant is unbreakable, for only *believers* will persevere to the end without breaking God's covenant. Note the blessings of this new covenant:

- i *God's law is written on my heart*-- 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts' (v. 33).
- ii *I have a personal knowledge of God*-- 'No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," because *they will all know me*, from the least of them to the greatest' (v 34a).
- iii *I have forgiveness of my sins*-- 'For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more' (v 34b).

Of course these blessings were experienced by elect old covenant believers but sometimes they formed a small minority of the covenant community. Now *all* who are covenant members experience these peculiar blessings. Ezekiel chapter 16 outlines the history of the old covenant nation and stresses the unfaithfulness of that covenant community, 'You have despised my oath by breaking my covenant' (Ezek 16:59). It is this failure that motivates the Lord to establish a new, an everlasting covenant, that will not be broken. It will not be broken 'because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest' (Heb 8:11).

3. *The new covenant is made only with the elect, with those who have experienced these blessings.* It is *not* made with those who have *not* experienced these blessings. There is no warrant for giving the sign and seal of the new covenant to those who do not evidence its blessings. When those who baptise babies speak of these babies when they grow up as covenant breakers the observation should be made that we are all born as sinners and need to be born again. Why give baptism to babies when they are sinners and lack the signs of new birth? It cannot be right to reason along these lines: I must behave well because I am in the covenant. Rather as a child grows up under believing parents or one believing parent he must make repentance and faith his primary concern. Repentance and faith form the gateway for all without exception.

Hebrews 8:7-13 is pivotal. There are a number of ways in which the plain meaning is evaded:

1. It can be said that Jeremiah's phrase, 'They shall all know me,' applies only to those covenant members who happen to be *elect*, but not to *all* covenant members whatsoever. But this is to avoid what we could term the punch line of the passage. The whole point is that this covenant will not be broken precisely because they will ALL know me. In the old covenant they did not ALL know me. There are no covenant members who do not know the Lord.

2. It can be said that Jeremiah's phrase, 'They shall all know me,' applies to *all types of people* in the new covenant. In other words whereas under the old covenant only *one* type of person really knew the Lord (the Jews), now under the new covenant *all kinds* of people will know him, from the greatest of them to the least.

It is true that the new covenant is characterised by the inclusion of believers from all nations, tribes and languages as we see on the day of Pentecost. But that very day of Pentecost reminds us that already under the old covenant administration all kinds of people were being included. Diversity is not the thrust of Hebrews 8:7-13. The writer is not saying that whereas in the old covenant I only dealt with one kind of people but now I am going to include all kinds of people. His contrast and thrust all the way through is that whereas they did not know him then now in this new covenant they will all know him.

'No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother saying, "Know the Lord," because they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest point.' The writer is not saying that the problem in the old covenant was diversity of race. The problem was not diversity of race but the fact that they did not know the Lord.

I recall an experience when a good friend who wished to convert me to paedobaptism gave me a cassette with an exposition of Hebrews 8:8-13 by a professor of theology whom I esteem highly. I trembled because I faced a two hour journey back to Leeds. What if I arrived home and had to announce to my wife that I had been converted to paedobaptism! She is a strong believer who knows this subject well. I also needed to concentrate on driving along a busy motorway. I listened to the cassette and to my amazement the professor expounded the passage as though its main thrust was the diversity of nations that characterises the new covenant, along the lines that I have just explained. He chose to ignore the principal thrust of Hebrews 8:8-13, namely the radical discontinuity of the old to the new emphasised in the fact that every member of the new covenant knows the Lord.

3. It can be argued that infant baptism is based on the Abrahamic covenant whereas this passage is referring to the Mosaic covenant. In answer to that I say that the Abrahamic covenant was preparatory to the Mosaic covenant. The principle that every one born in the clan must be circumcised is identical to that of the

Mosaic covenant. The basis of inclusion for Abraham, namely natural birth, provides covenant status. That is identical with the Mosaic covenant.

4. A case can be reasoned that knowing of the Lord is *an external knowledge* about the things of God revealed in Scripture. This, it can be suggested, is the knowledge shared by all who grow up in believers' homes. But this does not fit. As shown above the knowledge is not external. It is spiritual. It is that knowledge which saves and which brings forgiveness of sin. It is a knowledge of the Lord which is the same as union with Christ. That is, it is new covenant knowledge.

