

**THE WHITLEY LECTURE
1999-2000**

**SEEN AND HEARD
Reflections on children
and Baptist tradition**

Anne Dunkley

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The Whitley Lecture

The Whitley Lectureship was first established in 1949, in honour of W.T. Whitley (1861-1947), arguably the first systematic modern Baptist historian. Whitley was a notable scholar and servant of the Church of Christ. He had pastorates in England and Australia. He served the denomination in both countries in many ways, including pursuing historical studies.

Whitley was a key figure in the formation of the Baptist Historical Society (1908). He edited its journal which soon gained an international reputation for the quality of its contents. Altogether he made a particularly remarkable contribution to Baptist life and self-understanding, providing an inspiring model of how a pastor scholar might enrich the life and faith of others.

The establishment of the Lectureship in his name was intended to be an encouragement to research by Baptist scholars into aspects of Christian life and thought and to enable the results of such research to be published and available to the denomination and beyond.

The Whitley Lectureship's Management Committee is composed of representatives of the Baptist Colleges, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Baptist Missionary Society, the Baptist Ministers Fellowship and the Baptist Historical Society.

Through the years the encouragement towards scholarship has taken different forms, from the full support of the writing of lectures for publication by a designated Whitley Lecturer to the making available of smaller grants to those working at particular research interests.

In 1996 the Management Committee of the Whitley Lectureship began a new initiative in keeping with the original purpose. It was agreed to appoint each year a Lecturer to write and deliver a lecture as a contribution to scholarly Baptist thought. Each lecture will be published.

The Management Committee is delighted that the Revd Anne Dunkley is the fourth lecturer in the new series. Anne has served as a local pastor in Nottingham and also as a key member of the Northern Baptist College, Manchester, Community Learning Network. She has recently been appointed full-time Tutor with responsibility for the Community Learning Network. She has worked energetically with others in the Baptist Union of Great Britain on issues relating to children and the church. Although there are particular issues for Baptists with regard to children her lecture is one which will interest all Christian people.

Brian Haymes

on behalf of the Management Committee

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Children come with a spiritual health-warning. They are dangerous for us because they embody the values of the Kingdom of God. Yet we do not see children and what they represent. Children are dangerous because by being small and vulnerable, they enable us to exploit and abuse, ignore and dominate them in ways which oppose the values of God's Kingdom. We do not hear children, or the voice of God in them. Jesus taught that mature discipleship consists in protecting and welcoming, emulating and learning from children. But children are still oppressed, marginalized or overlooked in church and society today, as throughout much of history, even Christian history. Our spiritual health depends on responding to children whom we see and hear as ambassadors of the Kingdom.

In choosing to focus on children at this significant time, the Whitley Committee has made an important statement. Much valuable material has been written about children over the last twenty years, and it would be tempting to use this lecture as a platform for revisiting the key publications in children's work,¹ for much of the thinking they contain has, like children themselves, been sidelined. This is the field in which I have been professionally involved over many years as teacher and minister, and there would be security in treading such familiar ground. But to do so would not take us forward. What I aim to do in this lecture, therefore, is to offer some fresh theological reflection on children and childhood, then assess honestly

the way we have dealt with children in the past, particularly as Baptists. I shall try to offer a vision for a church where children are both seen and heard, principles to guide us being church together as a community of people of all ages. There will, however, be no recipes or blueprints, for it is incumbent on each community, adults and children together, to work out the shape of their worshipping and community life as they wrestle with the theology and translate it into practice in cognisance also of the effects of historical movements and of child development.

The need is urgent. Children are, as we shall see, naturally spiritual beings. But there is such dissonance between their lives and many of the structures and attitudes they find within the church that they vote with their feet at an ever earlier age. And this does not address the majority of children who never have any contact with the church, who are also children of God. The main focus of the lecture will be the children we already have in our midst; if we take them seriously, that in itself is a commendation to those who as yet have no contact.

We begin, then, by thinking theologically.

CHILDREN: GOD'S GIFT AND GOD'S PROMISE

A woman gives birth to a child. She has nurtured her in her womb as embryo and foetus. She has worked hard and suffered pain to give him life. She is intensely aware that what she has laboured for, given of herself to create, is good. In the presence of the newly born, we tread on holy ground. We respond in awe and wonder. Divine blessing is in the gift.

This is a profound theological truth, that to give birth is to share in the creative work of God whose creation can be

nothing except good and precious. The sense of this is captured by Kathy Galloway in the meditation 'A Labour of Love' in which she parallels the story of God's seven-day creation with human birthing: 'At the sixth time, there was a momentary, endless hesitation. Then a child was born. And the child looked like the one who had given it life. The child too was born with the power to create and to make decisions and to love. The labourer looked at all that had been accomplished, and rejoiced, for it was very good.'²

Infants are created whole. They model the wholeness of personhood which is God's intention and goal for all people. But they enter a broken world, and sooner or later the wholeness of birth becomes fractured. Biblical tradition testifies to this theological truth. After the creation of man and woman in Genesis 1, the writer tells us: 'God blessed them' and 'God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good'(vv.28,31). Again, the Yahwist who draws together many of the more primitive stories in the early chapters of Genesis affirms the richness and blessing of life. But the man and woman are ejected from the garden. The stories in Genesis 2-3 represent an early struggle to reconcile the belief in the goodness of the God who created all life with humanity's experience of frailty and brokenness. It is resolved for the writer when, within each act of separation from God, God provides for the future. Humankind is not written off or there would be no story. Promise and blessing thread their way through the story, superseding each act of human disobedience. That promise consists in the capacity to bear children so that they can inherit the blessing, and perhaps make a better job of it than their parents. Children are the way God holds on to wayward humanity, directing our gaze from the past and

the present towards the future. 'Unless you change and become like children ...'.

These first traces of salvation history became focused in the covenant with Abraham. To an old childless couple God gave a promise of hope and blessing out of the curse of alienation and separation. But that blessing only began its fulfilment with the birth of Isaac. We find a similar pattern repeated in Israel's later experience. In times of oppression, failure, and disobedience, hope was born in a child: Moses, saved and nurtured by courageous women; Samuel, given back to God by his mother; David, chosen although the youngest and least significant brother; Jeremiah, called in the womb.³ Each demonstrated a capacity for spirituality by which they could respond to God's calling; although these children were marked out in story as being specially receptive to God, we also find evidence of the ability all children are believed to have to recognize and respond to God: 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise.' (Psalm 8.2).

