

## IS THE LORD'S SUPPER FOR CHILDREN?

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WHY not let baptized infants and children back into the Lord's Supper? This request is not nearly so strange once it is understood that infant observance of the Lord's Supper was widespread in the early church.<sup>1</sup> In the eastern branch of the church, traces of this practice are to be found in the liturgy of St. Clement,<sup>2</sup> in Pseudo-Dionysius,<sup>3</sup> in Evagrius,<sup>4</sup> and in John Moschus,<sup>5</sup> and it is still practiced by eastern churches to this day.

References to this practice are more numerous, however, in the western branch of the early church. The first known witness is Cyprian in 251,<sup>6</sup> followed by Augustine of Hippo,<sup>7</sup> Innocent I,<sup>8</sup> Gelasius of Rome,<sup>9</sup> and Gennadius of Marseilles.<sup>10</sup> It was

<sup>1</sup> Opinion of historians is overwhelmingly in favor of this viewpoint. See: Joseph Bingham, *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, vol. 3, Bk. 2, ch. 1; Abraham Booth, *Paedobaptism Examined*, London, 1787, vol. 2, ch. 5; McClintock and Strong, "Infant Communion," *Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1878, pp. 576-577; Patrick Morrisroe, "Communion of Children," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, The Encyclopedia Press, Inc., New York, 1908, pp. 170-171; W. Smith, "Infant Communion," *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, vol. 1, ed. W. Smith, S. Cheetham, John Murray, London, 1876, pp. 835-837; Jeremy Taylor, "Of Communicating Infants," *The Whole Works of . . .*, vol. 15, Ogle, Duncan, and Co., London, 1822, pp. 501-508; William Wall, *The History of Infant Baptism*, vol. 1, Oxford, 1863, pp. 517-518; Zornius, *Historia Eucharistiae Infantum*, Berlin, 1736.

<sup>2</sup> *Constit. Apost.*, lib. viii, c. 12-13.

<sup>3</sup> *De Eccl. Hierarch.*, c. vii, 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Church History*, lib. iv, c. 36.

<sup>5</sup> *Pratum Spirit.*, c. 196.

<sup>6</sup> *De Lapsis*, ch. 25 (— *A.N.F.*, vol. 5, p. 444).

<sup>7</sup> Sermon 174, 7; *Contra Julianum*, Op. imperf. 1. :: c. 30; *De Peccat. Mer.* lib. i, c. xx, 26; c. xxiv, 34; *Contra Duas Epp. Pelag.*, lib. i, c. xxii, 40.

<sup>8</sup> *Ad Patres Syn. Milev.* 5, in 417.

<sup>9</sup> *Epist. 7, ad Ephis. per Picenum*, in 495.

<sup>10</sup> *De Eccl. Dogm.* c. 22, in 495.

approved at the council of Mâcon in 585,<sup>11</sup> at the council of Toledo in 675,<sup>12</sup> and by the Gelasian Sacramentary.<sup>13</sup> In some cases, infants were even forbidden to eat food or suck milk between their baptism and their first communion.<sup>14</sup>

References to infant and child participation in the Lord's Supper continue in the west throughout the period of Charlemagne and following. But with the emergence of the doctrine of transubstantiation and the doctrine of concomitance (i.e., that Christ is present entirely under either kind), this ancient practice was soon discontinued. The fear that infants and children might spill the wine and thereby profane the actual body and blood of the Lord appears to have been the primary reason for this discontinuance.<sup>15</sup> This gradual abrogation of communion under two kinds led pope Paschalis the Second, in the 12th century, to emphasize in a letter to Pontius, abbot of Cluny: "As Christ communicated bread and wine, each by itself, and it ever had been so observed in the church, it ever should be so done in the future, save in the case of infants and of the sick, who as a general thing, could not eat bread."<sup>16</sup> This letter shows that infants were accustomed at that time, in the western church at least, to partake only of wine in the Lord's Supper, since it was harder for them to eat the bread.<sup>17</sup> Thus when the cup was

<sup>11</sup> Can. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Can. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Lib. 1, n. 75.

<sup>14</sup> *Ordo Romanus*, 730.

<sup>15</sup> Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. vi, tr. by William McGilchrist, William and Norgue, Covent Garden, London 1899, p. 240; Augustus Neander, *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, vol. 4, Boston, 1871, pp. 341ff. Other reasons for withdrawing the cup were hygienic and out of fear of disease. It should also be remembered that removal of the cup from the laity enhanced the dignity of the priest at a time in which the Roman Catholic Church was seeking an individuality of its own after the split with the Orthodox Church in 1054.

