

THE FAMILY-INTEGRATED CHURCH MOVEMENT:
AN EXPLORATION IN ECCLESIOLOGY

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A THESIS

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Abstract

The Family-Integrated Church Movement is a loosely organized group of laymen who aspire to transform the modern American Church to fit into the household model of discipleship. The proponents of this ecclesiology place the blame for the break down of the Church and Family on the Church's shoulders, suggesting that it is because the Church has usurped the Family's prerogative in discipleship. They then propose that the Church should realign its identity and ministry along family lines, calling for a family of families ecclesiology.

This proposed realignment does not do justice to the full Biblical picture for the Church, nor does it rightly understand the relationship between the New Covenant and the New Covenant Community. The New Covenant sets forth a people who are obviously described as eschatological, regenerated, and forgiven. These features are not family traits.

The Family-Integrated Church Movement suggests that they stand in line with the Puritans who they think advocated a family-integrated ecclesiology. The Puritans, while having some features in common with the Family-Integrated Movement did not embrace their ecclesiology and can be seen to oppose it in several areas. The works of Richard Baxter, John Owen and several Early Particular Baptists reveal their true ecclesiology.

On the whole the Family-Integrated Movement seems to require more work in their theological formulation and exegesis of the Scriptural data on both the Church and Family.

To my wife, Stephanie Webb

I took up classes; you took up a cross. Thank you.

And

To my Pastors and Family at Grace Fellowship Church

Your prayers and financial support have made my dreams a reality.

And

To My Jesus

I lay this crown, small as it is, at your feet.

It is nothing compared to your love.

Table of Contents

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	2
Family-Integrated Church Movement Resources.....	3
Internet Resources.....	5
Biblical Theology Books.....	6
Historical Works.....	6
3. THE FAMILY-INTEGRATED CHURCH MOVEMENT.....	8
Who is Driving the Family-Integrated Church Movement?.....	9
What is the Family-Integrated Church Movement?.....	11
4. BIBLICAL STUDIES.....	19
Covenant is Canon.....	20
The New Covenant People.....	24
5. SYSTEMATIC OVERVIEW OF THE CHURCH AND FAMILY.....	35
Metaphors for the Church.....	36
The Role of the Church.....	41
The Family in Scripture.....	43
6. THE HISTORICAL CRITIQUE FROM PURITAN ECCLESIOLOGY.....	46
The Puritan's Theological View of Families and the Church.....	48

Richard Baxter's Theology of Family and Ecclesiology.....	52
The Ecclesiology of John Owen.....	58
The Early Particular Baptists.....	61
7. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	64
8. CONCLUSION.....	69
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	74

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

My acquaintance with the Family-Integrated Church Movement started innocently enough. A Vision Forum catalog came to my house. I had never heard of the Vision Forum, but I liked what I saw. The catalog was interesting, a little old-fashioned perhaps, but intriguing. I looked at the books first because I am a bibliophile if nothing else. They seemed solid from what I could tell. I am a strong advocate for fathers and family religion and the books clearly supported both. I was a bit turned off with the 19th century Victorian dresses and style that they seemed to prefer for the people in their book covers, but there is room for all kinds in God's family. I reread the catalog over and over again, and its oddity was lost on me after awhile, and I became a fan of the Vision Forum.

My next step into the world of Vision Forum and the Family-Integrated Church Movement was through the Internet. I read their articles with interest. I liked their emphasis on the family. I thought they were a bit overboard on some of their stances and was not convinced by their no nursery policy and their full-quiver theology, but these were not areas of real interest to me except as perhaps a silly theological point to argue among friends. Soon after, I read one of their published books: *Family Man, Family Leader* by Philip Lancaster. I was a young dad and I thought it was good for the most part. I did not know what to make of some of what he said, but I just put it into the category of the wait and see, because it seemed only odd, not wrong.

The final step in my introduction into Family-Integrated Church theology was through my pastor. In one of our mentor meetings, he brought up a theological discussion that occurred at the General Assembly of the Association of the Reformed Baptist Churches of America. It was about patriarchy and the various pastors' experiences of patriarchy and family-integrated church families. Pastors described their churches attacked; their churches struck with division and strife. I listened to the discussion on the Internet and realized that this is more serious than I had originally thought. Family-Integrated theology was harming good, solid churches and leaving certain families licking their wounds outside the Church. I did not understand what was going on. How could this good, yet odd little group of people be causing such harm? These events precipitated this thesis. I began my research in earnest, not only for myself and for this paper, but for the group of churches to whom I belong. This thesis is the result of that research.

The Family-Integrated Church Movement is new to the American evangelical scene, but its influence is beyond its years. Because of its recent origins very little if any serious evaluation of this movement has taken place. Therefore, I would like to explore the Family-Integrated Church movement in depth. In particular I want to evaluate this movement in light of Biblical covenant theology and standard Reformed systematic understanding of ecclesiology. As a reformed Baptist I do not think that this movement lives up to the design of the New Testament church as found in Scripture. After exploring it theologically, I then would like to compare this movement's ecclesiology with Puritan ecclesiology. This study will make it evident that the family-integrated church movement, while correctly seeing the many problems facing the modern American church, is mistaken in its description of the church as a family of families.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Family-Integrated Church Movement Resources

The documentation of the Family Integrated Church Movement (FICM) is a scattered affair because of its recent genesis. The FICM is of such recent origin that little academic work has been done on the topic. The works that have been written are of completely recent origin propounding the tenants and motivations of the movement, but in many ways these books have not been put through the trial of debate. The result is that many of the ideas are unrefined, but these books have proven to be priceless in value for someone seeking to understand the movement.

Eric Wallace self-published the leading book of the movement entitled *Uniting Church and Home: A Blueprint for Rebuilding Church Community*. In this book Wallace explains the homeschooling impetus that drives this movement. He also seeks to show the distinct problems that the American church faces. His argument is the basic argument that the entire FICM makes. He says the church with its age-segregated approach to ministry has destroyed the American church family. Parents have abrogated their duty to disciple their children because historically the church has co-opted the family's God-given responsibility.

Wallace is harsh in his assessment of the modern American church. The whole edifice needs to be reformed. This reforming must be done by restructuring the local church along family lines. The fundamental idea of the church is the household according to Wallace, and

as such all the ministries of the church should be done through the individual families in the church. He ends his book with a practical guide for transforming existing churches into family-integrated churches. This book is the necessary foundation for understanding the FICM and is constantly referred to by others in the movements.

The second book produced by the FICM is Voddie Baucham's book *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God*. This book is less directly about the movement, but more of a guide to discipling children in the Christian faith. The book's vision and argument is the same as the rest of the FICM. The American Church has failed its young people; the American church has destroyed family religion; the only way to save the church is through reformation along family lines. Baucham is a leading spokesman in the FICM, and so this is important in understanding the particular features that the FICM wishes to emphasize to the American Church.

The third book available from the FICM perspective is entitled *Family-Integrated Church*. J. Mark Fox self-published this book in 2006. He is pastor of Antioch Community Church in Burlington, North Carolina. This book is the story of Antioch Community Church and follows its path from a program-oriented church to a family-integrated church. As such, it is long on stories, and short on definitive theological work. It is a rambling work that covers everything from Antioch's program-driven-past to various topics discussing how to discipline in the church, the need for elders, and how the Christian should approach money. This book is useful for understanding the forces that move a church in the direction of a family-integrated approach, but not the Biblical basis for making those decisions.

Internet Resources

The Internet has proven to be both fertile ground and a barren wasteland. Anyone can say anything about his or her views of the FICM, and so they do. The result is that there is a plethora of material available on the Internet, but much of it is repetitive and unoriginal. Nevertheless, the Internet is the primary resource for understanding the FICM, because that is where it lives in written form at present.

A number of articles and websites are of supreme importance. Probably the most important is Vision Forum's website at <http://www.visionforumministries.org>. This site includes "A Biblical Confession for Uniting Church and Family." This document is important for understanding the precise assertions the FICM is making. In small format it contains all the essentials of the FICM.

The Vision Forum website also hosts the National Center for Family-Integrated Churches, which is a registry of the FICM's in America. The National Center for Family-Integrated Churches' website contains numerous articles on everything from the biblical basis for the FICM to how preaching is to be done in the FICM. Vision Forum also hosts numerous articles that revolve around FICM: articles on patriarchy, homeschooling, full-quiver families. It is necessary to read this site in order to understand the worldview that stands behind the FICM. These articles are linked numerous times throughout the FICM-Internet world.

Another major source for FICM is the Uniting Church and Home Site ran by Eric Wallace. This site is not nearly as developed as is Vision Forum's but is still a good resource for understanding the FICM. Included in this site are several audio recordings of teaching sessions done at the Uniting Church and Home Institute.

Biblical Theology Books

Several lines of argument challenge the FICM, but the primary line of argumentation is from a biblical theological perspective. The following resources were useful in developing the argument of this thesis.

The Structure of Biblical Authority by Meredith Kline. Kline argues in this book that the very idea of covenant carries with it a canonical idea. He shows from the Ancient Near East documents how covenants were used in the historical context and shows how the Bible uses the same paradigm for developing its own canonicity. Based on this idea he makes a distinction between the inspiration of Scripture and a precise definition of canonicity, showing that the Old Testament is no longer in a technical sense canonical for the New Covenant church.

Geerhardus Vos has been useful as well for his precise exegesis of several key texts that confront the FICM. His book entitled *Pauline Eschatology* is an exploration of Paul's view of the church in the broader work of redemption. His book on the Kingdom of God and Church also makes some very careful analysis of the relationship between the Church and the Kingdom of God. Also extremely helpful was his book entitled *The Teaching of the Epistle of the Hebrews*. In this book he shows the development of eschatology and the relationship of the New Covenant to the Old Testament.

Historical Works

In such a short work it is hard to encompass the full breadth of historical theology that speaks to the FICM. The FICM has only produced one article that deals with the historical

nature of their movement. This work by Scott Brown is entitled, “My Four Favorite Family-Integrated Pastors” In this article he posits that John Bunyan, Jonathan Edwards, Matthew Henry, and Richard Baxter implemented the family integrated philosophy. The Scott Brown article articulates the FICM belief that the FIC model is the historical paradigm for the Puritan church.

The thesis will look at a number of Puritan works to determine the truth of this belief. Richard Baxter’s *Christian Directory* and *Reformed Pastor* state in different ways Baxter’s view of the family and church. The *Reformed Pastor* was written for pastors encouraging them to catechize from house to house the parishioners under the pastor’s care. He gives directions and motives for this work. This book is often cited or at least esteemed in the FICM to support their belief that Baxter saw the family as the primary building block of the church, and that the church should drive its ministries through families.

Baxter’s second book often cited is the *Christian Directory*. This formidable tome is the high point of puritanical practical religion. It covers every conceivable detail of practical religion, from whom to marry to whom to hire as a house servant. Baxter goes into great detail about family religion. He also talks much about the role of fathers and the necessity of the church and the state to have strong families. This book is particularly helpful, because it is so thorough. In it the modern reader can see the full sweep of Baxter’s thoughts regarding the family and the church.

The FICM is fairly well represented in reformed Baptist churches. Therefore, it is helpful to consider the practice of the early particular Baptists especially those who wrote the confession to which so many family integrated churches hold. This has been admirably done in Dr. James Renihan’s dissertation on the practical ecclesiology of the particular Baptists,

entitled: “The Practical Ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists, 1675-1705: The Doctrine of the Church in the Second London Baptist Confession as Implemented in the Subscribing Churches.” In his doctoral dissertation he explains how the particular Baptists expounded biblical churchmanship, and how they actually put it into practice. This is the group to whom John Bunyan himself belonged, although he was dead by the signing of the 1689 London Confession.

Chapter 3

THE FAMILY-INTEGRATED CHURCH MOVEMENT

It is notoriously difficult to take the measure of a historical person during his or her own time. The scene has yet to play itself out. The ramifications of the person's choices and ideas are ongoing, and the future is difficult to discern. This holds true for a movement such as the Family-Integrated Church Movement (FICM). The best a person can do is describe what he sees and tentatively evaluate with great humility, knowing his opinion is certainly not final.

The evolution of the Internet makes the scholar's work even more precarious. Ideas move fast on the Internet, faster than a scholar can do his work. Just as the principle of uncertainty in physics makes physical certainty impossible, the Internet makes scholarly-certainty extraordinarily difficult. The FICM is very much an Internet phenomenon. Adherents to FIC theology have published few books and had relatively few meetings, but the effects of these are multiplied through the constant quoting, linking, and repeating that goes on in the Internet.

