ANOTHER INVESTIGATION INTO CHILD ABUSE BY ABWE MISSIONARIES

By David C. Bennett, D. Min

August 20, 2012

Yes, another paper concerning the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism (ABWE). Some readers will say enough is enough believing in the Balance Theory which is “The Good outweighs the Bad”.

Others point to the “successes” ABWE missionaries have had on the various fields of the world. What is success? As I drive to church on Sunday I drive past the Mormon hall. It has a larger number of cars and I assume more people than what gathers where I worship the Lord. Therefore the Mormons are successful. The Roman Catholic building has a huge number of attendees so therefore they are successful. So numbers and whatever else one may use to determine success in the “Christian” world can be used for evangelicals as well as not so evangelical.

Whatever “success” ABWE has had in the past doesn’t void what sins the ABWE hierarchy has covered up. ABWE was rocked last year by a blog begun by some former ABWE female MKs. This blog has had several results so far. One result is that G.R.A.C.E was hired to investigate the allegations against former missionary doctor Donn Ketcham. A second result is that ABWE’s president Michael Loftis resigned. The third result is that Donn Ketcham was forced to relinquish his medical license. Another result is ABWE’s hiring a second investigator to examine child abuse by ABWE missionaries going back to 1956.

At http://www.abwe.org/news/article/abwe-historical-investigation-update/ is given the article concerning this second investigation into child abuse by ABWE personnel. It is this article this paper will cover and this blogger will underline certain passages and his comments will be in brackets.

“After hiring G.R.A.C.E. to investigate the tragic child abuse by Donn Ketcham in Bangladesh and its aftermath, ABWE took several more steps in its effort to follow God’s plan for repentance and reconciliation. (ABWE didn’t know God’s plan for repentance and reconciliation before hiring these investigators? Why didn’t ABWE hire G.R.A.C.E. to perform this investigation? Is G.R.A.C.E TOO THOROUGH FOR ABWE? Can anyone show the Scriptures that outlines “God’s plan for repentance and reconciliation” for a parachurch organization?)

Last year, ABWE hired Simms Showers LLP, who brought a highly experienced team, led by Rob Showers, to search for and investigate all other historical cases of child abuse (except the case being handled by G.R.A.C.E.) in ABWE’s 85-year history. Simms Showers immediately began looking at old reports, reviewing field notes and corporate records, and compiling historical cases. (When this blogger was a missionary with ABWE he also served several terms as field council chairman. The only notes he is aware of being sent to ABWE during those days are those from field council meetings. What reports, notes, records and cases does ABWE keep on its missionaries? Does the field administrator write notes on the individual missionaries that only those in the know have access to?)

Before going into private practice, Mr. Showers acted as Deputy Assistant Attorney General and Executive Director of the National Obscenity Enforcement Unit, later called the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, in the U.S. Department of Justice. He has started and run several nonprofit organizations, including the National Law Center for Children and Families, and has lectured and written articles about church and nonprofit law, sexual misconduct and the sexual exploitation of children. (Just think how much of the Lord’s money has been used in these investigations because of the ineptness of the
ABWE presidents, field administrators and board. Each ABWE missionary raises in their monthly support “$290/month as administrative service fee” which means some of this may be used to pay for the incompetence of the past and present ABWE leaders.

The independent investigators from Simms Showers conducted an extensive review of ABWE records and found other incidents of potential child abuse involving ABWE missionaries or MKs dating back to 1956. From that point, the independent investigators conducted numerous investigations on those historical cases. All of these thorough investigations have now been concluded, resolved, and closed. (G.R.A.C.E. began their investigation into one incident in April, 2011. How could these investigations be concluded, resolved and closed so fast?)

On July 11, 2012, the investigators submitted their final reports to the Board of ABWE International, summarizing their findings and recommendations.

In four of the cases, Simms Showers conducted their own full investigation, interviewing witnesses, victims, and perpetrators, and presented their factual findings to the ABWE Board. All four of these cases found child abuse occurred and resulted in the Board taking appropriate disciplinary action against the perpetrators, some of whom were former ABWE personnel. (Why doesn’t ABWE give what disciplinary action was taken? Surely if the reader needs to know what ABWE is telling them in this article they need to know what action was taken? Has there been any action taken toward those in ABWE leadership that were complicit or helped cover-up any of these “cases” from the past?)