As they grew, children would learn of and participate in the faith stories and rituals of the community in which they found their identity. Indeed it was for them that the Torah and the new land were given.⁴ That children carried hope for the future is further borne out by the future child of the prophecies of Isaiah. The promise of a child to continue the Davidic dynasty is a sign of God's active involvement on the people's behalf; the child plays in safety and exercises leadership in a restored creation.⁵ Although it is possible to read these verses as visions of the enthronement of a Davidic king (cf. Psalm 2.7), they are also consistent with the pattern of expectation of a child found elsewhere in the Old Testament.

With the failure of the Sinai covenant, exilic writers returned to the Abrahamic covenant as the basis on which to remake the fractured relationship with God. Deutero-Isaiah picks up the two themes: God is the creator, and the one who called Abraham and Sarah and blessed them. God is also the one who re-creates, the redeemer who restores wholeness, heals the people's sin and brokenness and promises a 'new thing' in the future.⁶

There is no idealization of children in the Old Testament, however. Proverbs contains very harsh instructions for keeping children's wild behaviour in check. Corporal punishment is moderate in comparison to the non-Jewish world where children could be brutally treated and unwanted children exposed. Plato compared bringing up a child to taming a wild animal. Children's importance lay in being bearers of the promise, of the family name and tradition; for themselves individually, they had little significance.

It was into this context that Jesus came as a child. The theological significance of God's incarnation, the experience to God of being a child, raises for ever the status of every child. God chose to save humankind through a child. And uncharacteristically for their time, children are highly visible in the gospels. Although Jesus never speaks directly to children, he both sees and hears them. They show a perceptiveness about him, and his acceptance encourages in them an open and generous response, whether making an offering in faith of bread and fish (what adult would do that, imagining it could possibly stretch to feed such a crowd!), singing his praises in the Temple, or just hanging around listening while he was teaching.⁷

We learn most from the teaching of Jesus on children.⁸ When Jesus welcomes, takes, touches, cuddles, blesses

children, he is clearly overturning the accepted view that they are of value only because of what they will be in and to their communities when they assume adult responsibilities. Like other marginalized groups, he brings them out of the shadows and places them centre-stage. According to Hans Ruedi Weber, 'when Jesus takes them in his arms and blesses them, they receive the greatest gift possible, the kingdom of God which is both a present and a future reality'. Like the vision of Isaiah this action has messianic significance. Weber describes how in rabbinic teaching, the resurrection of the people of Israel will happen when 'God embraces them, presses them to his heart and kisses them, thus bringing them into the life of the world to come'. The children were embraced by the messianic king, and thus received the kingdom. Weber explores Jesus' action further; Jesus, he says, is not teaching about the nature of children, but revealing the nature of God.

Against all human calculation, God gives the kingdom in a totally gratuitous way. His love for children is as 'unreasonable' as the generosity of the steward in the parable of the labourers in the vineyard.⁹ Where the child becomes the metaphor of discipleship,¹⁰ his adult followers are taught to claim the kingdom like a child claims food and love, and to receive it with empty hand, for the kingdom is given by grace alone. There is a real sense in which the child is Jesus' representative, envoy, successor;¹¹ this is as shocking a lesson as that the Messiah was to suffer.

On this basis we begin to construct our theology of childhood. But childhood is a phase in time. How does it relate theologically to life as a whole? Childhood is an essential part of what it is to be human, to be made in

God's image. It is not a subordinate stage to be passed through on the way to something more advanced. We shall see how that view has had a detrimental effect on the way children have been treated in the past. Childhood has a unique value and meaning, because although of earth, we do not belong only in time and space.

Karl Rahner reflects helpfully on childhood in the context of eternity. Our nature, he says, is 'more than what is pushed through the space-time dimension', as if only the transient moment, 'the present' is important. 'The totality of man's existence as saved and redeemed in its consummated state does not constitute a further period appended to or following upon his life; it is part of that temporal mode of existence we take with us into eternity.' Rather than childhood being left behind, then, it 'endures as that which is given and abiding'. Because childhood has this quality, it belongs to our future, a dimension of our life, taken as a whole, we go on living through. 'We move into the eternity of this childhood, to its definitive and enduring validity in God's sight.' Rahner goes on to picture childhood as a 'field bearing fair flowers and ripe fruits that can only grow in this field and no other, and will themselves be carried into the storehouses of eternity.' He describes the maturity of adulthood as the afternoon, following a morning which does not derive its value from that which follows, but is unique, a time in which the child touches upon the divinity of God in a special way of its own; in fact the child, 'fresh from the hands of God' has an immediacy to God as a right, from his origins as a unique creation. Unless we realize this intimacy and necessity of relationship between childhood and adulthood as stages in our eternal relationship with God, we cannot become fully mature within that relationship. For we take with us into

adulthood, as our basic attitude and outlook, the openness and readiness to journey which Rahner sees as key aspects of 'this playtime' of childhood, and allow them to develop to the full without limitation. To view all human life as the realization of what a person already is transforms our understanding of the child, and again drives us to want to know them as subjects, that in listening to them we may catch glimpses of that which is eternal.¹²

How different is this from other pictures we receive; as in medieval art children are depicted as small adults, so in theology, the starting point for discussion of children is frequently adult experience, projected back into childhood. Most theological reflection on children is concentrated in the related areas of human nature and its redemption. The two divergent views which have governed thinking about children find their origins in the classic doctrines of humanity usually associated with Augustine and Irenaeus respectively, the one pessimistic promoting the theory of original sin (and original guilt, a belief which has less acceptance today); the other optimistic, seeing sin as disability. These two approaches to human destiny are summed up in the report *The Child and the Church* which distinguishes between children taught to 'turn from what they are' and children nurtured 'to become what they are'.

For children, as for us all, the end of the twentieth century has brought with it lifestyles and pressures, knowledge and opportunities which require a new, or at least re-discovered, theological paradigm. Childhood has come into its own over the last 300 years as an identifiable and valuable stage of life, occasioned by the Industrial Revolution, the advent of universal state education, and contemporary commercialism. Consequently, in society and in the church, children are treated as objects to whom

things must be done, marketable commodities who must produce results rather than subjects with their own integrity to be valued and respected. The educational machine depersonalizes them as it strives to attain standards measured in league tables; pupils and teachers are responding with anger and frustration to the expectations placed on them, but more seriously, their mental health is being affected. A recent report by the Mental Health Foundation shows that twenty per cent of those under twenty experience problems ranging from anxiety and depression to psychotic and major developmental disorders.¹³ Yet many churches deal with children as if their lives were care- and stress-free, an unreal environment indeed.

Children need the church to represent a counter-culture, one which values them for who they are, respects the experiences of joy and fulfilment as well as of pain and doubt they bring with them, and stands in solidarity with them as they learn to cope with living at each age and stage. More than this, they have unique gifts and insights of God to offer to the church community, as our theological reflections have indicated and experience confirms.