<sup>16</sup> Harduin, *com. cil.*, t. vi, p. ii, f. 1796 (cited in Neander, *op. cit.*, p. 345).

<sup>17</sup> Charles Crawford, "Infant Communion: Past Tradition and Present Practice," *Theological Studies*, vol. 31, Baltimore, 1970, pp. 527ff; Joseph A. Jungmann, *Missarum sollemnia*, vol. 3, Aubier, Paris, 1956, pp. 342-343; ("Kinderkommunia," *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 6, 1961, col. 154); J. Baumgärtler, *Die Erstkommunion*, Kösel & Pustet, Munich, 1929, pp. 87-89, 102, and 124ff; E. Dublanchy, "Communion

withdrawn from infants, it *ipso facto* meant the cessation of any involvement in the Lord's Supper as well.<sup>18</sup> Additional justification given for this discontinuance was that infants received all that was necessary for salvation in baptism, and that little children, therefore, were not in danger of losing their salvation if they waited until the age of discretion before partaking of the eucharist, at which time they would eat with more respect and understanding.<sup>19</sup>

Not everyone, however, was in favor of withdrawing the cup from the laity. The Hussites, among others, sought for a long time to restore the cup. Less well known, perhaps, is that the Hussites also pleaded for the restoration of infant participation in the Lord's Supper.<sup>20</sup> At the time of the Reformation, however, when the cup actually was restored to the laity, the Lord's Supper continued to be kept from infants and children. The Anabaptists were quick to point to what they believed was an inconsistency on the part of the pedobaptist reformers in this exclusion. They argued that if infants had a right to baptism on the basis of their former right to circumcision, why shouldn't they also have a right to the Lord's Supper on the basis of their former right to the Passover Feast? Pedobaptist reformers, although willing to admit that the ancient church allowed infants and children to observe the Lord's Supper,<sup>21</sup> mostly followed

eucharistique (sous les deux espèces)", *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, vol. 3, 1908, col. 563-564.

<sup>18</sup> Crawford, *op. cit.*, pp. 529ff; Paul K. Jewett, "Infant Baptism and Confirmation," syllabus, 1960, pp. 26-27.

<sup>19</sup> Fourth Ecumenical council of the Lateran, 1215; Council of Bordeaux, 1255, can. 5; Council of Trent, can. 4; Fulgentius, in the 9th century, claimed that Augustine never taught the necessity of eating the Lord's Supper as a means of salvation for an infant, but only the necessity of infant baptism (see the note of the Benedictine editors on Aug. to Recc. Mer. lib. i. c. 20, para. 26.)

<sup>20</sup> Council of Basel, 1438.

<sup>21</sup> Some Protestant pedobaptists have doubted if the practice of infant participation in the Lord's Supper really was so widespread in the early church; see: Samuel Miller, *Infant Baptism, Scriptural and Reasonable*, Philadelphia, 1876, pp. 45-46; The Rev. Daniel Waterland, "An Enquiry Concerning Infant Communion," *The Works of . . .*, vol. 2, Oxford, 1853, pp. 41-72. Waterland argues, first, that Augustine nowhere says baptized infants must eat the Lord's Supper in order to have eternal life, nor, second, should he, since he argues in many places that infants have par-

Zwingli and Calvin in excluding infants and children from the Supper.<sup>22</sup>

taken already of the body and blood of the Lord in their baptism, and thus already have the eternal life referred to in John 6:53. They need not go to the Lord's Supper to receive eternal life again if they have received it already in their baptism. But Waterland cannot reasonably escape the clear statements of Augustine who directly states that he is speaking not of the "sacrament of the laver, but concerning the sacrament of His own holy table" (end of ch. 26) when referring to John 6:53 and its relationship to infants (beg. ch. 27) in *De Peccat. Mer. lib. i. c. xx*, chs. 26, 27 (Augustine, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 1st Series, vol. v, ed. Philip Schaff, The Christian Literature Co., New York, 1887, p. 25).