The movement is difficult to trace for other reasons as well. "Family-integration" is not a very defined idea, and many forms and revisions exist, all supported with the same articles and Scriptural arguments. The FICM is a movement of laymen, and it draws people who have a singular focus on their families but with little time for writing or researching their adopted ideas. This is not to say that the group is unintelligent, but merely that they focus on

what is important to them, leaving little time to write and research. With these difficulties and hesitations admitted, there still remains the necessity to evaluate what is going on in the Church of Christ.

Who is Driving the Family-Integrated Church Movement?

The true answer to that question is the thousands of men and women who fill the pews of churches. It is a lay movement, but, as in all things, the masses are indefinable except in the most generic terms. They are a group of people who love their families, and who love God. They are sick of this world, and long for righteousness and faithfulness in their families and in their culture. They are conservatives in the public sphere. They are not fundamentalists of the early 20th century stripe, but rather they are reformed in their convictions. They cherish the traditions and certain aspects of the past, but they are looking forward to generations of the future with an intense longing. They are a serious people, not morose, but serious about God and their religion. They are turned off with the modern American church scene, and long for genuine relationships. Their hearts are turned towards their children, and to their fathers.

There are only a handful of leaders that drive this group, that paint the vision, publish the articles, and organize the conferences.

- (1) Douglas Phillips graduated from George Mason School of Law. He is a trained Constitutional lawyer who served at the Home School Legal Defense Association for six years. Currently he is a pastor at Boerne Christian Assembly in San Antonio, a church that holds to the 1689 London Confession of Faith. He is also President of Vision Forum

Ministries. The Mission statement states: “Preserving Our Covenant with God through Biblical Patriarchy and Multi-Generational Faithfulness”¹ He is the most vocal and most visible advocate of the FICM.

- (2) Scott Brown is the director of the National Center for Family-Integrated Churches. He is a pastor at Hope Baptist Church in Wake Forest, North Carolina. The National Center for Family-Integrated Churches is under the umbrella of Vision Forum Ministries. He holds his M.Div from Talbot School of Theology.
- (3) Voddie Baucham seems to be the keenest academic in the group. Baucham holds degrees from Houston Baptist University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div.), Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (D.Min.), an honorary degree from Southern California Seminary (D.D.). He is the Pastor for Preaching at Grace Family Baptist Church in Spring, TX. He frequently speaks at colleges and conferences and has authored three books, including *Family Driven Faith*.
- (4) Philip Lancaster has also been associated with Vision Forum Ministries. He was ordained as an elder in the Presbyterian Church in America and the publisher of a magazine entitled *Patriarch*. This magazine is no longer published, but Vision Forum has published one of his books entitled *Family Man, Family Leader*. Through these avenues and an aggressive conference schedule he has supported the FICM.

¹ Vision Forum, “Our Mission, available from <http://www.visionforumministries.org//home>; Internet’ accessed 8 November 2008.

- (5) Eric Wallace is somewhat a leader in the FICM, although he has distanced himself from much of the movement. His book *Uniting Church and Home* was an original impetus to the movement, but he has said that he is not satisfied with what others have done with some of his ideas. He is included in this survey, because his ideas have motivated the FICM. For several years he worked at Harvester Presbyterian Church in Springfield, VA as director of Harvester Training Services, a ministry directed primarily toward homeschool families. He has moved on and now is the Director of the Institute for Uniting Church and Home, an organization that seeks to teach the household vision for the church.

What is the Family-Integrated Church Movement?

The Family-Integrated Church Movement is a loosely related group of families, individuals, and churches motivated by the same ideas. At the core of the movement is dissatisfaction with the American Church. They look over the American church scene and see a growing coldness, worldliness, and compromise. They see a falling away from the traditional norms of morality and family values, and they are distressed. The proponents of the FICM see an eclipse of the church in the culture as millions drop out and never come back. This insight is not original and has been noted repeatedly, but what is original is the reasons and the solutions that the FICM gives to this problem.

The problem is not the world or men's sinful hearts (which they would readily admit as key factors); rather the FICM puts the problem on the Church's doorstep. The FICM says that the Church itself has brought about its own destruction in the way that it ministers. The

churches and how they are organized destroy the Church's vitality and home life. The American church tears families apart; rending the very fabric of the institution that God primarily intends to foster religion. In 2006, Vision Forum presented "A Biblical Confession for Uniting Church and Family."² In the introduction it says, "Rather than helping in this battle, church leadership has often unwittingly contributed to the problem and though well intentioned, bears responsibility for the vulnerability of the family in the face of its enemies."

³ Scott Brown wrote in another article:

We appear to be reaching people. It is a good-looking collapse, but it is a façade. "Whitewash" too often disguises an inwardly decrepit building. The appearance looks good enough, but underneath there has been a breakdown of basic biblical order, practice, and authority.⁴

Eric Wallace writes "Despite its many well-intentioned efforts, modern ministry has done very little to help strengthen families. In fact, much ministry has had the opposite effect."⁵ This is the common accusation that the church is destroying the family with its own attempts at ministering. The key point to note is that it is the church's ministries that are destroying the family and the church itself. There is a breakdown in "biblical order, practice, and authority." The fault lies in what churches are doing and how they are doing it.

Another common accusation is that the church's youth ministry is the cause of young people abandoning the Church. The facts are known. Baucham writes, "According to researchers, between 70 and 88 percent of Christian teens are leaving the church by their

² A Biblical Confession for Uniting Church and Family. Projects. http://www.visionforumministries.org/home/about/a_biblical_confession_for_unit_1.aspx (accessed 16 August 2008).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Scott Brown. Returning to Biblical Order in the Church and the Home. Uniting Church and Family. http://www.visionforumministries.org/issues/uniting_church_and_family/returning_to_biblical_order_in.aspx. (accessed 16 August 2008).

⁵ Eric Wallace, *Uniting Church and Home* (Lorton, VA: Solutions for Integrating Church and Home, 1999). 75.

second year in college.”⁶ The FICM ask what is to blame for this mass exodus? The answer they come up with is that the church is not ministering to young people, as they should. The church has usurped the authority of the families, particularly the fathers, and has caused this destruction and loss. In a radio interview Philips speaking of the destruction of families and fatherhood, said “and the local church has encouraged this by taking the responsibilities away from fathers and passing it to youth group directors.”⁷ This reasoning is used repeatedly in the FICM. The family is broken down because of church’s usurping the family authority.

The third accusation is that age segregation in the church is unbiblical. In the article “Tenants of Biblical Patriarchy” Philip Lancaster writes, “The modern preference for grouping children exclusively with their age mates for educational and social purposes is contrary to scriptural wisdom and example.”⁸ Scott Brown citing, Ephesians 6.1-4 as his example, writes, “We need to understand that the meetings in the early church included babies who were cutting teeth, eight-year old boys who were wired for movement.... The children were not in age-graded Sunday schools.”⁹ Later he asks, “Is there any evidence of childcare services to support the worship and instruction of God’s people? Do the apostles ever allude to a nursery or Sunday School? Are there any commands relating to the subject?”¹⁰ It is clear from his rhetorical questions that he is saying that there is no evidence that there was and so these practices are unbiblical.

⁶ Voddie Baucham, *Family Driven Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 10.

⁷ Kevin Swanson. “The Family-Integrated Church Movement.” In an interview with Douglas Philips, June 2006. <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=6120610850> (31 October 2008).

⁸ Philip Lancaster. The Tenets of Biblical Patriarchy. About Vision Forum. http://www.visionforumministries.org/home/about/biblical_patriarchy.aspx (accessed 16 August 2008).

⁹ Scott Brown. Children in the Meeting of the Ephesian Church. Uniting Church and Family http://www.visionforumministries.org/issues/uniting_church_and_family/children_in_the_meeting_of_the.aspx (accessed 16 August 2008).

¹⁰ Ibid.

The fourth accusation is that age segregation is unhistorical; rather, the church has been family-integrated until recent decades, especially since the rise of Sunday schools. They argue that the church has been understood as a *family of families*, and that the Church has practiced household ministry without segregation. Wallace writes, “Note that the kind of individual identity that we see in our multitudinous age-segregated programs has no place in the history of the church until recently.”¹¹ The understanding is that the church has thought of itself as an integrated group of families that ministers to one another.

The FICM paints a dark picture of the American church. The Church is using self-destructive methods of ministering to individual groups. The church has lost its way in its individualistic pursuit of discipleship. The church has abandoned the family as the primary means of ministry, and therefore abandoned the biblical teaching. The church’s age-segregated ministries are on dubious, unbiblical and unhistorical soil, and the proponents of the FICM are calling the church back to a family centered ecclesiology.

The answer then is a new revival. They see themselves as a revival of unheard-of proportions. Voddie Baucham writes, “I believe that the recent rise in parental awareness, desperation over the future of our families, churches, and communities, the homesechool movement, and the family-integrated church movement constitutes a modern revival.”¹² Kevin Swanson in a previously mentioned radio broadcast called the FICM “the most significant church movement in the last two hundred years.” Philip Lancaster wrote in *Family Man, Family Leader*, “We can be part of a new revival and hasten its spread if we will turn our hearts toward our families and shape them according to the Word of God.”¹³

¹¹ Wallace, 105.

¹² Baucham, 169.

¹³ Philip Lancaster, *Family Man, Family Leader* (San Antonio, TX: The Vision Forum, 2003), 295.

This revival will be accomplished and spread, as families once again become the focus of the church's ministry efforts. This leads to the rise in family-integrated churches. The family-integrated church has the basic ecclesiology that the church is a *family of families*. In the "Biblical Confession for Uniting Church and Family" Article VI states, "We affirm that our Heavenly Father designed His church to be a spiritual household-a *family of families* and singles."¹⁴ What they mean by this is elaborated in Article VII: "We affirm that the biblical family is scripturally ordered household of parents, children, and sometimes others, forming the God-ordained building blocks of the church. (2 Timothy 4.19)"¹⁵ Wallace writes, "An integrated household ministry looks like a family because it is actually a *family of families*."¹⁶ Baucham said in one address, "The family is the foundational institution upon which all other institutions are built and for which all other institutions including the church exist."¹⁷

It is out of this ecclesiology that they build their new agenda and structure for the church. Before the argument against this ecclesiology is taken up it will be useful to show what superstructure they build on this foundation. These characteristics are primarily taken from *Family Driven Faith*. Baucham writes, "The family-integrated church movement is easily distinguishable in its insistence on integration as an ecclesiological principle."¹⁸ With this principle based on the *family of families* these 3 features characterize the ecclesiology of the movement:

¹⁴ A Biblical Confession. 1 Timothy 3.15 is the proof-text for this affirmation: "If I delay, you may know how to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God."

¹⁵ Ibid. 2 Timothy 4.19 says "Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus." To think this verse can bear the weight of this affirmation is unreasonable.

¹⁶ Wallace, 89.

¹⁷ Voddie Baucham, "The Nature of the Family." In *Faith in Practice Conference*, October 2005. available from <http://www.uu.edu/audio/Detail.cfm?ID=227>; Internet; accessed 7 October 2008.

¹⁸ Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 194.

1. Families Worship Together. There is no nursery. There is no children's church. There is no teen youth group. Families sit together and worship together. The Family-Integrated church will generally not provide a nursery, but that varies within the group. There are no Sunday Schools. The emphasis is on family-togetherness at all times.

2. Evangelism and Discipleship is done through homes. Sunday school is not a common feature in a FIC. Parents disciple their children in their homes. Parents evangelize their children in their homes. Wallace writes: "Elders and their wives work with fathers and mothers both together and individually to provide challenge, encouragement, and accountability."¹⁹ The pattern then is that the elders and their wives disciple the parents and in turn the parents disciple their children. Brown writes:

While the church in the twenty-first century is losing the next generation of children to worldliness, we at the NCFIC are encouraging fathers to return to the biblical role as the head of the household and to preach the gospel and make disciples of their children. We are also encouraging church leaders to have the courage to cancel the programs which steal the father's creation-order role and put their energy into fulfilling the clear commands of God.²⁰

3. Emphasis on Education as a Key Component of Discipleship. The FICM is a home schooling group. The FICM found its birth in the home schooling movement. Gregg Harris commenting on Eric Wallace's book wrote, "The time has come to apply the proven insights gained from home schooling movement to the reformation of the local church..."²¹ The people that are convinced of the parental role in education are generally convinced that they too have a large role to play in their children's discipleship. Lancaster wrote, "Christians should not send their children to public schools since education is not a God-ordained

¹⁹ Ibid., 90.