In four other cases, partial investigations were conducted since previous reports had been made. In these cases, the Board concluded that child abuse had occurred; disciplinary action was taken and the files were closed. (Again what disciplinary action was taken? Surely the readers of this ABWE article would like to know (or would they?)

In the remaining cases, the victim(s) and/or perpetrators were not available because they were either deceased, not identified, or the victims did not consent to pursuing an investigation. (The lesson learned here is wait long enough and the problem will go away.)

When the firm began its investigations, none of the ABWE personnel involved in any of the cases remained in the mission field—they were either retired, or had previously resigned or been terminated. (From the above it looks like there were more than eight cases investigated. Exactly how many were investigated? Again what action has ABWE taken against the ABWE leadership (if still living) which mishandled these situations?)

The ABWE Board can now report that in all of these historic cases, the necessary authorities have been notified and in cases where supporting and/or sending churches were told only of the missionary’s “moral failure,” they have now been told that the missionary was specifically involved in child abuse. (Why were the supporting and/or sending churches told only that these were moral failures rather than what they were. Why did it take ABWE this long to WAKE up to these sins?)

When warranted, ABWE administered discipline to the perpetrator. In situations where ABWE policy and Scripture dictated, we informed the missionaries’ churches so they could take appropriate action. The Board has now concluded all investigations and cases involving historical child abuse allegations, except for the investigation by G.R.A.C.E. (Being a service agency for the churches exactly how does ABWE discipline a church’s missionary? What situations exactly dictated whether ABWE policy and Scripture would cause ABWE to inform the sending church? Does ABWE policy follow Scripture or is it the other way around? Shouldn’t the local church be aware of any sin that disqualifies their missionary from serving the Lord?)
Moreover, ABWE now has drafted and implemented a comprehensive interim child-protection policy that will improve education about the seriousness of the issue, reporting an incident, and timely investigation and counseling for the victims. (As if more policies and education will take care of the problem of the heart! NOT ONCE IN THIS ARTICLE IS PEDOPHILIA MENTIONED! The programmes ABWE is talking about sounds like a government initiative to educate people the harmful effects from smoking. ABWE is a religious MONSTOR that is usurping the authority of the local church.)

Perhaps no other sin scars its victims so deeply as child abuse. Although God, by His grace, does have the capacity to fully forgive this grievous sin, we also recognize a biblical principle that forgiveness does not remove all its consequences.

As in all personnel matters, ABWE’s actions will not be made public. The Board and its administrative actions should not be confused with a court of law and its verdicts. If the authorities, who were informed, decide to take action, then the names and actions involved in the investigations will come to light. But we do not feel it is our place to release the information except in an appropriate forum such as to sending churches and appropriate authorities. (ABWE says their actions will not be made public so where is their transparency? Before these former MK girls began their blog Donn Kethcam was allowed by ABWE to return to the states to practice medicine for over twenty years after his open confession of pedophilia. Why didn’t ABWE take care of Donn Ketcham when he confessed his pedophilia? Why is it only now that ABWE is saying they are taking care of these sins committed against children? Would these sins have continued to be covered up if these MK girls had not begun their blog?)

The Board of ABWE International is truly sorry for both the sins and the failures that have so tragically impacted the lives of our MKs. Over the past year, we have taken a series of steps aimed at rectifying any mistakes in handling previous cases, as well as strengthening our child safety and protection policies. (Were these “mistakes” or was it rather some people in high places who were complicit in a cover-up? How will written policies of child safety and protection eradicate future cover-up? ABWE is a religious MONSTER and a Good Ole Boy’s Club and sadly this blogger believes nothing has really changed.)

Although we will never be able to change what has happened, we are committed to redressing the wrongs and making right what we can. Please be in prayer for us, as we seek to repent of our past failures and ensure the safety of our children. (Are those on the present ABWE Board and in leadership responsible for those sins that were committed under the presidencies of Harold Commons and Wendell Kempton? Have the field administrators such as Russ Ebersole who covered-up Donn Ketcham’s pedophilia and probably some of these other cases been disciplined? When G.R.A.C.E. turns in its report will ABWE name those people publically who were guilty of being complicit in the Donn Ketcham cover-up?)

The New Testament has only two God ordained institutions and they are the family and the local church. The problem here is ABWE has always been an illegitimate MONSTER and is accountable to no one. The ABWE board is self-perpetuating which makes it easy for the Good Ole Boy’s Club to continue. Oh, the leadership will use high and lofty platitudes and write policies but the culture will remain the same.