<sup>22</sup> Ulrich Zwingli, *Refutation of the Baptist Tricks (Opera*, ed. Schuler and Schulthess, III, 432; tr. *Selected Works*, ed. S. M. Jackson, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1972, p. 173); John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4:16:30; the Westminster Larger Catechism, Q. 177. Among some of the dissenters from this Protestant exclusion of infants and children from the table are: Wolfgangus Musculus, *Commonplaces of Christian Religion*, London, 1800, Fol. 318G-319G; Bishop Bedell, Usher's Letters, No. 163, (1700's) pp. 442, 445; James Pierce, *An Essay in Favour of the Ancient Practice of Giving the Eucharist to Children*, Exon, 1728 (to which Waterland's article, *op. cit.*, was specifically addressed); Charles E. Jefferson, at the International Congregational Council of Boston, 1899 (according to Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology*, Judson Press, Valley Forge, p. 953). Bishop Jeremy Taylor, however, declared himself "for infant communion" (Jewett, *op. cit.*, p. 223-224) only in that he considered it lawful but not necessary, and that therefore "the present practice of the church is to be our rule and measure of peace" (*op. cit.*, p. 508). More recently dissenters from the common Protestant and Roman Catholic practice of exclusion may be found in the Standing Liturgical Commission of the Episcopal Church, "Holy Baptism with the laying-on-of-hands and Holy Communion," *Prayer Book Studies 18: On Baptism and Confirmation*, Church Pension Fund, New York, 1970; and Crawford, *op. cit.*, who is disposed toward restoring the Lord's Supper to infants especially since the Second Vatican Council has allowed the laity to receive communion under both species in certain specific cases. Crawford, who believes that the removal of the cup from the laity was the original reason for the church discontinuing infant observance of the eucharist, urges that with the gradual restoral of the cup to the laity in the Catholic Church today, a restoral which he believes should be broadened (p. 534, f. 45), there should also be a restoral of communion to the baptized infants of the church. There has been an abundance of recent writing on this whole subject of infant inclusion in the eucharist; see: L. Andrieux, *La première communion*, Paris, 1911; F. X. Bauer, "Zur Geschichte der feier. Kindererskommunion," *Theologie und*

It is true that the rationale usually given in the early church for infant inclusion in the Supper was that eternal life was thereby secured on the basis of John 6:53. But was this rationale originally responsible for introducing the Supper to infants, or was it a distorted<sup>23</sup> view later imposed upon what was an original apostolic practice? The same question may be asked of infant baptism. Was the doctrine of baptismal regeneration the rationale for infant baptism in the early church, or was it a distorted view later placed upon what was an apostolic practice? Church history has not been able to settle these questions. Earlier documentation is needed.

This article, however, has not been written simply to review a curious bit of doctrinal history. Its main purpose is twofold. First, it is to show from Scripture that pedobaptists are indeed guilty of the baptist charge of inconsistency in not allowing their baptized infants and children to participate in the Lord's Supper.<sup>24</sup> By the word "infant" this article will mean those who are physically capable of eating the Lord's Supper. Thus we are not

*Glaube*, vol. 25, 1933, pp. 563-590; J. Baumgärtler, *Die Erstkommunion*, Munich, 1929; R. T. Beckwith, "The Age of Admission to Communion," *The Churchman*, v. 85, London, 1971, pp. 13ff; J. B. Bossuet, *Traité de la communion sous les deux espèces*, 1682; P. Browe, "Die Taufkommunion," *Die Pflichtkommunion im Mittelalter*, Münster, 1940, pp. 129-142; C. O. Buchanan, "An Evangelical Looks at Sacramental Initiation," *Faith and Unity*, May, 1968; F. Gillmann, "Die anni discretionis," *Archiv für katholisches Kirchenrecht*, vol. 108, 1928, pp. 556-617; vol. 110, 1930, pp. 187-192. H. A. Heiser, *Die Kinderkommunion in Geist der Kirche*, 3 vols., Vienna, 1926-32; P. Hellbernd, *Die Erstkommunion der Kinder in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Vecktor, 1954; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Confirmation In the Church Today*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1973, pp. 40-45; A. G. Martimort, *L'Eglise en prière*, Desclée, Paris, 1961; Burkhard Neunheuser, *Baptism and Confirmation*. Herder and Herder, New York, 1964; J. M. R. Tillard, *The Eucharist*, Alba House, Staten Island, 1967.

<sup>23</sup> It is "distorted" because it contradicts biblical teaching on the efficacy of the sacraments. This judgment will be assumed, though, instead of proven because of the article's space limitations. But saving grace is not administered in some *ex opere operato* fashion in the giving of the sacraments.