²⁰ Scott Brown, *The Greatest Untapped ...*

²¹ Wallace, 1.

function of civil government...”²² In other words the FICM is a home schooling movement to a large degree, although it is not necessarily so.²³

The FICM builds a family-oriented ecclesiastical structure on the *family of families* foundation. The FICM says that families are the building blocks with which churches are made. This is the core theology that drives the whole movement. The family is a redemptive unit and the argument is advanced to say that God always works through families in constructing his covenant people. This was true with Israel and this is true of the Church as well. There is then a focus on the organic nature of the covenant structure of the church.

This organic understanding of the new covenant is evident in several ways. First they see discipleship as being primarily a multigenerational goal. In Article VIII of the Confession for Uniting Church and Family Vision Forum says, “We affirm that God intends both church and family to carry out evangelism and discipleship through multiple generations.”²⁴ The organic understanding is shown in their definition of patriarchy. Douglas Philips said, Patriarchy is “A father with a multigenerational vision, who is discipling his children in covenant keeping.”²⁵ Voddie Baucham, commenting on Ephesians 6.2, says, “This is a promise to the people of God—if you want to continue to be the people of God and live in the land that God has given you then here is what you do.”²⁶ Obedience to the

²² Lancaster, “Tenants of Patriarchy.” The fact that these two movements can be logically divided does not mean that they are in reality divided.

²³ Eric Wallace in a phone conversation said that he believes how you educate your children is a matter for Christian liberty. He does not hold to the strict statements of Vision Forum, and has distanced himself from their insistence on home schooling.

²⁴ Vision Forum, “Confession for Uniting Church and Family.”

²⁵ Kevin Swanson, The Family-Integrated Church Movement. In an interview with Douglas Philips, June 2006, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=6120610850> (accessed 31 October 2008).

²⁶ Baucham, *Nature of the Family*. What is most intriguing about these three quotes is they come from Baptists. That the Church would carry on this organic principle is the heart of the paedobaptist argument for infant baptism, and the fact that this organic principle has ceased is the heart of the Baptist argument for believer’s baptism. I’m not sure how they maintain their believer’s baptism stance, not to mention their profession of the

command to raise your children in the fear and admonition of the Lord is the heart of covenant maintenance. Baucham takes this even further and makes his organic understanding of the covenant clearer when he writes in *Family Driven Faith*:

When was the last time you heard a sermon on birth rates? Most Christians do not think about the community of Christ-followers as a heritage to be preserved. We don't even think in terms of intermarriage rates as a component of continuity... This movement seeks to address issues of intermarriage, birth rates, and religious education.²⁷

If this feature of the FICM's ecclesiology is understood, it is clear how they come to adopt their *family of families* ecclesiology. If the family is the reason the church exists (cf. Baucham), if discipleship is primarily accomplished by fathers in families, and new covenant keeping is done through obedience to Ephesians 6.2ff, then it is easy to come to the conclusion that the church is a *family of families* and that the church should be organized along family lines. Their whole philosophy falls out from this point, and so it is this point that needs to be examined in light of Scripture. If this doctrine is unscriptural then their ecclesiology and thus much of their mentality must be rejected as false.²⁸ The family-integrated church movement, while correctly seeing the many problems facing the modern American misunderstands the biblical and historical understanding of the New Covenant nature of the Church in its description of the church as a *family of families*.

1689 Confession while holding to this patently anti-baptistic understanding of ecclesiology and covenant theology.

²⁷ Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 201. This is a case of what I can only call militant fecundity. It seems that the inner working of the New Covenant has been totally rehabilitated to amount to little more than the Sinai Covenant. There is no mention of regeneration or God's Spirit in the work of establishing the New Covenant.

²⁸ At this point I want to express my deep sympathy with much of what the FICM says. The family is so vital for the Church. I believe with Richard Baxter that healthy godly families make a healthy godly Church. The American church has very little family religion and that is one reason why the American church is losing teens by the millions. I appreciate so much their emphasis on the need for fathers to lead their families in all godliness, for families to worship together in church, for wives to be in the home and finding their domain in the home, for pastors to be men of example for their families, for their clarion call for families to worship God together. I deeply respect much of what they write, but they are still in error and for the health of God's Church depends on right doctrine.

Chapter 4

BIBLICAL STUDIES

The constitution of the Church is the New Covenant. The New Covenant documents of the New Testament set forth the New Covenant and illustrate and explain what the Church is to think and believe about itself. The proponents of the Family-Integrated Church Movement (FICM) frequently explain that they believe all of the Scripture and that the Scripture is sufficient for all of life and godliness. What seems to slip in, however, is the subtle hermeneutic that the Old Covenant is canonical for the Church.¹ The Old Covenant relates to the New Covenant believers in the same way that it related to the Old Covenant people of God.

Advocates of the FICM constantly refer to Deuteronomy 6.1-8 as a proof for the doctrine that they are espousing with little consideration for the fact that this was written to the Old Covenant people and does not stand in the same relationship to the New Covenant people of God. To interpret Deuteronomy 6 along with many other Old Testament passages without consideration for the coming of the New Covenant is to have an inadequate hermeneutical context and therefore to misinterpret the Word of God.

¹ The thesis will explain below where the author believes they are at fault. The author very much agrees that all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. He does not believe that the Old Covenant is canonical in the same sense as the New Covenant is canonical for the New Covenant church, and the author will explain his precise meaning of canonical below.

Covenant is Canon

Meredith Kline in his book *The Structure of Biblical Authority* makes it crystal clear that the canonicity of the Word of God is covenantal in structure. It is the fact that God is the covenant suzerain who gives His word the authority to determine the relationship that people have with him. The Ancient Near East possessed a genre of literature called the international treaty document. Kline explains, “In these treaties an overlord addressed his vassals, sovereignly regulating their relationship with him, with his other vassals, and with other nations.”² The document was written down on two identical tablets and deposited in the presence of the gods who ratified the document. Attached to the document were covenant-curses if anyone should destroy the tablet. For example, in one it said, “You swear that you will not alter it, you will not consign it to the fire nor throw it into the water...and if you do, may Ashur...decree for you evil.”³

The similarity between the Old Covenant structure and this international treaty document are evident. God, the suzerain, drew up the documents with his own hand and they were carried on two tablets. Not one consisting of the first four commandments and the second containing the last six commands, but two identical tablets and deposited before the ratifying God, Yahweh in the Ark of the Covenant.⁴ The Old Covenant contained also the traditional curses that all canonical documents contained. In Deuteronomy 4.2 Moses says, “You shall not add to the word that I commanded you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD.” The New Covenant also bears a curse for those who change any part of the written copy of the covenant. Revelation 22.18 says, “I warn everyone

² Meredith Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1997), 27.

³ Ibid., 30.

⁴ Cf. Exodus 25.16, 21, 40.20, Deuteronomy 31.9-13

who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book...”

This then is the basic covenantal idea of canonicity. The suzerain gives inviolable words that set up and control the relationship between the two parties. Kline comments:

To sum up this far, [the] canonical document was the customary instrument of international covenant administration in the world in which the Bible was produced. In this treaty form as it had developed in the history of diplomacy in the ancient Near East a formal canonical structure was, therefore, available, needing only to be taken up and inspired by the breath of God to become altogether what the church has confessed as canon.⁵

The Old Testament, while including other genres besides international treaty, still can be boiled down into the primary genre of covenant. The prophetic literature, wisdom literature, the historical literature all function as corollaries inside the covenant genre-- thus the Old Testament is called a *testamentum* or covenant. That is why the Old Testament is sometimes called the Law and the Prophets and other times it is called simply the Law, and the Law was a covenant document.

As a foundation this is important to understand, because the covenant documents of the ancient Near East were more than divine revelation (so to speak), but they also served an architectural function for the community under the great suzerain. It was at Sinai that Israel became a nation under God’s rule. He redeemed the people out of Egypt and established his covenant with them. The covenant governed the people and was the constitution of the nation. Again Kline says:

The community is inextricably bound up in the reality of canonical Scripture. The concept of covenant-canon requires a covenant community. Though the community

⁵ Ibid., 37. Kline is quick to point out that the Scriptures do not depend on the genre to insure their canonicity or authority because they are of divine origin regardless of the genre they took. Nevertheless, God chose to put his canonical words in a covenant form that was familiar to the people of God and in a form that stressed his covenant relationship with them. God reveals himself as more than our Creator. God is our covenant LORD and he expresses this even in the structure of His revelation.

does not confer canonical authority on the Scriptures, Scripture in the form of constitutional treaty implies the community constituted by it and existing under its authority.⁶

This inextricable tie between covenant-canon and covenant community has significant ramifications for how the New Testament Church should view itself and what should be the canon, the community constitution, for the New Covenant Church. It is obvious then that only the New Covenant has the status of canon in this restricted meaning for the New Covenant Church. The Covenant constitutes the community and provides the architectural structure for the people, and the New Covenant is the only constituting covenant in effect. Hebrews 8.13 reads, “In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”

Therefore, it is evident that the New Testament Church needs to look primarily to the New Covenant to see what people constitute the new covenant community. To read an Old Covenant principle of who is in God’s kingdom is to read an anachronistic covenant into the new covenant. The covenant-canon principle that is the basis for the covenant scriptures that God has given denies this as a possibility. Each covenant constitutes its own people and governs who is and who is not in the covenant.⁷ There can be no assumption of any detail based on prior covenants, because that would do harm to the covenant-canon principle that God uses. Kline says again:

The distinctiveness of the two community organizations brings out the individual integrity of the two Testaments which serves as community rules for the two orders...This is to say that the Old Testament is not the canon of the Christian

⁶ Ibid., 91.

⁷ Samuel Waldron in *A Reformed Baptist Manifesto: The New Covenant Constitution of the Church* (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2004), 6 echoes Kline’s sentiments. He says, “A covenant in the Bible, among other things, is the formal or legal basis of some relationship. The Old or Mosaic Covenant was the formal, legal, basis for the national existence of Israel...Though written church constitutions are permissible for the sake of administration, the premise for this study is that the New Covenant is itself the ultimate, formal basis and legal rule of the Church.

church...The form of government appointed in the old covenant is not the community polity for the church of the new covenant.⁸

This position should not be assumed to say that the Old Testament is not relevant or able to teach the New Covenant people of God. There is of course great unity of purpose between the two canons in the overall covenant of Grace. 2 Timothy 3.16, Hebrews 11, 1 Corinthians 10.6 all confirm that the Old Testament is Scripture and is necessary for the New Covenant Church to know and understand.

This clarifies the hermeneutical principles that are required when defining the make-up of the New Covenant church. It is not enough to say that Scripture is sufficient to answer that question, but more precisely one should ask what does the New Covenant say. What are the characteristics of the people who are constituted a people under the New Covenant? Is the family a defining characteristic of the New Covenant? Is the organic principle found in the Abrahamic covenant and the Old Covenant still present in the New Covenant? Or does the New Covenant define and create a people along different lines?

It seems that from the outset that the New Covenant constitutes a people that are characteristically different than the Old Testament people. This is not to say that there is not a unity of the people of God in all ages. There certainly is, but a change of covenant means at least some change in the structure of the people. Jeremiah 31 portrays the differences between the two covenants and the respective peoples that these covenants constitute.

The New Covenant People

1. The New Covenant People are Eschatological

⁸ Kline, 99.

Hebrews 8.8 says, “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” The formula “the days are coming” generally refers in the Old Testament to the coming *eschaton* of the Messiah and of the new age. Hebrews 1.1 says, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son.” The clear idea behind this verse is that the Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messianic coming have been fulfilled. The present time is eschatological. The New Covenant then is eschatological as well. Gerhardus Vos writes:

The Epistle distinguishes not only two covenants, but also two worlds or ages, namely this age, and the age to come. The peculiarity of the old *Diatheke* is that it pertains to this present world, whereas the new *Diatheke* is that of the future eschatological world.⁹

If this is the case then one would expect that the constituents would be eschatological in nature as well. The author of the Hebrews says this cogently in several places. In Hebrews 12.22 the author states that Christians have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. This is not mere metaphor, but expresses reality. The Christians have come to the heavenly. They are in real connection to the world to come, and participate in the age to come. In 6.5 he states that they have tasted the powers of the age to come. In 9.11 and 10.1 the author makes the claim that when Christ came he brought with him “the good things that have come” and that the law was “a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities.” If this is the case, then all those who are in Christ have tasted heavenly realities and are new creatures, eschatological creatures.

⁹ Gerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing), 1956; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001, 50.

To understand more clearly the relationship of the old and the new covenant one needs to look at how the author describes each covenant respectively. As Hebrews 10.1 says, the law was a shadow and lacked the true form or image of the realities. This is normal typological language, but the author uses the idea of shadow and reality in a more complex manner than does the rest of the New Testament. Instead of a straight horizontal-historical relationship, the Old and New Covenant both have relationship to the heavenly reality. In other words when the author calls the Old Testament a shadow he is saying it is not a shadow so much of the New Testament in that it is incomplete, like an artist's sketch, but rather that it is shadowed down from heaven.