Increased understanding of child development over the last fifty years has helped us towards this more positive view of children. Research focused on psychology, education, morality and spirituality has given us insights which affirm the capacity of the child for faith, and an awareness of God or of the spiritual dimension, which exists prior to any cognitive input from church or school. Young children inhabit a holistic world, where there is an interplay of cognitive and affective learning and response.

Western society and church, placing primary emphasis on rational thought and logical reasoning, have been

impoverished by the secondary value placed on feeling, sensitivity, intuitive knowing and aesthetic awareness. The former are objectively measurable and mechanisms exist to place people within a hierarchy of knowledge. Of course, it would be absurd to contemplate devising criteria to assess affective 'knowledge', so in an aggressively competitive society, the scientist and lawyer are afforded higher status than the story-teller or minister. Yet many people derive a deeper understanding of the way the world is by reading C.S. Lewis's Narnia stories than from the works of Isaac Newton or Stephen Hawking. Children live with this tension throughout their schooling. They and their parents pick up the hidden (and overt) signals that these aspects are only peripheral or optional to full human development.

Two pieces of current research in particular are helping to move forward our understanding of children's spiritual lives. The methodology used does not demand traditional formulation of a hypothesis from which questioning proceeds to establish proof. A qualitative research framework based on flexibility and openness was found to be a more appropriate way into the thinking of children.¹⁴

In Nottingham, the 'Children's Spirituality Project', headed by Dr David Hay, has applied the work of Alister Hardy, the Oxford zoologist, to children. Hardy asserted that spiritual awareness is biologically based, developing through the evolutionary process. Hay illustrates from his own research how children describe and strive to make meaning out of experiences of loss and of conflict without necessarily having been exposed to the language of religion, thus showing how innately it becomes a means even for young children of transcending circumstances which could pose a threat to their emotional well-being as well as their

physical survival. In this meaning-making, they are in tune with something beyond themselves.

Hay, working with Rebecca Nye, based the research into 'the uncharted area of children's spirituality' on three categories of spiritual sensitivity, simply to offer an initial 'something to look for': these are awareness-sensing, mystery-sensing and value-sensing.¹⁵ In analysing the results of conversations with children, Rebecca Nye detected a significant common feature, a further core category which she termed 'relational consciousness'; this was the category which held in dynamic tension the other features and dimensions and made 'what the children said come alive with spirituality'. Children, they concluded, are therefore not only innately aware of 'otherness' but necessarily relate to it. This openness to spirituality was most clearly found in young children. Hay and Nye note that by the age of eleven, spiritual life has either become privatized or spirituality itself has become discredited, a destructive process that is not inevitable but is socially constructed.¹⁶

The Children and Worldviews project¹⁷ finds similar depths in children. Danny Sullivan describes how in the research process, 'we spend time with children, we listen to them, we share story and narrative with them. We invite them to take us into their "special", "secret" or "sacred" places, whether these are within themselves or in the world outside and which we adults very often fail to notice.' He concludes: 'The children ... seemed to be identifying the real significance of the spiritual, of the inner world to their lives and give the impression that adults are missing out on a great deal.' Sullivan's comments on the theology of childhood are also affirmed by the finding of the Nottingham research team: 'If there is a theology of

childhood it has much to do with a sense of story, of spirituality, of delighting in the Kingdom, of struggling to make sense, even at a very early age, of the harshness and pain of life. That theology appears to be lived in a natural and open way until children sense it does not reflect the world and language of adults. That is when they choose to retreat inside themselves and to hide their theology, their experience of the Kingdom - sometimes to the extent that it remains hidden never again to be tapped, enriched or developed through contact and dialogue with others.¹⁸

What is becoming increasingly clear is that many earlier and supposedly definitive studies of children using criteria and means of assessment appropriate to adults have failed to discover the complexity of the knowledge and experience worlds of even very young children.¹⁹

The Biblical evidence of children in early and close relationship with God is substantiated by contemporary research into children's spiritual awareness, if such spirituality can indeed be equated with a nascent relationship with God. Spirituality has no agreed definition, and its relationship to religious faith is fiercely argued. It may not always be the case that spiritual experience can be contained within the vocabulary of traditional religion, and attempts to translate what a child knows intuitively into language consistent with traditional Christian belief may rob it of meaning and even begin to close down the child's openness to the divine. This remains a real difficulty: how to enable children, by learning the language of faith, to find their own place in the Christian story so that it has meaning for their lives, while still giving them the space to experience God, and to think about and express those experiences on their own terms. When John Bradford²⁰ describes spirituality as a 'dynamic, tripartite and inter-

related concept' he provides us with a useful basis for broadening our understanding of a holistic and therefore healthy spirituality. Children require an integrated engagement with (i) their human (innate) spirituality through family and friends, (ii) the devotional spirituality of a faith community through which they can encounter God, and (iii) a practical spirituality by which they relate to the wider world. The three interact, and together enable the child to attain full human development individually and corporately. Although only affecting a minority of children, he regards contact with the faith community as essential; children who do not belong to such a group do not acquire the language by which they can name a significant part of their experience. Despite the caution thrown up by his research, David Hay agrees that children cannot mature without learning to use language which will enable them 'to ponder'; but he urges adults to listen carefully to children so that they encourage learning starting from where the children are, not where we would like them to arrive.²¹

This seems far removed from the experience of many if not most of the children in our churches. The typical experience of a child on a Sunday morning is of a very controlled environment prepared for them by adults. They are segregated by age, kept occupied by given material within a teaching environment, and excluded from the full diet of worship of the people of God. A minister recently commented that 'the adult church in the main tidies them away.' They are neither seen nor heard.

These contemporary trends have more to do with history and ideology than theology, and are neither ancient nor immutable. So at this point, we will turn our attention to the history of children in Baptist communities; by tracing the path over nearly 400 years, we shall try to understand

where and why this situation exists in the majority of our churches today.

CHILDREN IN BAPTIST HISTORY: THE FIRST 200 YEARS

Baptists origins in the seventeenth century lay in their distinctive ecclesiology. In a world where children were of little significance, rejection of infant baptism questioned their status, particularly in Christian families. The first Baptists were courageously mapping new territory. Dissent denied to children their accepted place in society. It is not surprising that early thinking contained contradictions. We know that there was much fluidity of thought and practice in Dissenting circles in those early days and we should not look for clearly systematized statements. The two Reformation strands which undergirded thinking about children were the Arminian concept of redemption that 'stretcheth to all men' and that of Calvin which restricted the efficacy of the cross to the elect.