<sup>24</sup> My views on this matter were largely stimulated by the baptist apologist, Dr. Paul Jewett, in "Infant Baptism and Confirmation," syllabus, 1960, pp. 25-28; 213-225. See also: David Kingdon, *Children of Abraham*, Carey Publications Ltd., Foxton, England, 1973, pp. 48, f5; 71.

advocating a strict return to the ancient practices of forcing food and wine down the throat of a child, or of intinction. By "children" it will mean those youngsters who have not yet reached an "age of discernment."<sup>25</sup> And so, the word "adult," will refer to those who have reached the age of discernment, an age which will vary from person to person. A major purpose of this article will be accomplished, therefore, when it is shown that the practice of infant participation in the Lord's Supper rests upon three biblical truths: (1) the analogy between the Lord's Supper and the Passover Feast; (2) the analogy between the Lord's Supper and other Old Testament sacrificial feasts; and finally (3) infant membership in the New Testament visible church. The second major purpose of this article is to foster ecumenical discussion. The same issues that arise in the debate over infant and child observance of the Lord's Supper appear also in the debate over infant baptism. Perhaps approaching some of these similar issues from a fresh perspective will help contribute in some small way to resolving the disagreement over infant baptism, a disagreement which separates literally millions of baptists and pedobaptists from a closer visible communion with one another.

*The analogy between the Lord's Supper and the Passover Feast.*

The first argument for the participation of baptized infants and children in the Lord's Supper is based on the analogy between the Lord's Supper and the Passover Feast. This argument, briefly alluded to before, can now be stated more fully: that since infant and child members of the Old Testament visible church were commanded by God to eat the Passover Feast if physically capable — a commandment only temporarily lifted when Israel entered the land of Canaan and had to make pilgrimages to the place which God chose for his name to dwell — and since the Lord's Supper has now taken the place of the Passover Feast in the New Testament visible church and is essentially the same in meaning as the Passover Feast, infant and child members of the New Testament visible church are therefore commanded by God to eat the Lord's Supper if physically capable, for we are

<sup>25</sup> Age of discernment will be defined more clearly later.

not to add to nor take away from God's commandments concerning worship in his church (Deut. 12:32).

Pedobaptists recognize the at least formal similarity between this argument and their own argument for infant baptism. They argue generally in this way: that since God commanded infant members of the Old Testament visible church to be circumcised — a commandment never abrogated except for an uncertain reason during Israel's wilderness journey (Josh. 5:2ff), and since baptism has now taken the place of circumcision and is essentially the same in meaning as circumcision, infant members of the New Testament visible church are therefore commanded by God to be baptized, for we may not take away from God's commandments. Pedobaptists, on the other hand, disagree with the substance of the argument for infant inclusion in the Supper. Among other things, they are usually unwilling to admit that there is any biblical evidence for infant participation in the Passover Feast. According to John Murray, for instance: "The fallacy of this kind of argument, as far as the passover is concerned, resides in the assumption that little infants partook of the passover. There is no evidence that this was the case."<sup>26</sup>

*Evidence for infant and child observance of the first Passover meal.*

In Exodus 12:3 the Lord says that a lamb should be taken for each household, verse 4 adding that a lamb should be taken "according to the number of persons" in each household. Are infants and children physically capable of eating the meal counted among these persons? Yes, they are, because verse 4 becomes even more precise: "each one according to the mouth of his eating," *אִישׁ לְפִי אֹכְלוֹ*. Note that the Lord does not say, "according to the mouth of his faith" but "according to the mouth of his eating," implying that the requisite ability be physical eating and not spiritual belief and confession.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> John Murray, *Christian Baptism*, The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia, 1970, p. 77. Herbert S. Bird is more cautious and speaks of the age at which infants observed the Passover Feast as being "not so easy of determination" in "Professor Jewett on Baptism," *Westminster Theological Journal*, vol. 31, 1969, p. 160.

<sup>27</sup> See Jewett, *op. cit.*, p. 221; Certainly spiritual feeding should have taken place for adults as well, as we shall see later in this article.