This is how the author discusses the earthly tabernacle. It is an antitype of a heavenly reality. The heavenly reality is what Christ entered, but the priests entered only the shadow. Hebrews 8.5 states, "They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, 'See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.'" And in Hebrews 9.24 it says, "For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself to appear in the presence of God on our behalf."

This picture is exemplary of how the author of Hebrews sees the Old and the New Covenant. The Old Covenant is a shadowy reality of the heavenly, but the New Covenant is the very image of the heavenly reality. The New Covenant is the fulfillment and perfect picture of the heavenly covenant and is called the eternal covenant for this very reason (Hebrews 13.20). The covenant of Grace then reaches its eschatological fulfillment in the New Covenant. The clarity and understanding of the God's purpose and covenant to save mankind is clarified as redemptive history progresses, but leaves provisional status in the

coming of Christ and the establishment of the New Covenant. Therefore there is an essential equality between the covenant of Grace and the New Covenant, with its members being identical. I do not mean that the Old Covenant believers were in the New Covenant; that would be to harm the progress of redemption. Now under the New Covenant administration there is a numerical equality between those who are in the New Covenant and those in the Covenant of Grace.

This is clear by the very descriptions that God gives of the New Covenant, but it is also true by its eschatological nature. Those that are in a heavenly covenant, an eternal covenant, are invariably redeemed. In the past before Christ came there was a necessity for genealogical reasons to include an organic aspect to the covenant administration. The Old Covenant was made with both the original hearers and their seed. Covenant membership was then passed on genealogically. Faithful remnant and unbelievers alike received the land and were in covenant with God, thus the many promises and curses of the prophets. The people for good and for ill were in covenant with God with their children, and so the people as a whole were judged and condemned as covenant breakers. But with the coming of Christ and his subsequent death and resurrection, the people now are eschatological, heavenly in nature, because they have been constituted in an eschatological covenant. The Church, the New Covenant people of God, is eschatological in nature by definition and so by definition is going to a better country.

But some argue that the Church is not pure, and so the administration of the New Covenant must include the organic idea of Old Covenant. There *is* a “not yetness” to the New Covenant administration of God’s people. The people are regenerate (cf. below), but there is remaining indwelling sin. They know the LORD, but through a glass darkly, They are

forgiven, yet sin daily. The New Covenant has not yet created a perfect people, but all those who are in it will be perfect one day, for the simple reason that God has promised them that they would be so in the New Covenant itself.

2. The New Covenant People are Regenerate

The nature of new covenant is not only a generic eschatological nature that speaks to the kind of Church it has established, but also it has specific characteristics that mark all those who are in the New Covenant. Hebrews 8.10 says, “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts.” Simon Kistemaker says, “God’s people experience the permeating power of God’s Word, so that his law becomes a part of their conscience.”¹⁰ This speaks of God’s Word coming to His Covenant people and working so thoroughly in their minds and hearts that God’s law becomes the law of their very nature.

They are born again after the image of God’s own heart. F.F. Bruce writes:

Jeremiah’s words imply the receiving of a new heart by the people—as is expressly promised in the parallel prophecy of his younger contemporary Ezekiel: ‘I will give the one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.’¹¹

God’s people continually failed and their failure led God to abandon them. Hebrews 8.9 says, “For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.” The law was good, but “it was weakened by the flesh” (Romans 8.3). God had to overcome this defect in his people if they were to remain his covenant people. “What was needed was a new nature, a heart liberated from its bondage to sin, a heart which

¹⁰ Simon Kistemaker, *Hebrews*. New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1984), 226.

¹¹ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 190

not only spontaneously knew and loved the will of God but had the power to do it.”¹² The new covenant set out to do what the old covenant could not do and that is to create hearts that loved and served God. Christ’s death purchased the covenant promise of the Holy Spirit and His work in the regeneration of all those who were in the New Covenant.¹³

3. The New Covenant People have Christ as their Mediator.

The first covenant had priests and sacrifices. Year after year the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies and took blood as an atonement for the sin of the people. The High Priest represented all those who were in the covenant and offered a sacrifice on their behalf. The sacrifice was made for those who were in the covenant and none others. In the same way Christ entered into the heavenly tabernacle and “by means of his own blood” he secured eternal redemption for all those who are in the New Covenant. Hebrews 9.15 says, “Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from transgressions committed under the first covenant.”

In this passage the connection is made between Christ as the mediatorial head of the new covenant and his work of redemption. They are coextensive realities. As covenant mediator he establishes the covenant with his blood (Luke 22.20, Hebrews 9.23ff). He also redeems those who are called. There is a golden chain between the new covenant members-the called-the redeemed-and the receivers of the promised eternal inheritance. Christ’s death

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Matthew Henry writes, “He once wrote his laws to them, now he will write his laws in them; that is, he will give them understanding to know and to believe his law; he will give them memories to retain them; he will give them hearts to love them and consciences to recognize them; he will give them courage to profess them and power to put them in practice; the whole habit and frame of their souls shall be a table and transcript of the law of God. *Hebrews*. Commentary on the Whole Bible. (Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 743.

did not take place in a vacuum for the elect, but his death was a covenant-sealing death for those who were in the Covenant of Grace that is realized fully in the New Covenant. The cross of Christ is connected intimately with the new covenant in all of Hebrews, but particularly in 10:14, “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, This is the covenant that I will make with them...”

It is difficult to interpose the organic idea into this formulation, because of the tight logical connections that the author makes between those who are in the New Covenant and those who have been redeemed. By definition it leaves all unregenerate children out of the equation. It does not have reference to families, but to those who are redeemed, thus making it impossible that families as a whole are in the New Covenant. Individuals are redeemed and regenerated, not families. There is no use to argue that somehow in some provisional way unregenerate children are in the New Covenant, for the very point of the new covenant is that Christ’s perfect sacrifice is efficient to save all those that are under his mediatorial headship. Ridderbos writes: “God’s people are those for whom Christ sheds his blood of the covenant. They share in the remission of sins brought about by him and in the unbreakable communion with God in the new covenant that he has made possible.”¹⁴

To deny this connection between Christ’s mediatorial role and new covenant membership is to disjoint all of covenant theology. It also places unregenerate children as having Christ as a mediator, but not enjoying the benefits of his mediation. He is their mediator, but not their redeemer. He is their covenant head, but they remain in the covenant

¹⁴ Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1962), 202.

of works. It is an untenable position. Christ is redeemer for all those under his headship. He is the head of the Church; therefore those who are not saved are not in the church.

4. The New Covenant People are Forgiven

Hebrews 8.12 says, “For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.” In Hebrews 10 this forgiveness of sins is connected with Christ’s offering for sin. The offerings of the priests year after year could not cleanse the consciences from sin, but rather they were a constant reminder of the sins committed (Hebrews 10.3) Christ’s sacrifice was once for all and resulted in the forgiveness of sins promised in the New Covenant for those in the covenant.

There is a clear superiority of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant. There was no forgiveness of sins sworn on oath to the people in the Old Covenant, rather what was offered were the types and shadows that pointed to Christ. Given the nature of the New Covenant Church, that it has been established in the blood of Christ, there can be little doubt that the New Covenant people from first to last is a forgiven people. Jesus Christ’s sacrifice insures that all those He represents in the New Covenant are forgiven. There is no room to say that those who are not forgiven should be considered as members of the church. Therefore, families are not the building blocks of the New Covenant Church. The forgiven and regenerate are the building blocks of the Church, not families.

5. The New Covenant members all know him

Hebrews 8.11 says, “And they shall not teach each one his neighbor and each one his brother saying, ‘Know the Lord.’ for they shall all know me.” This argument needs to be

examined closely to draw out all of its implications relating to the New Covenant Church. This certainly cannot be construed to mean that there is no teaching necessary in the New Covenant Church. To say that would be to deny the necessity of the apostles, the roles of pastors and teachers, etc. Obviously this verse is not a promise to the contrary of Christ's clear intentions for the Church. Rather, no one in the New Covenant needs introduced to the Lord, for they all know Him. This knowledge is more than an acquaintance; it is a vital, intimate knowledge. It is covenant knowledge.

It cannot be said that all children in Christian homes know the Lord, because that is obviously not true. It is irreconcilable to suggest that these who do not know the Lord are in the covenant when the covenant outlines its members precisely at this point that they "all should know me, from the least to the greatest." If this is not an all-inclusive statement then language has no meaning. It cannot be even suggested that all does not mean all here in this passage, for the "from the least to the greatest" is an exegetical statement defining the all. The explanation of the all is as all embracing as the word it defines.

Furthermore this descriptive statement of the New Covenant means that men cannot disciple those outside the covenant in any way as to bring them into the covenant. Since regeneration is also a description of members, as his forgiveness, it holds that men cannot disciple those outside the covenant in a way to bring them into the covenant. This is true for the same reason that men cannot be born and added to the covenant, because as John 1.12 says, "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." God is the only one who can introduce a person into the New Covenant,

because it is he alone, who regenerates, forgives, and gives His Son for the Son's Covenant people.

6. The Members of the New Covenant cannot break it.

The very point of failure in the Old Covenant was that the members of the Covenant and the *ecclesia* of God could not keep the covenant that God had made with them. The New Covenant is “*not* like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke.” (Jeremiah 31.32) In what way is the New Covenant not like the Old Covenant? The people cannot break the New Covenant. The Old Covenant people had no heart for the law of God. The covenant was not one of pure promise, but depended on their keeping the law. In the New Covenant the Mediator obeys for the people, and guarantees the covenant blessings to the people through His oath sealing sacrifice. Furthermore, the people could not keep the covenant because the majority of the people did not believe.

7. The Members are in the Covenant as Individuals.

In Jeremiah 31.29, the very prologue to the New Covenant prophecy, God makes the individualism of the New Covenant clear. There is no longer any physical organic principle at work as there was in the Old Covenant. “In those days they shall no longer say: ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ But everyone shall die for his own sin.” The principle at work in the Old Covenant was an organic principle. God punished and blessed according to generational obedience or disobedience. It led to miserable failure and the great host of Israel were judged and condemned. The nations

carried Israel off for the sins of Manasseh. The children were punished for the sins of their fathers. Jeremiah 31.29-30 teaches that this principle will no longer be effective in the covenant people of God. Rather, the covenant people will be redefined to include only those individuals who have the law of God written in their hearts and know the Lord.

On these grounds it is misguided to say that fathers need to disciple their children in covenant keeping. The only covenant that children outside of Christ are in is the Covenant of Works. Fathers furthermore cannot disciple their children in a sufficient manner to introduce them into the New Covenant in Christ's blood. This must be the work of the Spirit of God alone. Therefore when Douglas Philips says that patriarchy is "a father with a multigenerational vision who is discipling their children in covenant keeping," he is completely bypassing the heart of the New Covenant. The heart of the New Covenant is the cross of Christ and the gospel of God in all of its naked glory. To have a stated goal that you want to have your children keeping covenant with God in the New Covenant is nothing but suggesting that the basis of New Covenant membership is some form of keeping God's law, and not the work of the Holy Spirit in uniting a person to Christ as his meditorial head.

If by God's own definition, those in the New Covenant are those who are in Christ, forgiven, born again, and know the Lord, on what grounds can other people be introduced? To suggest, that an inference from other covenants demands it, is to suggest that man's inference has priority over the clear statements of God's word. The clear word must trump any possible inference to the contrary. If the New Covenant people are those born again and those alone, and the New Covenant establishes the New Testament Church, then how can anyone knowingly and willingly introduce others to the contrary? If the New Covenant Church is an eschatological people, then should we not expect that its members to have tasted

the powers of the age to come? On these grounds it seems impossible to think that the church is made up of any other building blocks than the saved and regenerate, and those alone. Families do not make up the new covenant. Families therefore do not make up the new covenant church in either its particular or universal manifestations. To imagine God has a double standard in this area is to introduce nothing but a contradiction to the intentions of God. Why would he want the unregenerate in the local church, but bar them from the universal church? Obviously in this age there is confusion and men cannot see who the unregenerate and the regenerate are but it does not follow that men therefore should say people are in the new covenant church when they know they are not in the new covenant.¹⁵

¹⁵ I understand the paedobaptist conception of the covenant of Grace has by definition an organic component. It really is not my point to argue against my paedobaptist brothers, but I understand that my knife is cutting in two directions. The paedobaptistic argument that the covenant of Grace possesses an organic component is based on their connection of the Abrahamic covenant to the Covenant of Grace. They believe that the entirety of the Covenant of Grace holds an organic component because of the Abrahamic Covenant. This flattens out all of revelation, to see more continuity than is there. It is really to make an *a priori* assumption about the nature of redemption based simply on one covenant. Later revelation should hold more sway with us than an inference from the Abrahamic covenant. Furthermore, the Abrahamic covenant was not the kingdom-establishing covenant of the Old Testament people. The Old Covenant was. Therefore, if we are examining ecclesiastical polity, the covenant properly establishing the Covenant should be examined, not a promissory covenant promising the existence of the nation. That is why I think the first argument is the most important key to my whole paper and to the whole debate. If the New Covenant establishes the Church then the New Covenant alone should have a role in determining the structure and nature of the people. To do otherwise is to arbitrarily introduce whatever features from the past into the present administration that we like. The theonomists do this with the law of God. The paedobaptists do this with the organic principle of covenant perpetuation, and the FICM does it with their *family of families* ecclesiology.