John Smyth placed children firmly outside the church; children of 'the faithful' shared the status of 'carnal children'. Entry to the church was by baptism as a believer, but 'Christ expressly excluded infants from baptism because baptism was only for those made disciples (Matthew 28.19). Infants cannot be made disciples by teaching.' Smyth's view that faith comes by teaching and shows itself in adherence to legal precepts typifies much of the attitude to the development of faith amongst Baptists ever since. We still live with the consequences of the opinion that: 'Repentance and faith are wrought in the hearts of men by the preaching of the word ... Faith is a knowledge in the mind of the doctrine of the law and gospel contained in the

prophetical and apostolical scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.' Smyth's reliance on cognition for the inculcation of faith would, as we have seen, not find universal assent today.

So much for what children are not. Statements of this nature still did not meet the felt need to define their status. Smyth's answer admits to some confusion. On one occasion, he wrote that infants are 'conceived and born in innocence without sin and that so dying are undoubtedly saved', on another that 'they are one of the Lord's secrets not to be searched into.' His universalism regarding children was confirmed in the Orthodox Confession of 1679. Although outside the covenant, children of faithful parents did, he believed, have advantages. 'Our infants under the gospel shall have the daily instruction and education of faithful parents, which is infinitely superior. With open face they may in the preaching of the gospel see Jesus Christ... Parents are bound to bring up their children with instruction and information of the Lord.' Parents were expected to play a major part in the nurturing of children's faith.

Despite their theological differences, Particular Baptists, in their Confession of 1689, were also able to affirm that 'infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit who works when and where and how he pleases.'²²

The generosity towards children reflected in both General and Particular Baptist views may have been in recognition of the social conditions of the day, when infant mortality was very high, and parents were asking deep questions about the eternal destiny of the large numbers of children who did not live beyond the age of ten. Estimates from the early eighteenth century put the death rate for

children under ten at fifty-four per cent. The previous century is unlikely to have been different, considering that deaths from plague, fire, war and natural disasters had to be added to those from more usual causes. Few families can have been spared the pain of a child's death, and this helps us to understand why theological statements about children from this period focused on their death, rather than their life. This touches again on the question of the immutability of theological statements when experience calls them into question. John Smyth is reported by Whitley as appealing to experience in doing his theology 'which was rare in those days'.²³ Seemingly unacquainted with the Augustinian doctrine of hereditary guilt, he held an optimistic view of children at odds with much popular belief of his time, but which accorded with his own experience of young children.

There is little recorded about the way children of Dissenters were taught the faith. Parents were expected to impart sufficient knowledge to their children to create an awareness of sin, so that they could make a conscious choice to repent and believe. There has been no consensus as to the age at which moral and religious responsibility can be said to begin. Lessons at home were supported by the church's teaching, but no concessions were made in public worship to the presence of children. Family life particularly on Sundays was centred around worship; if parents followed the advice of popular conduct books they would train their children to read the Bible, and attend church as soon as they could 'sit reverently or fruitfully',²⁴ and even among Baptists learn a short catechism containing 'the principles and grounds of Christian religion'. Sunday afternoon was spent repeating the sermons heard, either from notes or from memory. A truly spiritual upbringing

also consisted in children learning to behave 'decently in their going, in their speaking and in the gesture of their bodies'. Puritan influence was strong. Morality and personal piety supported one another.

We do have one glimpse of family life in a Baptist home in this period from the description of the Vernon family which H. Wheeler Robinson brings us.²⁵ Caleb Vernon aged twelve was dying. He was already well schooled in reading and classical languages, and had a child's grasp of doctrine; his imperfect understanding gives an example of how children in their desire to win adult approval, learn to repeat set phrases. However, Caleb did have a sharp mind and was able to argue cogently that he should be baptized despite his physical weakness. His baptism proved to be a profound spiritual experience for him. His pious upbringing can be seen in his repetition of verses written for children by a family friend extolling the fear of God and devotion to worship which concludes:

How seldom Timothys we see,
 vers'd in the Word of Truth ...
Few tender-hearted Youths as was
 Josiah, Judah's king:
Hosannah in the high'st, alas,
 How seldom children sing.

How exceptional Caleb was we do not know. His doctor father told his story because his son was gifted, a rare product of the teaching and pious upbringing common to the period.

Childhood was still no more than a preparatory stage on the way to maturity and adulthood as Caleb Vernon's story bears out. A child who made the passage swiftly was highly esteemed. It was the rationality of mind which was the

hallmark of adulthood to which children were striving. Until they developed a facility for language by which they could demonstrate an ability to reason, they were thought to be deficient in mental capacity (the Greek *νήπιος*, 'infant', like the Latin *infans*, literally means 'non-speaker'). In Caleb Vernon's case, illness was the only ground for reluctance to baptize the boy; his powers of reasoning were not in question.

Until children could reason, they lacked self-control which as we have seen in earlier Judaism put them on a level with fools and animals. Puritan advice for parents informed them that 'reason maketh a man differ from a beast'; the inculcation of piety was the only sure basis for moral Christian life and rational adulthood. A programme of parental duty included, for the early years: 'nourishing children until they are independent, nurturing them in the fear of God with good discipline; instructing them in God's ways.' Much discussed were different methods of physical punishment thought to be essential for bringing about piety. One writer described the buttocks as 'specially created by God to receive just correction in childhood without serious bodily injury.' How strictly the text books were followed is unknown, but it is clear from contemporary writers that they experienced physical punishment in their upbringing.²⁶

Further evidence of a Baptist view of children's upbringing comes from Benjamin Keach who was pilloried in 1664 for publishing *The child's instructor or new easy primer* which contradicted the official church catechism. Again, Wheeler Robinson paints the picture. In advance of its time, the primer contained a set of lesson material divided into age groups, suited to three to four, ten and 'mature-age' children. Catechetical instruction was placed alongside spelling and moral lessons. The content illustrates

the adult perception of childhood on which nurture was modelled, 'cross-sections of the presumptive religious capabilities of these several ages'.²⁷ The three to four year old was taught that salvation was by conversion, and given memory verses containing moral teaching. Play was scorned. The ten year old who wanted to do as other children did while he was young, was warned of the danger of putting off religious decision, through an imaginary dialogue with his father in which he instilled in the child the fear of eternal damnation and forced him to submit. The boy was to reply: 'My dear father, I can hold out no longer, my Heart is smitten, and my soul trembles', and chant the ten commandments in verse. Keach believed a child of this age was being actively solicited by both the Devil and Christ. Keach followed this advice with a detailed catechism for young people, which Wheeler Robinson comments is 'Too long for notice and for most men today too tedious'. What sympathy we feel for these children! Much of Keach's instruction was intended for boys, but girls also were warned 'against the worldly life of the Restoration with its "growling Eyes and amorous Glances".' We have early evidence here of a piety which taught girls to submit to plainness and self-deprecation. This substantiates the argument that female gender construction was consciously engineered during this period.²⁸