I have been detailed on Hebrews 8:8-13 because this passage is crucial in its emphasis on the radical discontinuity of the old and new covenants. Paedobaptists rightly affirm the fundamental and underlying *unity* of the covenant of grace in all ages. But they suppress the radical change that has taken place. They suppress the *not*. (Heb 8:9), 'It will *not* be like the covenant I made with their forefathers.' We must not read the Old Testament as though it were the New and we must not read the New Testament as though it were the Old. The coming of Christ, his life, death, resurrection and ascension have brought a complete fulfilment of the Old. Subsequently there was introduced a radically different covenant administration. This new covenant administration began on the day of Pentecost. We are now the Church. We are not the nation of Israel. The fundamental error of paedobaptists is in the very subject where many of them pride themselves as being strong, namely, in biblical theology, that is progressive redemptive history.

The baptism of believers is the antithesis of infant baptism. Our Lord designed baptism of believers as a powerful testimony. That must not be nullified. Infant baptism and believers' baptism proceed on different grounds. According to paedobaptists, infant baptism is only for babies of believers and proceeds on the basis of descent and covenant status. According to baptists, believers' baptism is for all men and women of every race under the sun and proceeds on the basis of repentance and faith.

Do you think it is important to insist on immersion for baptism?

I have never doubted that immersion is intended to symbolise union with Christ or that immersion was the method used in the New Testament. The word *Rantizo* means to sprinkle and the word *baptizo* means to dip or to immerse. The Holy Spirit could easily have used *rantizo* if he meant us to sprinkle. The Greek Orthodox Church uses immersion when baptising infants because they grasp their own language. But the mode is secondary to the subjects. If people genuinely, for physical reasons, cannot be immersed, I would accept the validity of their baptism as believers by other means, such as pouring.

The argument that there could not be enough water in Jerusalem to baptise 3000 converts in one day, I always rejected. As an architect I know that no city can exist without adequate water supplies and water conservation. Furthermore the issue was settled by a Presbyterian, Murray Adamthwaite of Australia, who was involved in archaeological work in Israel. He testified that in the 1970s and 1980s no less than 48 purification pools (miqveh - pools to meet the requirements of the laws of Leviticus 15 and Numbers 19) were unearthed in the temple mount area. The specification of rabbis was that a minimum of 47 inches depth was required and a minimum of six steps down into the water.⁶

How important is believers' baptism?

Salvation is first. Baptism second (1 Cor 1:13). Making disciples is first and baptism second (Matt 28:18-20). Believers' baptism is God's appointed way of entrance into church membership. Practised with discernment on the basis of genuine credible professions of faith, believers' baptism safeguards the nature of the Church and preserves her from being nominal in character. In paedobaptist churches it is noteworthy that there is often a struggle with this issue. For instance when the Church in the Netherlands changed from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism it was soon discovered that it was impossible to maintain 'a holy church' with such a high proportion of evidently unregenerate members.⁷

There is a problem when the Lord's table is not related to believers' baptism. If those baptised as infants have a right to the table irrespective of evidence of a saving change and holiness of life, a quandary follows. Jonathan Edwards faced this dilemma. He sought to guard the Lord's table from evidently unregenerate members. There may have been other reasons for his unpopularity but this was the primary reason which led to his dismissal from his church on 22nd June, 1750, from his church by 230 votes to 23.⁸

How can you reject infant baptism when it was the practice of the post-apostolic Church?

I do not accept that it was the practice of the post-apostolic Church. With regard to that question a well researched work has come from Profs H F Stander and J P Louw of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa. They show that infant baptism first appeared in the third century.⁹

Do you believe that church membership should be confined to those only who have been baptised as believers?

Yes, I do, and for three reasons.

My first reason has to do with the apostolic command to baptise. We see in Acts 2 that the apostles required that all converts be baptised without exception. 'Be baptised every one of you,' commanded Peter on the day of Pentecost. There may not be two standards, namely believers' baptism for new converts but another wholly different baptism for infants and subsequent status for those who claim the validity of baptism as infants.¹⁰

Some object to this on the grounds that the practice of believers' baptism divides families. Note the radical new covenant position stated by our Lord in Matthew 10.

'Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law - A man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'

Apart from Micah chapter 7:1-6 this radical teaching is nowhere to be found in the Old Testament where the unity of the nation of Israel as the standard-bearer of God's revelation was the primary consideration. Micah suggests that scandalous sin, bribery and corruption, causes deep family division for those who refuse to compromise holiness. But in the new covenant era union with Christ (which is the main significance of baptism) results in inevitable cleavage in families. Our Lord is faithful to warn of this. This dramatic teaching about family division is new. Taking the side of Jesus is something quite radical. It involves turning away from the status quo. In our Western culture it is turning away from the world and in many cases from nominal, self-righteous, non-saving religion. It is not acceptable for a convert to say that he cannot be baptised because members of his family will be offended.

In Islamic nations believers' baptism can be extremely costly. It is interpreted to mean that there is no salvation in Islam but only in Christ. This results in resentment, anger and often in severe persecution. Believers' baptism focuses on union with Jesus which can spell the loss of everything in this world.