Chapter 5

SYSTEMATIC OVERVIEW OF CHURCH AND FAMILY

The Church and the Family are two institutions concerning which the Bible gives a considerable amount of teaching. The question is simply this: Does the Bible, when all the data is systemized, teach that the church is a *family of families*? To answer this question briefly, I will examine the positive descriptions of the church, the roles of the church and finally the roles of the family. The Church is not a family-integrated institution with its structure developed around the integration of several families.

The admitted difficulty is that there is not a lot of information about how actual instituted churches viewed themselves in the Bible or how the individual local churches were structured. The only viable means of understanding how the apostles structured the churches is to make the assumption that the local church was built around the apostle's ecclesiology of the universal church. It seems that the best way to look at the local church is to say that the local church is a manifestation of the universal church. While not sharing all things in common, nonetheless, the local and the universal church should be characterized along the same lines.

Metaphors for the Church

The church universal is described in several different ways. Contrary to Wallace when he says that the fundamental idea of the church is a household¹, there are several ideas that all have equal bearing in the conception of the church. The family metaphor is a very important metaphor for the church. God is our heavenly Father (Eph. 3.14). We are brothers and sisters. (Matthew 12.49-50, 1 John 3.14-18) The way we act towards one another is to be familial. In 1 Timothy 5.1-2 Paul says, “Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father. Treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity.” The richness of this language cannot be ignored. The fellowship and love of a family should mark the church. The common reference for the Father should denote all the family members.

This conception of the church is a long way from being the complete or guiding principle of ecclesiastical order. It is one thing to use the family as a metaphor, but it is something different to use a metaphor as the blueprint for making the physical family the guiding principle behind the Church. Paul uses similes and metaphors when he describes the Church as the family, when he calls the church the Household of God. He is saying that the Church has its common origin in the Father and enjoys fellowship like a family.

That idea is one thing. It is quite another to deduce from this language the idea that the church is a *family of families*. It is a logical leap without grounding. It is a confusion of terms and motifs. The symbolic language cannot be equated somehow with the physical families of the church, nor can it be used to structure the church itself.² Plain language and

¹Eric Wallace, *Uniting Church and Home* (Lorton, VA: Solutions for Integrating Church and Home, 1999), 103.

² Cf. Wallace 108-111. While a direct quotation cannot be adduced from Wallace to this effect the logical leap is evident throughout this section. After describing all the ways the church is like a household, he says, “Imagine what rediscovering just these simple aspects of what a household is would do for the church

plain institution is the way God constitutes His people. He has done this in the didactic teaching of the Scripture and more precisely in the New Covenant passages.

In an interesting twist to the family metaphor, Paul also refers to the church as the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5.22-32; Revelation 21.2,9; 2 Corinthians 11.2). The heart of the family is the husband and the wife, but to say from this metaphor that the church should be organized along spousal lines is as much a logical leap as to say that it should be organized along family lines. Neither metaphor can decide the organization of the church. Both metaphors should govern how the members of the church should relate to God, Christ, and each other, and that is the extent of their authority.³

Another metaphor the New Testament uses is the body. Paul uses two different metaphors that relate to the body. The first metaphor Paul refers to is in 1 Corinthians 12.14-17. The Church is referred to as the whole body: head and body. “And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye. I do not belong to the body.” Here the head is included as a member of the Church, but in Ephesians 1.22-23 the church is referred to the body and Christ is the head.

It is in the context of the discussion on the spiritual gifts that Paul uses the metaphor of the body. This is particularly important for evaluating the FICM. They want to say that all ministry should be done through the family structure. Fathers should guide their families in works of righteousness and ministry. While this is true to a certain extent, it is not the whole picture. The spiritual gifts are given to individuals for ministry. The spiritual gifts are granted to certain members of the body. The members of the body are not families, but individuals

household... I believe that this vision of the church as a household of households is absolutely crucial to our effectiveness in the world for Christ.” 111.

³ Cf. the above footnote.

who are particularly gifted for ministry. 1 Corinthians 12.7-9: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit...”

The Apostle Paul’s view of ministry is that only believers can participate in ministry, and the Holy Spirit equips every believer for service. Paul sees ministry not as a family affair, but as an individual affair. As individuals believers exercise their spiritual gifts and build up the church. 1 Corinthians 12.27 says, “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping...”

Vision Forum, in their “Confession for Uniting Church and Family” writes:

We affirm that the saints of God are to be equipped for spiritual ministry and maturity primarily through the preaching of the Word of God by qualified shepherds and that children are also equipped primarily through family-based, one-on-one, father directed, heart-level discipleship relationships.

This confuses several matters. The saints of God are not “primarily” equipped through the preaching of the Word, but by the Spirit of God. Granted, one of the means that God uses to encourage His children in their gifts is preaching. Then to say that children are “equipped” in this same way is to bypass the necessity of regeneration for spiritual ministry. The children cannot be equipped for spiritual ministry until they have been saved and equipped by the Holy Spirit. They misunderstand the situation children really are in. It does not matter who evangelizes, who disciples them, who teaches them whether Sunday School teacher or father, they will still not be equipped to be Christians until God works. Until they are saved, they are not members of the body of Christ, they are not equipped for any spiritual

service, so it seems improper to put these two categories of people-believers and their children- in the same category with the only difference that they are equipped differently.⁴

The Church is also called a new Temple. 1 Peter 2.4-5,7 says, “As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up a spiritual house...So the honor is for you who believe.” These verses demand special attention, because of their misuse in the Family-Integrated Church Movement (FICM). The FICM says the families are the building blocks of the Temple of God. This is pure eisegesis.

The stones that make up the Temple have several characteristics that rule out that they are families. First, nowhere in the context is it insinuated that Peter is talking about families. Second, they are ones who “come to him.” They are, third, those who believe. In verse 9, referring to the same people, Peter says, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” The church is constituted a people as God chooses them, calls them out of darkness, and puts the gospel in their hearts and mouths. These characteristics of faith, election, regeneration, and calling cannot be attributed to families, but only to individuals. Therefore, the Church is not made up of families, externally or internally. The believing individuals are the building blocks.⁵

⁴ This whole line of thinking present in the Vision Forum articles and confession has a conceptional overlap with the Federal Vision. The Children are presumed to be saved or will be saved if the parents will disciple them correctly. They rarely talk about regeneration or the children believing for themselves. There is little talk of seeking the conversion of your children. The emphasis is all on the idea that if parents will take up their responsibility to disciple their children, the children will stay faithful to the covenant. They will be covenant keepers-as if the New Covenant was perpetuated the same way as the Old Covenant or that there was no divine power needed for New Covenant membership.

⁵ Matthew Henry disagrees with the FICM’s interpretation. He writes, “Christians are living stones, and these make a spiritual house and they are a holy priesthood.” *Commentary* v.6, 818. Kistemaker, a paedobaptist, writes, “Peter describes Jesus as the “living Stone” and the believers as “living stones.” In the form of stones they are the building blocks of God’s house.” Kistemaker *Commentary on 1 Peter*, 86. Calvin writes, “We

These metaphors are an important means for understanding the nature of the Church, but the wide variety of metaphors should cause interpreters to be very careful in taking these metaphors too far. One metaphor for the Church cannot be elevated above others, as the FICM has elevated the family metaphor. These metaphors are very instructive, but to flatten all of New Covenant revelation into the family metaphor is hermeneutically unsound.

If the metaphors of the Bible do not point us to a *family of families* ecclesiology, then one might ask does the Church and the family have similar goals that would call for a family-integrated approach? It is apparent that in the widest sense the Church and the family have the same ultimate goal. “For all things were made by Him and *for* Him.” “Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” The family and the Church exist to the glory of God, but so do the sun and stars, government, and the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. This common goal cannot lead one to think that these two institutions should be integrated as the FICM has done. The question is what roles has God given the Church and what roles has God given the family?

The Role of the Church

The instituted Church on the earth, and every local manifestation of that church, has several basic roles. The first is that the Church is the pillar and foundation of the truth, according to 1 Timothy 3.15. This metaphor describes the Church as a pillar for the truth. The truth is held up high for all to see, and the pillar holding it is the Church. The Church’s

must further observe, that he constructs one house from the whole number of the faithful. Then as is true that each one is a temple in which God dwells by his Spirit, so all ought to be so fitted together that they may form one universal temple.” *Commentary on 1 Peter*, 64. Here are three commentators who held to the *organic principle* in the New Covenant. They do not see this verse as referring to families. How then can the Vision Forum authors say: “We affirm that the biblical family is a scripturally ordered household of parents, children, and sometimes others, forming the God-ordained building blocks of the Church?” They are building the church, the temple of God, with different blocks than Christ is building his Church.

role is to teach the whole watching world the Word of God. Paul does not expect the world to see the truth shining out from the institution of the family, but rather from the Church. The Church is called the foundation or buttress of the truth. The Church stabilizes and defends the truth against all attacks. God gives the defense and proclamation of the truth in the Church's hands, not in the hands of fathers and families primarily. It is true that the Church will seek to see God's will done and the truth proclaimed in families, but this is not to say that the Church works primarily through families. The Church works primarily through its members who have been equipped to proclaim the truth wherever they are.

God also gives the Church the responsibility to worship Him. Colossians 3.16 says the church is to "sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Wayne Grudem writes, "Worship in the church is not merely a preparation for something else: it is in itself fulfilling the major purpose of the church with reference to its Lord."⁶ The Church does this as the people give itself to coming together and hearing, singing, and praying the Word of God. Worship is something that only the regenerate can do because God demands worship to be done in spirit and in truth. Families do not worship God. Individuals worship God, and therefore the Church is not integrated in this aspect either.⁷

Jesus Christ calls the Church to evangelize and disciple the world. The Family-Integrated Church Movement would agree with this, but says that the Church is to do this primarily through the household. Again this seems to be a reduction of the full Biblical truth.

⁶ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 867.

⁷ Let me now provide some clarification. I believe that families ought to worship God together, if what is meant is that there should be times when families come together to sing, pray and read God's Word. This should not be confused with the Church's worship. The Church worships when it comes together as a body in unity to worship God with thankful, believing hearts. My children and I cannot replicate this. My children do not know God and they sing songs to a God whom they do not know or love as I love Him. It is my role as a father to constantly present them with their responsibility to worship and the opportunity to worship him. They need to see that my wife and I are deadly serious about God. I am under no illusion that what they do is the same thing as I do when I respond to my Savior in praise.

God expects fathers and mothers to evangelize their children. God expects men to govern their families in a way that brings honor to Christ, but this headship is not the same as evangelism. God told the apostles (the Church) to go and make disciples of all nations. In Acts Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Silas, Philip, Peter all do evangelism. The preaching of the gospel is the primary means of evangelism, and the preaching of the gospel is not given to families, but to the Church. As the Westminster Larger Confession says in answer to question 155:

The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ; of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will; of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions; of building them up in grace, and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation...the Word of God is to be preached only by such as sufficiently gifted, and also duly approved and called to that office.⁸

Neither fathers, nor family relationships, are the primary means of evangelism and building up the members of the Church, but the preaching of the Word of God. This preaching will build up families. This preaching will inspire families to operate according to God's standards. This preaching will win the lost out of the families. Godly direction from fathers and mothers will play a part in the salvation of children, but preaching of the gospel is the normal and primary means of evangelism.

The conclusion is that in the three areas of confessional witness, worship, and evangelism, God has specifically equipped the church to carry out these roles. Families will naturally be involved, but they are the recipients of the ministry primarily and not the means of carrying out the ministry. The Holy Spirit empowers the members of the body of Christ to carry out a spiritual ministry to the world and to their families, but families are not swept up

⁸ *Westminster Larger Catechism*, Questions 155 and 158.

into the role of ministry. Families are not gifted, nor commanded to do the work of the Church.