Childhood, then, was a serious business. Children's responses varied. We do not know what proportion of children of pious parents rejected faith as they grew to adulthood, but we do have evidence of a reaction to Puritanical parenting in the story of Sarah Wight which was told by Baptist Minister Henry Jessey.²⁹ In her mid-teens, Sarah entered a trance-like state which lasted three months,

during which time her utterances and visions were considered prophetic revelations from God, and heeded by the many visitors to her bedside. We know from Jessey's account that her mother suffered from depression, and Sarah had been brought up by her grandmother. Her strict upbringing included the honouring of parents which in Sarah's case meant bearing with and covering up for her mother's fear and frailty. In her trauma, Sarah attempted suicide, and her abhorrence of food would today be described as anorexic. Her mind was conditioned to 'a moral universe where small sins had cosmic consequences'; in a dysfunctional family, she took upon herself the responsibility of living up to a godly ideal, so punished herself for her failure. Her story resonates with contemporary experience of abused children, reminding us again that children's needs and characteristics are common throughout the ages. We also learn that adults of this period were open to children receiving spiritual insight and being used by God to speak prophetically. A number of cases of spirit possession, particularly among girls, are recorded in the seventeenth century.

The rationality which we have seen promoted in the formation of faith in children was a feature of the age. By the end of the century, less emphasis was placed on personal faith; although belief was important, it now came about not by revelation but as a consequence of rational proof. Positively, rationalism increased toleration, and persecution of Dissenters eased.³⁰ From the early eighteenth century the General Baptists declined, while the Calvinistic theology of the Particular Baptists became more rigid. Schools were being set up more widely, a movement from which, Whitley comments, Baptists remained aloof, not having 'grasped that it was any part of their duty to teach,

that one of the most effective ways of winning to Christ was to lead children to him'. He also comments on the anti-intellectual stance of the Baptists of this period: 'The fallacy gained ground that God set a premium on ignorance, that piety and education were barely compatible'.³¹ There is something of a paradox here since faith was to be gained by cognitive means.

From 1780, we enter the period which shaped the way not only Baptists but all Protestants catered for children, imposing a set of values and practices from which churches are still struggling to emerge today. This is the era of the Sunday school movement. We need to be quite clear about its origin, which Philip Cliff has described and analysed comprehensively.³² Schools were set up on Sundays initially to socialize and domesticate child factory and mill workers who ran wild on their day off. Although both reading and the church catechism were to be taught, the schools were not to be a recruiting agency for the churches. By this time, infant mortality had begun to decline so there were many more children around, particularly concentrated in the new urban areas. Robert Raikes who is generally credited with founding the Sunday school movement, showed in his writings a wide concern for society's problems. He was motivated by a sense of charity and his movement contributed to a transformation of society by bringing literacy to the masses. We might judge his action prophetic.

The first schools were founded largely independently of churches, either as Town Meetings or as individual initiatives by clergy or lay people, in homes or rented buildings. Bibles and hymn books were used as teaching primers, funding was by subscription (the 'anniversary' was a fund-raising not a commemorative event), rules of conduct and attendance were strict, and parents and

teachers also had a set of rules to adhere to. All scholars were to attend 'clean washed and combed'. Individual Baptists committed to the vision, as well as some local churches, started schools in those early days. Once a child was able to read a passage from anywhere in the Bible, they were given their own copy and dismissed, so that as many children as possible could be taught to read. The dismissal of children from the school was institutionalized (it was recorded in a column for that purpose in the registers of the time); that Sunday school was something you departed from when it had ceased to meet your learning needs remains with us. Such schools were not attended by the children of church members.

CHILDREN IN BAPTIST HISTORY: THE SUNDAY SCHOOL ERA

After twenty years' pioneering work, Sunday schools began to change. As 'agencies of working class education', the Sunday school had come under suspicion in government circles where there was fear of social upheaval following the French Revolution. It was acceptable for better class people to read hardback editions of Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*, but when the paperback version became a best seller among the working classes, alarm bells rang. And the source of new-found reading skills was the Sunday school. This was probably the only time the Sunday school movement could be claimed to be seditious. From 1800, however, it became a tool of the growing evangelical movement and its subsequent history reined in its potential to become a powerful force for social change.

Publishing houses now had a prolific output, not only of political but also of religious books. Quickly the Sunday

school took into use books promoting 'scriptural holiness' and piety, in addition to the Bible. The impetus came from the new evangelicalism which owed much to Wesley and Whitefield. Its popularity was fuelled by people's reaction against the rationalism of the Enlightenment period which had proved sterile in its concentration on 'left-brain' activity. In theology, the new movement gave renewed significance to human guilt dealt with by means of the penal theory of atonement, and the obligation laid on the individual to pursue holiness. Its appeal to individual conversion found a ready response amongst Baptists. There was a mission field ready to hand in the growing Sunday school movement. Philip Cliff comments how evangelicals laid stress on Sunday rather than school, the Bible rather than other forms of knowledge, and 'forced education into soul-saving channels'. Here, he concludes, lies the source of the movement's demise more than a century later. He also notes its failure to achieve its aim, if the saving of souls was to be measured by recruitment for church membership among scholars. It is estimated that the number of Sunday school children who went on to become church members was less than five per cent.

Baptist Sunday schools varied, and were often not as extreme as their Methodist counterparts where the teaching of writing was often banned as a sinful breaking of the Sabbath laws covering work. Baptist schools pursued wider educational aims.

Most other features of the Sunday school were common to all. They existed largely independently of the church and the minister. Lessons were held during the morning and afternoon, and attendance at worship was supposed to be compulsory, although the noise, smell and loss of pew rental income created tensions with the church. Each school

had its own governing body, rules, finances and often buildings. Parents became distanced from the learning process; instead of parents being encouraged to support the scholars' progress by improvements in their own behaviour, children were often exhorted to be critical of their home environment particularly of drinking, swearing and gambling. Contact with parents was regularly limited to an annual parents' evening. Records from Sutton, Surrey, from the late nineteenth century report the apparently long-standing practice of such evenings, the programme consisting of two or three uplifting talks by the minister and other prominent leaders, followed by spiritual music performed by the teachers. The distancing of parents has played a significant part in the history of children's relationship with the church, and of their faith development. Although we do not know how effective parental rules had been, there was in the later part of the century no suggestion that parents should have any personal investment in their children's religious education and, as it did not exercise any ownership of the school, the church became an increasingly alien and even hostile environment, to children as well as to parents.