The identical phrase, "each one according to the mouth of his eating," appears in the Old Testament in only one other context, in Exodus 16, where it is used three times to refer to the apportioning of the manna to each household (vss. 16, 18, and 21). In this context, the phrase certainly included infants and small children who were physically capable of eating the manna, for there was nothing else for them to eat. If the manna had not been apportioned to them, where would they have gone for food? And so why should not the same phrase, used by the same writer, have the same meaning when referring to the same act of apportioning food to households, that is, to mean the mere physical capability of eating? Was some kind of faith expected of infants and children on the basis of the phrase "according to the mouth of his eating," before they could eat the manna? Obviously not! Why then, on the basis of the same phrase, should we expect faith to have been required of infants and children before they could eat the Passover lamb? Hence in Exodus 12:3-4, and especially in the phrase "according to the mouth of his eating," clear and unambiguous evidence is found for infant participation in the Passover Feast. To say that infants and children did not so participate is tantamount to saying they were not allowed to eat the manna, a patent absurdity.

Thus physical capability of eating was the only requisite for inclusion of Israelite babes and children in the Passover Feast, and that is why the Lord's Supper should now be given only to baptized infants and children naturally capable of eating it. It should not be forced down their throats, or given under one kind only, or administered by intinction.<sup>28</sup> Thus the Lord's Supper is not for baptized children in their earliest infancy, and with this understanding Murray's argument is to no effect when he says concerning the passover that: "the diet was hardly suitable for infants."<sup>29</sup> Murray contends that, "Baptism is wash-

<sup>28</sup> The service of "Holy Baptism with the laying on of hands and Holy Communion" recommended by the Standing Liturgical Committee of the Episcopal Church of America in Prayer Book Studies 18 *On Baptism and Confirmation*, Church Passion Fund, New York, 1970, would also have to be rejected for this reason. There are certainly other legitimate reasons as well for rejecting such a service; see Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Confirmation in the Church Today*, William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, 1973.

<sup>29</sup> Murray, *Christian Baptism*, p. 77.



ing with water, something necessary and appropriate to the infant in the earliest stages of life. There is nothing in the element or the action incongruous with earliest infancy."<sup>30</sup> He then goes on to argue that partaking of bread and wine is incongruous with early infancy,<sup>31</sup> and should not therefore be given to the infant. Murray is certainly correct when he speaks of "early" infancy,<sup>32</sup> but those in "later" infancy and early childhood are quite capable of eating bread and drinking wine; it is as natural an activity for them as bathing with water is for those in early infancy. Thus there is nothing naturally inappropriate about those in later infancy and early childhood eating bread and drinking wine.

Some might argue that since weaning usually ended for Israelite children at the age of three,<sup>33</sup> at which time the child was no longer an infant and would be able to discern the spiritual meaning of the Passover, circumcised children therefore were not allowed to eat the Passover until they had reached an age of discernment. This argument, however, is very weak since it is most unlikely that a child normally had nothing but milk for the first three years of his life. In "early" infancy, it is true that a child would normally receive nothing but milk, which is why Paul speaks of the Corinthians as "babes in Christ" to whom he gave "milk to drink, not solid foods" for they "were not yet able" to receive it.<sup>34</sup> But there is such a thing as a nursing baby eating solid foods. Infants in "later" infancy are quite capable of eating and drinking more than just milk. Thus we read in Lamentations of Jeremiah's grief: "Because child (עוֹלֵל) and suckling (יֹנֵק) faint in the city's open places. To their mothers they say, 'Where is corn and wine'; as they faint like those wounded in the city's open places, as their life is poured out on the bosom of their mothers."<sup>35</sup>

This passage uses child (עוֹלֵל) and suckling (יֹנֵק) synonymously, for the עוֹלֵל as well as the יֹנֵק have their lives poured

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78-79.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>33</sup> 2 Maccabees 7:28.

<sup>34</sup> I Cor. 3:1-2.

<sup>35</sup> Lamentations 2:11, 12.

out on the bosom of their mothers.<sup>36</sup> They both ask for corn and wine in verse 12, which indicates that sucklings ate solids before they were weaned and thus would have also been able to eat a portion of the Passover lamb.

Hence the age of weaning is no argument against infants and children eating the Lord's Supper before an age of discernment. It should come as no surprise therefore that there were those physically capable of eating solids even though not weaned who would certainly have been embraced in the Lord's command to the Israelite families to eat the Passover, "each man according to the mouth of his eating." There is additional evidence from Exodus 12, however, for infant participation in the Passover Feast. The Israelite congregation included infants and children. In Joel 2:16, for instance, God calls out to the Israelites to "gather the people, sanctify the congregation (קָהַל), assemble the elders, *gather the children and nursing infants.*"<sup>37</sup> When, therefore, the Lord commands in Exodus 12:47 that "all the congregation (עַם) <sup>38</sup> of Israel are to celebrate this," he is commanding the Israelite infants and children as members of the Israelite congregation to celebrate the Passover meal, if physically capable.