The Family in Scripture

The Scripture puts the family into a different category than the church. The family is a this-present-world necessity. Marriage, the foundation for family life, is a momentary reality that ends at death. The institution of marriage ends at the coming of Christ when the Kingdom of God is fully realized in this world. “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.” (Matthew 22.30) Families are not a part of the eschatological reality, because marriage is not a part of the resurrection life. Family then is a this-world reality, and has a this-world function to perform. It is not a redemptive unit, because it itself is not carried over into the redeemed world.

The family does not have a purely earthly function either. Rather, families find a place in the Christian reality as the redeemed exercise influence in the familial sphere. As fathers instruct their children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord,” they exert real good for the kingdom of God and its future on the earth. This influence should not be elevated to say that the family is primarily a spiritual reality, because it is not. This is obvious from an eschatological perspective, but it is also evident from the instructions that the apostles give to families. The family’s primary role is to care for the physical and social well being of its members. 1 Timothy 5.8 says, “But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” In the matter of widows the function of the family was paramount. “But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own

household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.” (1 Timothy 5.18) God gives the role of provider to families. The family is to look after its own.

This is the way God has designed and then cursed families from the fall. Adam and Eve were cursed as a married couple in their specific spheres. Eve was cursed in childbearing. The ground was cursed because of Adam. “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.” These were family-related activities. Providing and childbearing were the specific means God gave them to exercise their family roles.

Families are even seen as prohibitive in many ways for the Christian. Contrary to the FICM that sees families as God’s paramount means of propagating the kingdom of God, the apostle Paul sees marriage and family as a burden. After Paul speaks about the goodness of sexual relations in the married situation, 1 Corinthians 7.6 says:

Now as a concession, not a command, I say this. I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, on of one kind and one of another. To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry.

Paul views singleness as a preferred situation to marriage. Rather, than a subclass that needs to be “adopted” into a family, a single person has more opportunity for various ministries. The single person has less worldly things to concern himself about. 1 Corinthians 7.32ff:

I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. I saw this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

Paul does not look at marriage and family as the ideal state for the Christian life. The married man and woman are divided. They have concerns for “worldly things” whereas in comparison the single Christian is concerned primarily for the Lord. Paul says he does not say these things to constrain anyone to a lifestyle they cannot live in a holy manner. He wants all to be as devoted as they can. The burden then lies on getting married, rather than being single. If a believer must marry for sexual holiness that is good and necessary, but that is the fall back position, not the default position. Singleness is preferred.

If this is true, then the church cannot be seen primarily as a *family of families*. If this is true then the church cannot constrain its ministries to the household, because the family is a physical necessity for many, but it is not the preferred institution for the Christian life.

It is apparent that the church is not a *family of families* on the testimony of Scripture to the roles of the Church and the family. It is apparent that the Church is not a *family of families* on the testimony of Paul that singleness is preferred and on the grounds of Jesus saying the family is a momentary reality. If these things are given their due, then one cannot simply hold to the FICM’s ecclesiology.

Chapter 6

THE HISTORICAL CRITIQUE FROM PURITAN ECCLESIOLOGY

A continual strain throughout the Family-Integrated Church Movement (FICM) literature is that the modern American Church has abandoned the historical roots of Christianity and Protestantism in particular. The FICM argument is that the American church in its program-oriented pursuit of bigger churches has left what churches used to be and has instead modeled itself after the corporation. The FICM says that from the beginning the church has been a *family of families*. This was purportedly seen in the early church, and was the standard in the Puritan practice.

This part of the FICM argument regarding a *family of families* ecclesiology is not well-developed, but they do see themselves as a better historical representation of the early church and a better reflection of the puritan ecclesiology. In a very popular article entitled “My Four Favorite Family-Integrated Pastors” Scott Brown writes, “The critics of the family-integrated church movement often forget that what we advocate was practiced by some of our most treasured pastors and theologians of the past.”¹ The historicity of Brown’s claim is debatable and needs to be explored in order to see if his contention is true. I have already explored the Biblical record, and now I would like to investigate whether this

¹ Scott Brown. My Four Favorite Family-Integrated Pastors. Uniting Church and Family. http://www.visionforumministries.org/issues/cross_examination/my_top_four_favorite_familyint.aspx (accessed 16 August 2008).

argument is true. Has the church traditionally understood itself as a *family of families* as the FICM argues?

The FICM thinks they are on solid historical ground when they compare their movement to the Puritan practice of worship and ecclesiology. This is certainly the common feeling among the FICM, but it is not necessarily true. When Brown uses the term family-integrated worship, he means to say that the Puritans held to the same ecclesiology of the FICM. Perhaps they do not mean the same thing precisely, but nevertheless they espoused the same kind of ecclesiology with the same emphases. In the article Brown discusses two Puritans and two Puritanesque pastors: Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, Matthew Henry, and Jonathan Edwards.

Brown says:

Week after week, they found great joy in preaching the pure and pleasant Word of God to families, filling them up with great theology. Imagine what it would have been like to have heard the voice of Richard Baxter or Matthew Henry or Jonathan Edwards as a babe in arms, then as a teenager, and then as a young man starting out life with a new wife at your side.²

This is nothing less than a romanticized version of what never really was, except in the possible case of Matthew Henry. John Bunyan spent 12 years in prison where he was allowed to meet with his people some of the time. Richard Baxter was only in his famed Kidderminster pulpit from 1647-61. Jonathan Edwards filled the historic pulpit at Northampton from 1727-1748, so it is possible that this romantic vision was reality for a few.

Brown's espoused vision does not stand up to simple historic fact, but it is nevertheless passed off as the truth. The reason there is a need for this basic (almost petty) critique is that there is a common practice in the FICM to use the Puritans as a historical

² Ibid.

precedence when real examination denies what the FICM says about the Puritans. The Puritans did not see the church as a *family of families*. They did not hold to the same sort of worldview as the FICM does. They did not particularly homeschool their children. They did not see fathers as the primary means of evangelism. They did not hold an idolization of the nuclear family with the church working centrally through the family. There is a great deal of overlap between the FICM theology of families and the Puritan view of families. To deny this overlap would be intellectually dishonest, but to equate them is to blur the full picture of the Puritan ecclesiology and the place of families in their ecclesiology.

The Puritan's Theological View of Families and the Church

The Puritans were the most thorough reformers of their day. Their God-centered, Bible-saturated vision of all things included the family. They had a keen theological doctrine of the family. Their families were not essentially a social unit, but rather theological groups. The family was to be marked as “Holiness to the LORD.” The Puritan Robert Cleaver wrote, “The government of a Familie tendeth unto two things specially. First, Christian holiness...they must seeke to have holiness found in their habitation whereby God may be glorified.”³

This idea stemmed from their view of covenant theology, and that was that just as in the Old Covenant families were in the covenant, so in the New Covenant families were in the covenant. This was the foundation on which the family was built in Puritan thought, and thus Baxter argued that, “all societies that have God for their founder or institutor, should, to their

³ Robert Cleaver, *A Godlie Forme of Householde Government: For the Ordering of Priveate Famlies, According to the Direction of Gods Word*. (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1622) 17.

utmost capacities, be devoted to him that founded and instituted them.”⁴ From this covenantal basis flowed all the aspects of family life. Man and woman were in covenant together. They were to reflect the covenant love between Christ and the Church. Parents and children were in covenant with each other. Out of this covenant parents were to admonish and teach their children. Thomas Cobbet wrote, “The greatest love and faithfulness which parents as covenanters can show to God, and to their children...is so to educate them, that...the conditions of the covenant may be attended by their children.”⁵

There clearly was an admirable drive for multi-generational faithfulness on covenantal grounds, but nevertheless the Puritans did not fall into line with the *family of families* ecclesiology. The paedobaptistic Puritans, although they were willing to say that families were in the New Covenant, did not say that the church was a *family of families*. The families were not the primary building blocks of the church. Nor was the church viewed primarily through the lens of the household as the FICM wishes to do; rather the church was a very spiritual, even personal, reality.

The evidence for the Puritan view of the church as a spiritual reality is abundant, and necessary to review, if someone is to understand the Puritan ecclesiology properly. The FICM understands very well the reality that the Church is not an institutional structure, but rather a relational reality. The Church is not the professional clergy and rituals. It is not any hierarchy, but is primarily a reality created by a web of relationships. But the Puritans did not understand this relational reality to be one based on family life, but rather spiritual life and faith. William Gouge wrote that the church consists of those who “inwardly and effectively

⁴ Richard Baxter, *The Christian Directory*, p. 411.

⁵ Thomas Cobbett, *A Fruitfull and Usefull Discourse*, 218, as quoted in Edmund Morgan, *The Puritan Family*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 91.

by the Spirit...believe in Christ.”⁶ In a catechism Henry Jacob wrote in response to the question, “How was such a church to be constituted?”, Henry said, “By a free mutual consent of believers joining and covenanting to live as members of a holy society together.”⁷

William Ames wrote in *The Marrow of Theology*, “Such a congregation or particular church is a society of believers joined together in a special bond for the continual exercise of the communion of saints among themselves.”⁸ Ames calls those who make up particular churches two things, “saints” and “believers”, neither of these things can be predicated to families. He does allow for children to be called members of the church, but immediately clarifies their position: “Yet children are not such perfect members of the church that they can exercise acts of communion or be admitted to all its privileges unless there is first a growth of faith.”⁹ He also says:

The form or constituting cause of this church must be something found alike in all those who are called. This can only be a relationship, and the only relationship which has this power is that which comes from a primary and intimate affection toward Christ. In man this comes only by faith. Faith, therefore, is the form of the church.¹⁰

The Westminster Confession is in complete agreement with Ames’ theology. It says in summary: “The visible Church...consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God.”¹¹ The same tension noticed in Ames registers in the Larger Catechism. In question 61 it is asked, “Are all they saved who hear the gospel, and live in the church?” The

⁶ William Gouge as quoted in Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 115.

⁷ Ryken, 117.

⁸ William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 179.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹¹ *Westminster Confession* 25.2.

answer says, “All that hear the gospel, and live in the visible church are not saved; but they only who are true members of the church invisible.”¹²

There is a recognized tension in most Puritan theology that although the children of believers are in the New Covenant, and as such they are somehow in the church, these children are not full or “perfect” members. This shows that the Puritan ecclesiology wavered between two poles. The first pole is the recognition that the Bible certainly teaches that the invisible church is certainly only made up of true believers. Faith is the “form”, as Ames calls it, of the Church. The other pole is their desire to somehow include the children in the membership of the same church, because covenant is the matrix for church membership. These are the two poles that determined how the paedobaptist Puritans did the local church, and how they did discipleship. There was a constant tension between knowing that only true believers were in the invisible church and true disciples, and that the children of believers were thought to have special privileges pertaining to the new covenant.

What is lacking in Puritan presbyterian ecclesiology is the recognition that the church is a *family of families*. The Puritans did not see the church as primarily constructed out of families, but out of believers whose children have an imperfect membership in the church. The children of believers are in the visible church by virtue of the faith of their parents, but they are not recognized to be in the true church until they personally experience conversion. In neither the Westminster Confession, nor the Larger or Smaller Catechism is the word *family* used in any of the descriptions or questions regarding the church. It seems clear from this general assessment that it is not possible that the authors merely assumed it and left it unsaid. The evidence, rather, points that they did not use the word because they did not think

¹² *Larger Catechism*, question 61.

in those terms. As was said before, they saw the constituted local church primarily made of believers with their children as attached by the covenant, yet still not “perfect” members.

Richard Baxter’s Theology of Family and Ecclesiology

One of the FICM’s most referenced Puritans is Richard Baxter. Because he is used so much to maintain the FICM’s ecclesiology and particular theology of the family, his theology needs to be explored to see how much he actually supports their ecclesiology and overall theology of family. Richard Baxter certainly said a lot about families and how they should be ordered. The modern church is dying to hear much of what he says about the importance of religion in the family. He certainly stressed the need for family masters to lead their families in worship. He spent a whole chapter in his *Christian Directory* in motivating “men to the holy governing of their families”¹³ He gives 10 motives for this holy governing. Among these reasons he says, “A well-governed family is an excellent help to the saving of all the souls that are in it.”¹⁴ Baxter says as well, “A holy and well-governed family doth tend to make a holy posterity, and so to propagate the fear of God from generation to generation.”¹⁵ Another motive he gives is that, “A holy, well-governed family is the preparative to a holy and well-governed church.”¹⁶

Now this point needs to be examined in more detail to see that Baxter does not in fact believe that the church is a *family of families*. Rather, he views the family as separate from the church, and although there is an intimate relationship between the two they are not related

¹³ Baxter, *Christian Directory*, 424.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 425.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

as parts to the whole. Listen how he states his view of the respective holiness of the family and the church:

If masters of families did their parts, and sent such polished materials to the churches, as they ought to do, the work and life of the pastors of the church would be unspeakably more easy and delightful; it would do one good to preach to such an auditory, and to catechize them, and instruct them, and examine them and watch over them, who are prepared by a wise and holy education, and understand and love the doctrine which they hear. To lay such *polished stones* in the building is an easy and delightful work...how comely and beautiful would the churches be, which are composed of such *persons!*”¹⁷ (emphasis mine)

The relationship of the church and the family is not a relationship of parts to the whole, but rather supplier and supplied. The families are the birthing and trying grounds for the members of the church who are *persons* and individual *stones*. Richard Baxter in this section does not have in mind that the church is made up of families, nor does he regard the church as working primarily through families. The church is a separate entity that is made up of individuals who come from families.