Believers' baptism can also be costly for those who have grown up in paedobaptist denominations. For instance the pioneer missionary to Burma on his way to that country for the first time in 1812 gave himself to an in depth study of baptism. The sea voyage took five months. When he was persuaded of believers' baptism that spelled the end of all his support. Ann Judson fiercely resisted this change but after searching the Scriptures for herself came to the same conclusions as Adoniram. Ann wrote to her parents, 'A renunciation of our former sentiments has caused us more pain than anything which ever happened to us through our lives.' Adoniram Judson's book *Christian Baptism* written on that voyage has been republished.¹¹

My second reason has to do with Church history. The truth of believers' baptism and the reality of the gathered church symbolism has been recovered at the cost of much suffering and martyrdom. We are required to provide clear guidelines for future generations. It is said that churches often begin in a revival and those converted in such a revival are zealous for the truth throughout their lives. The next generation takes the truth for granted. The third generation abandons the truth. That may be cynical and it need not be so. At least we can leave landmarks for future generations. It is encouraging to observe that there are Reformed Baptist churches in England that have remained faithful for over three centuries.

A death is represented in believers' baptism. In my baptism I died to the world. Now I live in newness of life with Christ. The old unregenerate self is dead (Col 3:9). This is parallel to our Lord's teaching, 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and for the gospel will save it (Mark 8:34). Baptism represents that point of taking up daily self mortification as Paul says I die every day (1 Cor 15:31). I look back

on my baptism as an historic event displaying as Paul says, 'In him you were also circumcised (aorist tense) not with the circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, (a references to new birth) having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead (Col 3:11,12).

My third reason is practical. To accept infant baptism is to deprive those who come to faith of an ordinance which is practical in its administration. While baptism does not save, as we have seen, it exemplifies something momentous - that is union with Christ and the washing away of sin. The ordinance is intended to have a powerful testimony, for the candidate as a seal of his or her faith, and to the gathered church and congregation.

The participation of paedobaptists in Baptist churches and of Baptists in Presbyterian churches is something that has to be worked through separately in detail.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion I observe that believers' baptism marks the greatest change that exists for a sinner. He is brought from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God by new birth. He is justified, he is set apart, a work of progressive sanctification is begun in his heart and he is adopted into the family of God. Believers' baptism is the ordinance designed to mark this transformation. He has been baptised by the Holy Spirit into Christ and into the body of Christ (Gal 3:26; Rom 6:1-7; 1 Cor 12:13). All this refers to something that has taken place. With our infants, we fervently pray and express our hopes that one day all this will happen but we have absolutely no right to attest these things before they are confirmed in reality. Believers' baptism not only declares the wondrous grace of God in conversion, it tells the one who now walks in newness of life that all his resources lie in the Triune God with whom he is now united. He does not look to secret formulas or gimmicks in his struggles and temptations. His baptism tells him that he is in Christ for time and for eternity and that in that union he must and will persevere to the end.

¹ The Central Baptist Church, Pretoria was situated in Beatrix Street. The property was sold and a new church complex built with an auditorium which can seat about 1,500. The new church is situated in Schoeman Street near the American Embassy building famous for its Fort Knox-like appearance. The original foundation stone was laid by Paul Kruger, president of the Transvaal Republic who was a zealous believer.

² Prof John Murray, Article on the Covenant, *New Bible Dictionary*, 1962.

³ Erroll Hulse, *The Testimony of Baptism*, Part two The Covenant pp 93-122, Carey Publications, distributed by EP.

⁴ Karl Barth, *Die Taufe*, pages 39-40. Cited in Paul K Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace*, Eerdmans, 1978, page 111.

⁵ Thomas E Watson, *Should Babies be Baptised?* Grace Publications, 125 pages, 1995.

⁶ Murray Adamthwaite, *Baptism is Immersion!* Reformation Today, issue 109.

⁷ Joel Beeke, *The Quest for Full Assurance*, Banner of Truth, 1999, p293ff.

⁸ Graham Harrison, 'Jonathan Edwards and terms of admission to communion', *Westminster Conference Papers, 1971*. These annual papers for 1955-1999 are being republished by Presbyterian and Reformed Publishers in the USA and in the UK are available from John Harris e mail: johar@globalnet.co.uk

⁹ H F Stander and J P Louw, *Baptism in the Early Church*, Didaskalia Publishers, 1988.

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¹⁰ Most Presbyterian denominations accept Roman Catholic infant baptism. This demonstrates that they are not consistent in their claim to base their practice on the Abrahamic Covenant. If that were so they would reject the sacramentalism of the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches.

¹¹ Adoniram Judson, *Christian Baptism*, 112 pages, Audubon Press, P O Box 8055, Laurel, MS 39441-8000, USA