Where Schools did find communities of common purpose was in the developing Sunday School Union. This dates from the early nineteenth century, and had its forerunner in the work of William Fox, a Baptist who founded a Sunday School Society in 1785. Its purpose was to raise money to support Schools financially and provide Bibles and other teaching materials, so that 'by learning to read, children might read the word of God for themselves'. This confusion of educational and spiritual aims naïvely presupposes that the one will trigger the growth of faith and discipleship, a view widely held for many years. Fox's

Society later merged with the Sunday School Union. The Union had wider objectives than the Society, particularly the improvement of 'methods of instruction' and the opening of new schools. Local Unions, linked to the national body, grew swiftly, and throughout the century promoted training for teachers, gave advice and support, published lesson plans and other materials.

It was interdenominational but, rather than being a strength, this in the end proved a weakness. There was no catechetical structure, and so lesson materials were solely and uncritically Biblical; the same time and emphasis would be given to studying Leviticus as to a Gospel, all parts of the Bible being of equal value. Older children were given no means of evaluating the Bible's contents, and those who were aware of such things found their Sunday teaching conflicted with new scientific theory, and critical approaches to Biblical material. There was no grading of lessons, either. This extract from an address in 1817 to children of four or five illustrates the urgent need for this to be done: 'You must be holy children, and be washed in the Lamb's blood from the guilt of all your sins. This is the reason for warning you against speaking lies, breaking the Sabbath and taking God's holy name in vain; for Christ the King of glory will not allow such children to live in his presence.' The early concentration on both religious and moral teaching was also rife among pious families of church members who were not as yet universally involved in Sunday school. To this, the tombstone of Garnault Treacher bears eloquent testimony. After a three-month illness, the child died aged two years six months. By that time, he had 'learnt to repeat correctly the Lord's Prayer, the Belief, and several of Dr Watts' beautiful hymns, besides various pieces of poetry'. His parents looked

forward to the development of his intellectual and moral faculties which would 'under better auspices, be carried on to perfection'.³³ Thank God for the diet of Spot, Alfie and Postman Pat my own children enjoyed at that age!

Biblical and doctrinal teaching was complemented, for all age groups, by pietistical material similar to that of the earlier period. As literacy became more widespread, and Sunday schools became more middle-class, moving away from their origins among the poor, so prizes for attendance or behaviour changed from clothing and combs to improving books. We learn a great deal about the manipulation of children's thought and behaviour from these books, which had more to say about respectability, character training and engineered gender roles than about religious truth. To illustrate this point, among a list of popular prize books from the end of the century was a volume of sermons by S. Baring-Gould who, in this extract about Easter Sunday, places his moral message very dubiously in a biblical setting:

What was Christ's first thought? To escape the tomb; to see his mother? No. He first folded up his grave clothes and put them properly in their proper place ... Unless tidiness were a Christian grace, Christ would not have provided that his gospel should record this striking instance of it for all ages to read ... And what were the good boys and girls doing in Jerusalem on Good Friday? In good homes, the girls were doing needlework and tidying the houses: the boys were going to school. They had thoughtful decent parents who kept them off the streets. In bad homes, disorderly children were playing truant from school, running about the streets, indulging in insulting gestures.

How offensive we find that today! We should not take such divisive attitudes lightly, for they persist in living memory.

I have concentrated on the negative side of the Sunday school movement because nostalgia amongst older generations for the days of full Sunday schools is still very powerful, and can render change or altered methods and goals in children's work contentious. Large numbers certainly attended between 1831 and 1870, when total membership rose from just under half a million to three and a half million, a level of increase which exceeded the birth rate. But this did not lead to an increase in commitment to faith, nor for the majority in spiritual awareness. After the implementation of the 1870 Education Act, it might be expected that numbers would swiftly drop, but this was not the case immediately. Attendance at Baptist Sunday schools reached a peak in 1906 with 586,601 scholars on the membership rolls. Change had been advocated over a long period,³⁴ but such calls were ignored.

THE CENTURY OF CHILDHOOD?

Numerical decline has been the feature of children's work throughout his century. Many changes have taken place, largely as a response to falling numbers. However, pioneering academic work was being done which provided the theoretical foundation for new ways of working with children. Gradually, children were beginning to be seen as subjects of the faith development process.

Two significant figures contributed to this work. In the 1920s George Hamilton Archibald was teaching that the child was a growing developing person who needed different treatment at each stage of life. Education must therefore begin with the child and not with the material.

Then in the post-war period, H.A. Hamilton promoted the idea of 'Family Church', believing that the school setting was inappropriate for sharing faith, that children needed to grow and be nurtured within the church as a body, and not in separation. The comment of Hamilton's daughter after her first visit to Sunday school spurred him on: when asked how she had enjoyed it, she replied: 'It was all right, but the teachers did everything'.³⁵

The idea of 'Family Church' slowly gained acceptance in Baptist churches. However, it is questionable how far the thinking of Hamilton, reinforced for Baptists by Dr Marjorie Reeves³⁶ has been internalized. The ethos of the school existing alongside the church, separating worship and learning for all ages is still the norm. This finds illustration in the recent survey of Baptists at worship compiled by the Revd Christopher Ellis³⁷ where readings in worship are only determined in around ten per cent of churches by a scheme being followed by the whole church (eg. SALT, Partners in Learning), compared with over sixty-two per cent of churches where the reading is chosen by the minister. The same survey notes one other finding related to children in worship; it is tabulated along with ecumenical services in a final section entitled 'Other features of worship in Baptist churches', and asks specifically about the presence of children. The author registers some surprise at the results: 'there was an assumption that in most churches all ages shared at least part of the morning service, but ... the responses were significantly lower than anticipated.' In just over half of our churches children share in part of the service. Three times as many never, rarely or only occasionally join in worship as share most or all of the service.

So children still suffer marginalization. It is particularly incumbent upon Baptists to keep faith with children by identifying their place within the community of God's people, having explicitly excluded them by our ecclesiology from membership of the church. Amongst early Baptists, this was attempted; parents were charged with the primary responsibility, and children's presence in church was accepted even if uncomfortably.³⁸ The partnership with parents and other significant adults who helped in the formation of children's faith was destroyed when discipleship training, now defined in educational terms, was handed over to the Sunday school.

Over the last fifty years, many of our Baptist leaders and academics have made significant contributions to our thinking about children, taking account of new insights.³⁹ All have urged more theological study of children and childhood, and greater inclusion of children in the worship and learning of the whole people of God. They have recognized that we cannot be a whole community unless children play a full part, nor can children develop in their discipleship unless they participate and belong in a meaningful way to a community of people of all ages committed to one another on the pilgrim journey.