There are several other lines of thought in Richard Baxter’s *Christian Directory* pointing away from an ecclesiology of a family-integrated church. The first is that he gives several powerful motives for a pastor not to marry and have children. In the FICM the prerequisite found in 1 Timothy 3 saying that a man must rule his own household well is emphasized to the degree that the pastor, is if not formally, at least informally, thought to require a family to rule in the church. Voddie Baucham said that the point of this qualification is that the pastor must, “show [the church] how to do family”¹⁸ This point, rather than being one qualification of many, becomes one of his defining skills, one of his

¹⁷ Ibid., 425-426.

¹⁸ Voddie Baucham, “The Two Skills a Pastor Must Have” In *Faith in Practice Conference*, October 2005. <http://www.uu.edu/audio/Detail.cfm?ID=228>; Internet; accessed 7 October 2008.

necessary qualifications, comparable to teaching. Richard Baxter stresses the exact opposite.

He gives twenty reasons why people should seek not to marry if at all possible.¹⁹ He

basically flushes out 1 Corinthians 7.26-28:

Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

After giving twenty reasons for all Christians to not seek marriage, he gives four additional reasons that a minister should not seek marriage. He qualifies his reasons saying:

Not that it is simply unlawful for them...as they are in the kingdom of Rome...But so great a hindrance ordinarily is this troublesome state of life to the sacred ministration which they undertake, that a very clear call should be expected for their satisfaction.²⁰

Baxter saw this qualification as only applying to ministers who were married, rather than pointing to a necessary perquisite to ruling. One wonders how the single Richard Baxter would have fit into the family-integrated churches of America? Which family would have adopted him into their household, so he could minister properly?

Richard Baxter's *Christian Directory* makes additional points that distance him from the FICM model of ecclesiology as well. As was stated previously many of the FICM churches in their zeal for family-integration have resorted to father's distributing the elements of the Lord's Supper as "pastors" of their family, as Eric Wallace suggested. This is far from Richard Baxter's idea of how the sacrament should be administered. In a question and answer format he explains how communion should be administered. He says, "Are all the members of the visible church to be admitted to this sacrament?" Answer: "It is

¹⁹ Not every one of these reasons are good. They are not, especially his comments regarding the "imbecility of the female sex." That is the only one that does not bear consideration.

²⁰ Baxter, *Christian Directory*, 400.

presupposed, that none should be numbered with the adult members of the church, but those that have personally owned their baptismal covenant, by a credible profession of true Christianity.”²¹

Richard Baxter’s view of communion is precisely in line with the typical Puritan view of ecclesiology and practice. The minister should not allow anyone, but those who have a credible profession of faith, to be considered as a member of the church with full rights. Also it does not enter his mind to suggest that fathers, as fathers, are involved in the administration of the sacrament. He never suggests anyone other than an ordained pastor should be officiating and administering the sacrament. He writes, “Look upon the minister as the agent or officer of Christ, who is commissioned by him to seal and deliver to you the covenant and its benefits.”²² As well as this: It is the duty of the pastors and governors of the church, to keep away notorious, scandalous offenders.”²³ Fathers are not considered officers of the church as elders or pastors over their flock. The minister is God’s commissioned officer, God’s shepherd to defend the flock.

The evidence from the Baxter’s *Christian Directory* conclusively speaks against the FICM’s ecclesiology, but what does Baxter’s other often-cited work *The Reformed Pastor* say concerning this matter? *The Reformed Pastor* is a reflection of Baxter’s well-known ministry at Kidderminster from 1647-1661. This tenacious book calls for the great work of pastoral oversight through catechizing the members of the parish. It should be noted that Baxter saw this as a ministry to all those under his care. The spiritual condition of Kidderminster at Baxter’s arrival was appalling, but he made it his practice to visit every

²¹ Ibid., 495.

²² Ibid., 494.

²³ Ibid., 498.

family in the town, not just those who were members of the church. The motive seems rather to be evangelical rather than a motive to visit the families of the church.

Baxter viewed this exercise not so much as a reflection that families themselves were so important, but that to visit each house was the way to reach every individual in his parish. He writes:

Little do they know that the minister is in the church, as the schoolmaster in his school, to teach, and take an account of *every one in particular* (emphasis mine); and that all Christians, ordinarily, must be disciples or scholars in some such school. They think not that a minister is in the church, as a physician in a town, for all people to resort to, for personal advice for the curing of all their diseases... They consider not, that all souls in the congregation are bound, for their own safety, to have personal recourse to him, for the resolving of their doubts, and for help against their sins, and for direction in duty.²⁴

His practice then does not reflect a general desire to be in families or see families particularly as so important in this matter of pastoral oversight. The individuals lived in families, and the best way to meet all the individuals in the parish was to meet them in their homes with their families. This is further proved in his instructions to the pastors on how they should carry out this work. He says, “When your people come to you, one family or more, begin with a brief preface, to mollify their minds...”²⁵ This suggests that he was not particularly concerned about how many families he met with in this business, but rather that he could get a larger group of them together at once for the saving of time. His instructions continue, “When you have spoken thus to them all, take them one by one, and deal with them as far as you can in private, out of the hearing of the rest.”²⁶ Baxter wanted to have plain dealing with people’s souls. His interest was the conversion of souls. He was not satisfied to have families learning the catechism and father’s teaching their children the catechism. He

²⁴ Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1999), 181.

²⁵ Ibid., 238.

²⁶ Ibid., 239.

wanted to have heart to heart conversations with everyone where he could speak plainly to them and they could in turn open up to him their fears, sins, and weaknesses.

The evidence from Richard Baxter suggests that he was not a family-integrated pastor. He was rather ordinary in his Puritan ecclesiology. He did not see the family as a redemptive unit or the building block of the church. The family life and worship had great influence on the church, and no one could or would want to deny, but he did not elevate the family over the individual soul. The individual was the building block of the church. The individual was the stone that the family supplied to the church for its construction. He preached, not for family cohesion and multi-generational family faithfulness, but for the conversion of souls and the edification of the church. He spent himself in pastoral oversight not over families, but over individuals who naturally lived in families. He sought the welfare of families, because their good meant the good of the entire society and the blessing of the church in particular, but there was no idolatry of the family, nor was there a family integrated ecclesiology that tried to combine the two.

The Ecclesiology of John Owen

J.I. Packer in his book *Quest for Godliness* compared the Puritans to the redwoods of California. Packer saw John Owen as one who stood taller than all the rest without rival. Packer wrote, “His thought was not subtle nor complicated... His ideas, like Norman pillars, leave in the mind an impression of massive grandeur precisely by reason of the solid simplicity of their structure.”²⁷ In the English language only Jonathan Edwards comes close to comparing to John Owen. Was John Owen a family-integrated pastor?

²⁷ J.I. Packer, *Quest for Godliness*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 193.

The answer is no; he was not a family-integrated pastor, and he didn't see the church as constituted of families. He saw churches as constituted of believers. In Owen's work entitled *A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God and Discipline of the Churches of the New Testament*, he explains what he thought of ecclesiology. In question 19 Owen asks, "What is the instituted church of the gospel?" The answer runs this way, "A society of persons called out of the world, or their natural worldly state, by administration of the word and Spirit."²⁸ What is most interesting about this answer is his explanation. He says he is not referring to the catholic church of elect believers, nor the "universality of professors of the gospel; but a particular church."²⁹ He goes onto say, "For although it be required of them of whom a particular church is constituted that they be true believers, see that unless a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God..."³⁰ True believers make up particular churches not families. Individuals are the target of the church, and it is individuals that Christ seeks. Later, he spoke of how Christ builds his church. He wrote:

We have declared that the Lord Christ, by the dispensation of his word and Spirit, doth prepare and fit men to be subjects of his kingdom, members of his church. The work of sending forth the means of the conversion of the souls of men, of translating them from the power of darkness into light, he hath taken upon himself, and doth effectually accomplish it in ever generation. And by this means he builds his church.³¹

In the entire section he is referring to the local, independent, visible church. He says it is believers that constitute the church, and it is Christ that builds his church by translating them through the power of darkness. If the Presbyterian Puritans were not clear enough, Owen makes it crystal clear that it is only those whom have been translated from darkness to

²⁸ John Owen, *A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God. Works of John Owen* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1965. 15: 445-530), 479.

²⁹ Ibid., 480.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 487.

light that are the building blocks of the church. He wrote commenting on 1 Timothy 3.15, Hebrews 3.6 and Ephesians 2.21-22, 1 Peter 2.5, “Besides the church is a house, a temple...*believers, singly considered*, are stones, living stones.”³² Owen did not see families as the stones of the church, but believers.

Owen was still fairly conventional in his ecclesiology. He still regarded children as members of the church in the same way as other Puritans viewed them. They had a quasi-formal membership in the church, although they were not to be thought of full members. He did have some very interesting ideas in light of the FICM discussion about children and the care the church should take of them. He writes:

Though neither the church nor its privileges be continued and preserved, as of old, by carnal generation, yet, because of the nature of the dispensation of God’s covenant, wherein he hath promised to be a God unto believers and their seed, the advantage of the means of a gracious education in such families, and of conversion and edification in the ministry of the church, ordinarily the continuation of the church is to depend on the addition of members out of the families already incorporated in it.³³

This is an excellent balancing statement. He sees both the church as being and not being made of families. From one perspective it is made of families, because of his view of covenant theology, but on the other hand, the church is added to out of families. The families supply the people that make up the church.

The question must then be asked, “What should be done with the child-member?” They are in the church, but not quite in the church. Should the church care for these members?

³² Ibid. 489.

³³ John Owen, *The Nature of the Gospel Church, Works of John Owen*. (Carlisle, Pa: Banner of Truth, 1965. 16:23.

Owen's answer is insightful. He says the church's duty is to do several things for the children. Among several of the church's duties is the duty to provide catechetical instruction according to their capacities. The church was to teach the children directly through a catechism. In case it is supposed that he meant that the church was to do this through their parents he says that children are often neglected and left in a ruined state precisely because of "the want of a teacher or catechist in every church, who should attend only unto the instruction of this sort of persons."³⁴

John Owen then apparently saw that each local church had a duty towards the children who were in their midst to teach them according to their capacity. The church did not only work through families, but had people who taught children specifically in a way that they could understand. It sounds striking when compared to Voddie Baucham's comment, "It's not the church's job to disciple my children. At best it is the church's job to equip me and assist me as I do what God commanded me to do in discipling my children."³⁵ John Owen would not agree with that assessment, nor the ecclesiology that lies behind it.

The Early Particular Baptists

The FICM is strongest among the Reformed Baptists. There are many Family-Integrated Churches who hold to the 1689 London Confession. The modern day Reformed Baptists on the whole do not embrace this ecclesiology, while still holding very much to the importance of family-togetherness in worship and the place of family worship in the home.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Voddie Baucham, "The Nature of the Family," in *Faith in Practice Conference*, October 2005. <http://www.uu.edu/audio/Detail.cfm?ID=227>; Internet; 7 October 2008.

It is necessary to examine early Baptist ecclesiology to see if this FICM ecclesiology corresponds to the early particular Baptists.

Dr. James Renihan laid much of the groundwork for this examination in his doctoral dissertation entitled, *The Practical Ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists, 1675-1705*. A careful reading of the evidence shows that the signers of the London Confession were not family-integrated theologians, but rather very much of the typical puritanical stripe without the quasi-formal membership of children as covenant and church members.

The 1689 Confession states in 26.6: “The members of these churches are saints by calling, visibly manifesting and evidencing (in and by their profession and waling) their obedience unto that call of Christ...”³⁶ Throughout the chapter on the Church there is not the word family, but rather the London Confession always speaks of “members.” The emphasis is that individuals saved by grace and professing faith make up the church, and they alone.