But in spite of this clear evidence from Exodus 12 that infants partook of the Passover Feast, some have argued on the basis of Exodus 12:26-27 to the contrary: "And it will come about when your children will say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?' that you will say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice to the Lord who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes'" (vv. 26 and 27).

<sup>36</sup> The meaning of the word עוֹלֵל must be understood from its context, for in Job 3:16 it refers to a stillborn. If Jeremiah is referring in vs. 12 only to weaned children then why does he speak of them as dying on their mother's bosom? But if he is speaking of sucklings, they must be at an age at which they are able to eat corn and drink wine. Calvin begs the point when he says in his commentary that wine is not allowed to infants, *Calvin's Commentaries, Jeremiah*, vol. V, p. 364. He also falsely assumes that sucklings could not ask, "where is corn and wine?" If children were nursed to the age of three, why couldn't they have asked this question at the ages of 1, 2, or 3? cf. Lam. 4:4 where the עוֹלֵל cry out for bread.

<sup>37</sup> See Gen. 17 and Deut. 29:11.

<sup>38</sup> See Ex. 12:6 where קָהַל and עַם are used to refer to the same group of people.

It is reasoned that if children asked questions about the Passover Feast, and if parents were to explain to them its spiritual meaning, only those who had reached an age of discernment were therefore able to partake of it. Thus Calvin says that "the Passover, the place of which has been taken by the Supper, did not admit all guests indiscriminately, but was duly eaten only by those who were old enough to be able to inquire into its meaning (Ex. 12:26)."<sup>39</sup>

This argument rests upon a false step in reasoning. Why conclude from an ability to inquire by some the necessity to inquire by all? A child's inquiry concerning the meaning of the Passover meal was never meant to be taken as a requirement for participation, but as an opportunity for instruction.<sup>40</sup> Once a child reached an age of discernment, he was to be instructed in the spiritual meaning of the Passover feast in which he had participated for years.

A similar situation is described in Deuteronomy 6 where Moses gave the following charge to the Israelite people: "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up . . .," and so on (Deut. 6:6-7). No one would doubt that Moses is teaching here that parents are to discipline and instruct their children in the ways of the Lord, just as Paul commanded the Ephesians, "fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). But in the same context, Moses says, "When your son asks you in time to come, saying 'What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean which the Lord commanded you?,' then you shall say to your son, 'We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt; and the Lord brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand . . .'" and so on (Deut. 6:20-21; cf. vv. 22-25). Are we to conclude from the ability of some sons to ask questions about the testimonies and statutes of the Lord, the necessity for all of them to do so before disciplining them in these statutes?

<sup>39</sup> John Calvin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 1353; see also: A. A. Hodge, *Outline of Theology*, Eerdmans, 1949, p. 624; Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>40</sup> Jewett, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

Were children required to understand the spiritual significance of their obedience before being trained? Obviously not! Children ought to be trained to obey their parents (the fifth commandment), for instance, regardless of their spiritual grasp of the meaning of salvation. When they reach an age of discernment, however, their questions afford an opportunity for instructing them in the redemptive significance of their obedience in previous years.<sup>41</sup>

It is the same in eating the Passover. Infants were allowed to eat the Passover before reaching an age of discernment (Ex. 12:3, 4, 47). When they did reach that age and began asking questions about the Passover (Ex. 12:26, 27), opportunity was given to instruct them in the spiritual meaning of that which they had eaten in previous years. It should be the same also for infant and child involvement in the Lord's Supper today.

*Evidence that infants and children had a right to observe the subsequent Passover meals.*

Although some pedobaptists might be willing to admit that infants and children partook of the first Passover meal in Egypt, they would be less willing to acknowledge that they also partook of subsequent Passover meals. One line of reasoning might be that on the basis of Deuteronomy 16:16 only male adults<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Which is not to say that parents must wait for their children to ask questions before instructing them in this redemptive significance.