A great deal of thinking has been directed towards the question of how children of church and congregation members can be nurtured in discipleship, once they have been brought for a service of Presentation which includes thanksgiving, blessing and a commitment by parents and church to work together 'in a long term commitment to relationship of home to Church and Church to home'. These children are not outsiders to the church, and are already developing their spiritual life and experiencing faith. The real question here is how the church community

undertakes with integrity the learning which helps faith grow, and provides opportunity for an 'I-Thou' encounter with God. G.W. Rusling, Dr George Beasley-Murray, and Dr Morris West have all looked to a reinvention of the ancient 'Catechumenate' as the most effective modern means to fulfil these commitments. The 1966 *Child in the Church* report contains full discussion of its place in Christian nurture. It describes the catechumenate as 'the preparation of the ground in order that the good seed may in due course germinate, take root and flourish in the life of faith. Conversions do not take place in a vacuum but in hearts and minds prepared ... by the testimony and teaching of the church'.⁴⁰ Dr West charts the passage of that most significant report through the Baptist Union Council, and the way it was sidelined, perhaps not altogether intentionally, and its recommendations ignored. He describes it as 'too challenging and risky a document with which to face Council'. Children are indeed dangerous, and when brought centre-stage challenge adult preconceptions and comfort-zones.

For to promote what John Westerhoff calls 'enculturation' demands that children be included, be present, in a creative relationship with the whole church. As Dr West states, the child 'belongs in the Church. The church must accept its responsibility, it must also have people and structures to ensure that responsibility is carried out'. Part of this responsibility will be exercised by supporting parents in a variety of ways, and particularly as they share faith with their children. In the liturgy for the Presentation of Infants in *Patterns and Prayers for Christian Worship*, church members promise to 'join with (the child's) parents in sharing our faith in Jesus Christ in the hope that he/she may one day discover such a faith for

himself/herself.' This represents a solemn commitment on the part of the church, but only rarely does a church have strategy for its implementation. John Westerhoff suggests a strategy which involves 'first being shaped by experience within the community of Christian faith and life, followed by a period of criticism, reflection, doubt and searching, finally coming to an act of decision followed by instruction in the knowledge and skills necessary for a faithful life'. Learning, which is taking place from the earliest days, is distinct from instruction in discipleship, which is part of a later stage. Westerhoff reminds us that this is not a linear, but a circular process, illustrated in his familiar diagram of concentric circles, like those in a tree-trunk, describing stages of faith.

The concept of the catechumenate has much to commend it, particularly in that it affirms children's place within the community of faith from the time of his or her introduction to the church. If, however, the catechumenate is controlled by a syllabus and learning measured, it reinforces the didactic model which has failed children over the years. Instead of asking how we can nurture children more effectively into the Christian faith through the Christian community, we need to ask what it is in the celebration and practice of our faith which denies children access to God, and denies adults and children the opportunity to learn from each other in mutual exchange. Worship which includes story-telling, ritual, drama, music, prayer, are means of learning about and celebrating faith which all can share. Some profound moments of insight, or of awareness of awe and wonder, have for many of us been occasioned by children. This is not to advocate a false 'togetherness' for every aspect of the church's life and worship. There will be times when either age or interest groups will find it

beneficial to be together for a set purpose, but there should be no specific time or activity which as a matter of course is segregated because of age or stage. If this means exploring the purpose and practice of particular parts of our worshipping life from which children are normally excluded (eg. preaching and communion) this is a healthy step forward.⁴¹

AN ALTERNATIVE FUTURE

I have urged churches to offer an experience of a counter-culture to children. They come to us from circumstances in family, school and world which they find oppressive, disturbing and competitive. Childhood is not a time of unalloyed innocence and light: children are exposed to and fear much that is dark and violent. If the often simplistic and fragmentary worship, and the set teaching material they find here do not say anything to their experience, or take seriously their deep concerns, we are failing them. If they cannot bring their experience of bullying, of SATS, of quarrelling parents, of unemployment, as well as of friendships, and pets and innocent games, we are not hearing their deepest needs. If we try to shield them from some of the problems the community is wrestling with, we may miss something important that their eyes alone can see. To develop towards the autonomy God wills for them, children need the liberation such a counter-culture can offer. Paulo Freire in his description of an appropriate pedagogy for oppressed people uses the term 'convivence' for the learning community in which children can find such liberation. In such a community people want to learn from and with each other. Learnt knowledge does not have priority over experiential knowledge; teachers and learners

together share in this convivence, and in the process of learning latent knowledge is drawn out and new knowledge produced. This practice of learning therefore overlaps generations, and is truly creative. Reflection on Freire's understanding of the learning process and its contribution to liberation could urge us to work to make the local church the place of this 'convivence'; such a revolutionary lifestyle would ensure that the gifts of the Kingdom in and for children would be received.⁴²

God's creative power inspires and infuses all human life made in God's image. This is particularly evident in children, whose minds and imaginations are fired up to think and to dream, and actively to make meaning out of their world. We may prepare programmes and try to impart knowledge as if they are passive recipients, but God is working already in children giving them insights and admonitions to share with adults. So we need to heed the words of Jesus, and turn to see and hear where children are, 'to put the welfare of children above the niceties of metaphysics',⁴³ finding God present in the lives of children, if only we will see and hear.

NOTES

1 The following list is a selection only.

Ecumenical: *The Child in the Church*, BCC, London 1976; *Understanding Christian Nurture*, BCC, London 1981; *Kaleidoscope: the churches together in training*, CGMC, NCEC, 1993; *Unfinished Business*, CCBI, London 1995

Baptist: *The child and the church: a Baptist discussion*, Carey Kingsgate Press 1966; *Children in the Church: A Baptist View*, Baptist Publications, 1978; *Believing and being Baptized: a discussion document*, BUGB Doctrine and Worship Committee, BUGB, 1997.

Church of England: *Children in the Way: new directions for the Church's children*, NS/CHP 1988; *How faith grows: faith development and Christian education*, NS/CHP 1991; *All God's children: Children's evangelism in crisis*, NS/CHP 1991.

Faith development: *Stages of faith*, James Fowler, Harper & Row 1981; *Will our children have faith?* John Westerhoff III, Seabury Press, 1976; *Children finding faith*, Francis Bridger, SU, 1988.

2 From *Love Burning Deep*, Kathy Galloway, SPCK 1993.

3 Exodus 1.15 - 2.10, 1 Samuel 3, Jeremiah 1.4-8.

4 Deuteronomy 6. 4-9, 20-25, Deuteronomy 1.39.

5 Isaiah 11. 1-9.

6 Isaiah 43.1; 51.2; 42. 5-9.

7 John 6.9; Matthew 21.15-16; Mark 9.36.

8 See, for example: *Jesus and the children*, Hans-Ruedi Weber, WCC, 1979; *Children in the early Church*, W.A. Strange, Paternoster, 1996.