In this rather succinct paragraph curiously the Confession does not give a formal definition of the local church, but different ecclesiastical writings of the time supplied this need. Hercules Collins was a pastor at London’s oldest Baptist church for 26 years (1676-1702) and one of the particular Baptists most esteemed theologians. He followed John Owen’s definition of the local church: “A society of Persons called out of the World, or their natural world state, by the Administration of Word and Spirit, into the obedience of Faith or the Knowledge of the Worship of God in Christ.”³⁷

Benjamin Keach wrote about the local church:

A Church of Christ, according to the Gospel-Institution, is a Congregation of Godly Christians, who as a Stated Assembly do by mutual agreement and consent give themselves up to the Lord, and one to another, according to the will of God; and do

³⁶ *London Baptist Confession* 26.6

³⁷ Herecles Collins, *Some Reasons for Seperation* as quoted in James Renihan’s *Particular Ecclesiology* 86.

ordinarily meet together in one place, for the Publick Service and worship of God; among whom the Word of God and Sacraments are duly administered, according to Christ's Institution.³⁸

Further evidence suggests that household voting in business meetings were not the norm among the early Baptist churches. They were very strict in their application of 1 Timothy 2.12, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet." Their strict obedience to 1 Timothy 2.12 though did not mean that they did not allow women to participate in the life of the church. The Abdingdon Association, a group of particular Baptists churches began in 1652, determined that a woman might speak in three cases: "to apply for membership in a church by giving her profession of faith, to be a witness or participant in discipline cases, and to express repentance if she had been disciplined."³⁹ This clearly shows that there was at least some recognition that women could have some independent role in the church besides through her family.

Perhaps this view developed more as the Baptists churches grew up. In 1694 there was a debate regarding "sisters respecting their Silence and Speaking in the Church"⁴⁰ in the Maze Pond, London church. This church was one of the strictest churches regarding women speaking in worship. They did not allow singing in the church in an effort to protect the women from breaking the 1 Timothy 2.12 injunction. They, nevertheless, said that women "were permitted to vote by raising their hands, and speak concerns with regard to a matter for vote upon approval by the church body."⁴¹

The early Baptists made it crystal clear that the local church should primarily be understood as a gathering of baptized believers. There is no doubt they understood the

³⁸ Benjamin Keach, *The Glory of a True Church and its Discipline display'd* as quoted in Renihan's, *Particular Ecclesiology*, 87.

³⁹ Renihan, *Particular Ecclesiology*, 264.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 265.

⁴¹ Ibid.

importance of families for they were consciously inline with the other Puritans, but nevertheless, they saw no reason to suggest or define the church as a family phenomenon. The emphasis was on God's work in an individual's life that resulted in a profession of faith. It was not assumed that a person was a Christian and therefore a church member until they had a credible profession of faith. The member's credible profession gave to them the right to fully participate in the church's life including participating in business meetings without going through their husbands. The headship of men did not squelch's the woman's voice in the congregation of the faithful, but rather governed how it could be used.

Chapter 7

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Family-Integrated Church Movement (FICM) presents many practical considerations and problems for the American Church.¹ The FICM is right in pointing out the problem of dropout young people and the breakdown of families. They are correct in emphasizing the role of fathers in the spiritual development of their children. Many fathers have neglected their role as head of homes and spiritual leaders in their homes. Many children are not holding onto their parent's faith. Families need to take their responsibility seriously. The FICM says a lot that is right and needs to be heard, but there are several practical considerations that rise from this thesis.

The first practical consideration is the need for the FICM to take more care in their writing and their theological work. It is possible that many proponents will say that the author has not analyzed the movement properly here or there and say, "I did not mean that to be taken like that." It is possible that the author may have misinterpreted much of what the FICM's proponents have said, but the defense is simply this: Then what they have said is unclear.

The FICM states that the God-ordained building blocks of the church are families. The proponents of this view need to say precisely what they mean and what they do not mean. The building block metaphor is used sparingly in the Bible and it never refers to

¹ The word problem is not used negatively, necessarily, as will be seen from what follows.

families, so either they mean it in a different, unspecified way, or they are contradicting the Word of God. They take the Word of God seriously; so one has a difficult time imagining that they mean what they are saying. Are they saying in un-equivocating terms that families, and not individuals, are the building blocks of churches? They do not refer to individuals, and so what other conclusion can a person draw?

Another area of clarification is this: Is the FICM saying that people stay in the New Covenant through covenant keeping? This is a popular idea for some with many of the same ideas, but this concept is foreign to the gospel of Jesus Christ provided in the New Covenant. We are kept in the New Covenant through God's grace. We cannot break the covenant because God provides all the obedience in Jesus Christ, and the new heart necessary to stay faithful. Covenant keeping is only another way to say obedience. Do they really mean children need to learn to obey to stay in covenant with God? What then of the need for regeneration and repentance? They speak of evangelizing children, but treat them as covenant members who need to obey the covenant stipulations or lose their place as God's covenant people. The FICM needs to clarify their stance on covenant theology. They need show how their ecclesiology fits into Biblical covenant theology.²

Another practical application of this study should be that the Church of Christ should take families seriously. There is an anti-family, anti-children mentality rampant in our culture. This mentality is damaging to all who embrace it and is damaging to the church. The FICM is absolutely correct in its disdain for programs for programs sake, and for programs that constantly tear the family apart. The self-aggrandizement of the church over the family

² This is said especially to those who hold the 1689 confession, who are professed reformed Baptist. Their ecclesiology and their stance that the organic principle is still active in the New Covenant is the very argument that paedobaptists use for their ecclesiology and sacramental theology.

to the destruction of the family must stop. The Church is more important than the family. Christ died for the Church and loves the Church, but the Church is called to be like Her Lord who heals and binds up. The Church should be a redemptive unifying force in family life with the basic understanding that the gospel will divide families. Let the gospel divide families, but there is no need for churches to have a dozen programs and events that leave Christian families running ragged. God wants His Children busy with His work, not torn and flayed by the shepherds. Much of God's work for moms and dads is sitting and walking and lying down with their children telling them God's Word. If a church's programs are taking this opportunity away from the family, then it has gone too far.

On the other side those sympathetic to the FICM need to guard their attitudes toward the Church. In the end there will not be families. There will only be God's family, the Church of God. Christ died for the Church, not for families or households. Voddie Baucham was mistaken when he said "the family is the institution for which all other institutions exist, including the church." Paul writes, "Christ is the head of all things for the Church." Baucham's attitude dishonors the institution that Christ died for, and dishonors God's intentions for the world. His plan is to fill the earth with His family. Our families are temporary blessings and will not last the judgment. The FICM in their zeal for family, have not guarded their words about the Church. To call church buildings "catacombs" and "sterile" is unnecessary and careless. It is a sweeping generality to say that all churches are barren and lifeless places. This is to denigrate the countless churches that are seeking to balance all of the priorities of God's Word, and seeking not self-aggrandizement, but the holiness of its members.

Therefore, there is a great need for balance. Balance is something that fallible humans have trouble achieving. The FICM has elevated the family too high as a principle in the organization and ministry of Church. This is reflected in their *family of families* mentality and their general disdain for all age-segregated activities. The Bible does indeed present the importance of families. The Bible presents the importance of fathers discipling their children as well, but it also gives the responsibility of discipling the world to the Church, and this includes all the little households in the world. This responsibility and authority necessarily means that the church is a separate entity, and is over the family in this regard. The Church has the care of all people everywhere. From little children to hardened criminals in prison, the Church is responsible for all, and so should have a discipling ministry to all.

Because Christ has given the responsibility to hold the truth up and to minister the Word of God to the whole world, the church has the authority to fulfill this responsibility. This means that the Church has the right to disciple in ways that it considers prudent and in accord with God's Word. There is no rule against dividing up children once or twice a week to teach them in age appropriate ways. This ministry does not take away from the parent's responsibility or prerogative. It is a means of fulfilling the Great Commission. There are general principles that should guide the church's entire ministry, but there is great latitude in the everyday practical outworking of ministry. Sunday Schools are neither sacrosanct, nor are they wrong.³

What this principle implies is that age-segregated meetings of a church are proper so long as they serve the ministry of the church. These meetings should be controlled and

³ The matter of nurseries could be brought up here, but space prohibits it. When they say nurseries are wrong, they are simply taking a principle of family togetherness to unwarranted extremes. The matter of having babies in the public worship of God seems to have pros and cons, and is best answered with prudence. I think the prudent answer is that the cons of having babies in the public worship outweigh the supposed benefits to the baby.

guided, but to say that they divide families and crush the spiritual life of children is only true when they have actually done so. This is where the logic of the FICM breaks down and shows its reductionism. The reason that the FICM pushes for a family of family ecclesiology is that the age-segregated programs of churches have destroyed the family and the church. Children are abandoning the faith and the FICM puts the blame on the doorstep of the Church for usurping the family's place with its programs.

Is the above assertion true? Perhaps it is partly true for some, but the abandonment of Christianity and breakdown of families is a complicated phenomenon. It is too complicated to be attributed to one single cause. Even if a person were to say that the Church's usurpation of the family's role is the cause behind the thousands of secondary causes, which would be difficult to prove as well. Parents have not abandoned their children to the Church because the Church somehow forced them or cunningly usurped their authority. The phenomenon is better explained by examining the spiritual condition of the parent's themselves and children themselves. The better, more comprehensive answer is that there is a growing coldness and unbelief in the hearts of most people. The love of this world has pulled away those who were in the church, nominally, and seemed to be good church members for generations. There is no room in their hearts for God anymore, if there was a love there to begin with.

The need then is not a family-centered revival, but a God-centered, Christ-centered revival. The FICM has simplified the answer and missed the true problem. In their self-proclaimed revival, they have missed the true revival so desperately needed. What families need is not to be exalted in importance, but for Christ to be once again exalted in importance. Families need to find their secondary place in the periphery of a Christ-exalting revival. Only when a Holy Spirit inspired revival takes place in the Church is there a hope for families and

for the American Church. The basic problem then is not age-segregated churches, but a lack of love for Christ. The only thing that can renew that love is for the Holy Spirit to come down and in power warm the hearts of people.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

The simplest conclusion that can be drawn from this thesis is that more work is necessary in understanding and evaluating the Family-Integrated Church Movement (FICM). It is still an unfolding event, and in many ways is still seeking to understand itself. What also seems to be clear is that there is a firm wall of Biblical truth that the FICM needs to come to terms with- simply that the church in its local or universal manifestations cannot be understood as a *family of families*. The Biblical evidence is simply negligible for this assertion. Perhaps in a general, superficial way this ecclesiology can be held, but they are talking in more than superficial, general terms.

In particular, however, the *family of families* ecclesiology is wrong for several reasons. It misunderstands the basis for ecclesiology. It has as its basis some sort of conjunction of Old and New Covenants with an emphasis on the organic principle that is present in the Old Covenant alone. They come to this conclusion through what apparently is a lack of consideration for the clear words and guidelines of the New Covenant found in Jeremiah 31 and Hebrews 8. The New Covenant specifies who is in the covenant and what characterizes the covenant members. The New Covenant does not allow for an organic principle to work, because it defines its members as the redeemed and regenerated of God. Redemption and regeneration is not hereditary, and therefore not familial.

The FICM also flattens out the role of the Church. The FICM does not see the wide role that God has given to the church in discipling the world and proclaiming the truth to all creatures. It confuses the authority of the church and the family. The Church is a separate authority and also has a wider sphere of spiritual influence than the family does. The Church's authority includes all the family members, and not just the fathers. The FICM's limitation of the churches' authority reduces its role in the family. This reduced role necessitates the family-integrated model of ministry. But when the Church is given its proper due, then it has the authority and right to prudently disciple those under its care, including using age-segregated means. The family structure cannot constrain the Church's ministry, given that the Church is of a different sphere than the family.

The history of the FICM is at best fuzzy, and at worse misguided and misleading. The Church has never seen itself as being constrained by the family structure. The Church has never defined itself as a *family of families*, and has never seen its role as poured into the same mold as the family. The FICM often sees the Puritans as pursuing family-integrated churches, but to look at what they actually say is to see that they were not family-integrated theologians. They did not hold to this ecclesiology, nor did they practice this philosophy of ministry. They saw the importance of families, but they did not combine the church and family. They held them as two separate entities with different authorities and powers.

The only conclusion that can be drawn from the research is that the Family-Integrated Church Movement needs to rework their ecclesiology. They need to clarify their positions and their priorities in light of Scripture. Their ecclesiology does not bear up to the scrutiny of the Word of God; neither does their elevation of the family as a guiding structure for the

Church. Christ is building His Church. The FICM needs to make sure they are not building with wood, hay, and straw.

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