<sup>42</sup> The word for "male" in Deuteronomy 16:16 is זָכוֹר. It is closely related to the word זָכוֹר, the more generally used word for "male," which applies to children as well as adults. Kingdon implies that when Moses speaks of "all" males in verse 16, he speaks of children as well as adults (*op. cit.*, p. 71). This interpretation would certainly strengthen the argument in favor of continued inclusion of infants and children in the subsequent Passover feasts. But when Deut. 20:13 speaks of "all the males" (זָכוֹר) it refers only to the adult males (cf. vs. 14). Gen. 34:25 also refers only to adults when it speaks of "all the males" זָכוֹר, (cf. vs. 29). Calvin interprets זָכוֹר in this context to mean adult males of twenty years and older (cf. Num. 1:2, 3 *Commentaries On the Four Last Books of Moses*, vol. II, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, p. 47). The reason why it is probably male adults who are referred to here as those required to celebrate the Passover each year is because they were the only ones able to present the sacrifice of the lamb. In Number 9, if the male had defiled himself or was on a distant trip, the Lord did not say, "have

were later required to celebrate the Passover at the place of God's choosing. Christ himself, it would be argued, did not go up to the Passover until he was twelve (Lk. 2:42).

Now it should be understood that this new commandment that only male adults were required to celebrate the Passover feast, had nothing to do with whether or not a child was able to discern the spiritual meaning of the meal. It was the result rather of making the Passover feast conform to the new form of worship centering around the Tabernacle (Deut. 12:5-7). Sacrifices were no longer allowed except at the place of God's choosing. Thus when Israel entered the land of Canaan, a pilgrimage had to be made to eat the Passover. Since it was difficult for the poor, the weak, the pregnant, etc., to make this journey, only male adults had to go.

Even though the rest of the family was not required to celebrate the Passover each year, they had the right and privilege to attend, if physically capable. Moses, in Deuteronomy 16:16, required that all male adults appear each year not only for the Passover feast, but also for the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Booths. Were women and children excluded from these other two feasts, since only males had to appear for them? Certainly not! The preceding verses speak of the celebrants as being "your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst, in the place where the Lord chooses to establish his name" (16:11, 14). Luke records that Christ's *parents* used to go to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover (Lk. 2:41). Thus when it says "all your males" shall celebrate the Passover Feast, women, children, and infants were not excluded from the Feast, but rather had the option and privilege of celebrating the Feast as well. They were simply not required to do so.

Scripture indicates that the Passover was celebrated regularly throughout Israel's history, in the time of the Judges (2 Kg. 23:22), in the days of Samuel (2 Ch. 35:18), and in the days of Solomon (2 Ch. 16:5, 6). Even in the time of Christ, the Passover was regularly celebrated (Lk. 2:41). The ques-

the wife offer the sacrifice." The Lord allowed instead for the men (W'N) to offer their Passover sacrifices a month later.

tion then arises: was Christ, as an infant and child, able to go to the Passover feast with his parents each year or was he only allowed to go beginning at the age of 12? By the time of Christ, were only the older children allowed to attend the feast? Luke 2:42 is ambiguous. All it says is that when Christ was at the age of 12, he went up to the feast with his parents. He is not mentioned specifically in verse 41 as going to Jerusalem with his parents each year, but this is no reason why it must be assumed he began going at the age of 12 just because this is when he is first explicitly mentioned as going. I Samuel 1:3 says of Elkanah: "Now this man would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh." Elkanah alone is mentioned in this verse but it is apparent that he was referred to in a representative way as the head of his family — all of whom went with him yearly to Shiloh. The same could be true in Luke 2:41; for in Luke's mentioning that Christ's parents went up yearly he could be referring to them as representatives of the whole family, who also went up with them.

Was it possible for infants and children to eat the Passover at the time of Christ? According to a section of the Gemara<sup>43</sup> under Sukkah 42b: "If a child can eat an olive size of roast meat, the Paschal lamb may be slaughtered on his behalf, as it is said,

According to the eating of every man.'"<sup>44</sup> This passage of the Talmud makes physical ability to eat a small portion of meat the only requirement for the participation of Israelite children in the Passover meal. An earlier reference still is the Mishna text which says: "Our Rabbis taught: 'a lamb for a household': this teaches that a man can bring (a lamb) and slaughter (it) on behalf of his sons and daughters, if *minors*<sup>45</sup> . . . whether with

<sup>43</sup> The Gemara was written roughly between 200–350 A.D.

<sup>44</sup> "An olive size of roast meat" refers to the minimum quantity of meat to be apportioned to any member of a company, not to the size of a piece of meat a person can put in his mouth. The Mishna, compiled around 200 A.D., makes this clear: "One may always register for it (i.e. the slaughtered lamb) as long as there is as much as an olive therein for each one (registered)": Pesahim 89a. Pesahim 91a also says, "One may not slaughter the passover-offering for a single person . . . And even a company of a hundred who cannot eat as much as an olive (jointly), one may not kill for them."