9 Matthew 20.1-20.

10 As for example Mark 10.15.

11 *Children's Liberation: a Biblical perspective*, J. Grassi, The Liturgical Press, 1991.

12 'Ideas for a Theology of Childhood', *Theological Investigations* Vol. VIII, Karl Rahner, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971.

13 As reported in *The Guardian* 20 July 99.

- 14 This methodology is expounded more fully in *The Education of the Whole Child*, C. Erricker, J. Erricker, C. Ota, D. Sullivan and M. Fletcher, Cassell, 1997, p.35.
- 15 *The Spirit of the Child*, David Hay with Rebecca Nye, Fount, 1998.
- 16 By 'consciousness' Nye means that which is termed meta-cognition in developmental psychology; the relational aspect encompasses others, self, world and God.
- 17 The Children and Worldviews project, of which 'The Education of the Whole Child' is an interim report, is based at Chichester institute, King Alfred's College, Winchester, and La Sainte Union College, Southampton.
- 18 "To such as these the Kingdom of Heaven belongs": children's spirituality and our contemporary world', Danny Sullivan, in *The Candles are still Burning*, eds. Grey, Heaton and Sullivan, Geoffrey Chapman, 1995.
- 19 For example, the egocentricity of the under-7s and their need to learn to decentre which is a significant feature of the work of Jean Piaget has been challenged by Margaret Donaldson who devised a means of testing children consistent with their own rather than adult experience. She also notes, as do others, how children desire to please adults, learning to win acceptance and approval by repeating the vocabulary adults use. *Children's Minds*, Margaret Donaldson, Collins 1978.
- 20 *Caring for the Whole Child: a holistic approach to children's spirituality*, John Bradford, The Children's Society, 1995. The Revd John Bradford has recently retired after many years as Chaplain to The Children's Society.
- 21 John Bradford and David Hay were brought together in May 1999 at a consultation organized by the Community Learning Network of Northern Baptist College to further an ecumenical initiative focusing on the spiritual needs of children who are looked after in foster or residential care. Some of the material in this section derives from the dialogue which took place between them.
- 22 This statement causes problems today for Baptists from the Reformed tradition who struggle with the concept of universal salvation even for infants. When the 1689 Confession was republished in contemporary language in 1975, the statement was prefaced with the word 'elect', the amendment being justified in the

- introduction as being in line with the theology clearly stated in the remainder of the Confession. Anonymous introduction to *A Faith to Confess: the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 rewritten in Modern English*, Carey Publications Ltd, 1975.
- 23 *A History of British Baptists*, W.T. Whitley, Charles Griffin & Co., 1923, p.28.
 - 24 *A Godly Form of Household Government*, J. Dod and R. Cleaver, 1614, cited in 'The Family, Marriage and the Upbringing of children in Protestant England', Anthony Fletcher, in *The Family in Theological Perspective*, ed. Stephen Barton, T & T Clark, 1996.
 - 25 *The Life and Faith of the Baptists*, H Wheeler Robinson, Methuen, 1927.
 - 26 Chastisement could also be spiritualized. Richard Baxter advocated a child read passages of Scripture prior to punishment then kneel to 'entreat God to bless and sanctify its effects'.
 - 27 Wheeler Robinson, *op.cit.*, p.30ff.
 - 28 Children of both genders are equal subjects of this lecture. The artificial construction of gender role and behaviour in the post-Reformation period deserves more public attention. It is described by Anthony Fletcher in *The Family in Theological perspective*. See also the same author's *Gender, Sex and Subordination 1500-1800*, Yale, 1995.
 - 29 *The Exceeding Riches of Grace Advanced*, Henry Jessey, London 1652. See "Such perfecting of praise out of the mouth of a babe": Sarah Wight as child prophet', Susan Hardman Moore in *The Church and Childhood*, ed. D. Wood, Blackwells 1994.
 - 30 The story of the rise of rationalism and toleration with its consequence for faith and for education can be found for example in *The Church and the Age of Reason, 1648-1789*, G.R. Cragg: Penguin 1960.
 - 31 Whitley, *op.cit.*, p.184.
 - 32 *The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement in England, 1780-1980*, Philip Cliff, NCEC, 1986.
 - 33 *Baptist Quarterly* 2, 1910-11, p.218.
 - 34 For example, Dr R.W. Dale, minister of Carrs Lane Meeting House was a strong opponent of uncritical Bible teaching, and advocate of comfortable surroundings for children and 'a pleasant arm-chair for the teacher'. Quoted in Philip Cliff, *op.cit.*, chapter 9.

- 35 G.H. Archibald was founder and first Principal of what became Westhill College which pioneered training for children's workers. H.A. Hamilton was the originator of the Family Church concept; a Congregationalist minister, he became President of the National Christian Education Council and then Associate Secretary of the World Council of Christian Education.
- 36 *The Children of the Future*, Marjorie Reeves, 1943.
- 37 *Baptist Worship Today*, C. Ellis, BU, 1999.
- 38 For example, Michael Watts in *The Dissenters* quotes the complaints of members of Speldhurst General Baptist Church in 1702 against those who came late to the meeting, slept through the proceedings, crowded round the fire so that others could not get warm, and brought with them too many children.
- 39 Among those who have made significant contributions to *Baptist Quarterly* and other books and journals are: M. Walker, R.E. Clements, G.R. Beasley Murray, G. Rusling, M. West and N. Clarke. Even such weighty advocacy has still left children marginalized in the life of most churches.
- 40 If this point requires proof we have it now in the results of John Finney's research in *Finding Faith Today*, Bible Society, 1992.
- 41 The policy of the National Christian Education Council, formerly the National Sunday School Union, into the the new millennium is to place less importance on 'teaching' but rather to empower parents through a series of publications, conferences etc. under the heading 'Faith in the Future'. In 1998, the BU contributed substantially to the development of this project through its annual tithe fund. Also worth noting is the fact that the Roman Catholic churches recently developed a catechetical programme which enables parents and children to participate together in sharing and finding their place in God's story.
- 42 Aspects of the child in the worshipping life in the community of faith are explored by Neville Clarke in *Worship and the Child*, ed. R.C. Jasper, SPCK, London, 1975.
- 43 'Reflection on the relevance of Paulo Freire's thinking to children in the church inspired by N. Mette, *Learning to live and believe with children*', in *Little Children Suffer*, ed. M. Junker-Kenny and N. Mette, Concilium 1996/2, SCM Press.



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