<sup>45</sup> Probably anywhere under 13, the age at which a child became subject to the commandments (Aboth 5:21).

their consent or without it."<sup>46</sup> That minors could partake of the Passover feast is not even the issue here; it is simply assumed that they can. These texts may have been written long after the time of Christ, but they do represent ancient Jewish tradition which could easily go back even to before the time of Christ. There is no dispute over this issue recorded in the Talmud, which would surely be expected if infants and children were suddenly allowed to partake of perhaps Israel's most sacred meal after being excluded from it for centuries.

Why then would Luke mention Christ's going up to the Passover at the age of 12, if he had gone up before? One reason, of course, is because of his discourse with the teachers at the Temple. But another reason might be to show that Christ fulfilled the requirement of Deuteronomy 16:16 for every male adult to celebrate each year the Passover in the place of God's choosing. At a certain age, the Jewish male became responsible to God for observing this ordinance of the covenant. The Book of Jubilees (2nd century B.C.) records 20 to be the year of accountability,<sup>47</sup> but Aboth 5:21 makes 13 the age at which children become subject to commandments of this kind. Thirteen was probably the age at the time of Christ. But if 13 was the age of accountability, why is Christ mentioned as having gone up at the age of 12? It may be because Luke wanted to show that Christ's parents were training their son in observing the fast connected with the Passover,<sup>48</sup> a kind of training Yoma 82a says should be done a year or two beforehand.<sup>49</sup> Thus just as Christ was circumcised at the proper time on the eighth day according to the law (Lk. 2:21), and redeemed by his parents at the proper time according to the law (Lk. 2:22f), even so he

<sup>46</sup> Pesahim 88a.

<sup>47</sup> They became accountable to God to observe certain civil and ceremonial ordinances of the Jewish law, which does not mean God did not hold them accountable for breaking his moral law before that age. It was tremendously important for an adult to observe the Passover, for he would otherwise have been liable to a cutting off from his people (Num. 9:13), which was not true of the infant and child.

<sup>48</sup> Pesahim 99b.

<sup>49</sup> Yoma 82 refers specifically to the day of Atonement, but also speaks in a general way of "religious observances."

went up with his parents to eat the Passover at the proper time (when he became an adult) according to the law.<sup>50</sup>

Under the new covenant, however, believers and their children do not have to make long pilgrimages to Jerusalem to eat the Lord's Supper. The hour now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth (Jn. 4:23). No longer do we look to an earthly temple, but to a spiritual, heavenly one, of which the earthly was a shadow and copy: to "the *true* tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man" (Heb. 8:2). That only male adults were required to eat the Passover was a temporary modification of its original institution because of geographical limitations. But these limitations are now removed under the new covenant; long pilgrimages do not have to be made, the lame and weak can partake. If it is maintained that infant and child observance of the Lord's Supper is optional today because of Deuteronomy 16:16, woman attendance must also be viewed as optional. But who would want to say that attendance at the Lord's Supper is optional for Christian women? Hence the original command for the *whole congregation* to observe the Passover (Ex. 12:47) should be obeyed, since the special conditions of Deuteronomy 12 and 16:16 no longer prevail.

And yet there is another line of reasoning which might acknowledge that infants and children ate the first Passover meal, but not subsequent ones. It is based upon the claim that the Egyptian Passover and the following ones are essentially different in significance: one being redemptive and the other being simply a memorial of that redemption. The next section of this article will attempt to show that there is no such basic difference, and that there is no reason, therefore, to assume that what infants and children had a right to from the beginning would have been removed from them.

*The Lord's Supper replaces the Passover meal and is essentially the same in meaning as the Passover Feast.*

The propitiation for sins accomplished through a sacrifice of atonement is the key to understanding this underlying unity

<sup>50</sup> The phrase: "according to the custom of the feast" (Lk. 2:42) therefore, could refer either to the law of going to the place of God's choice to celebrate the Passover, or to the requirement of going at the age when one becomes an adult, or to both (Deut. 16:16).



between the first Passover meal, the later Passover meals, and the Lord's Supper. This propitiation was always accomplished prior to the Passover meals through the sacrifice of the lambs.<sup>51</sup> The Passover meals, therefore, were sacrificial meals because that which was eaten had been sacrificed. Through the one sufficient death of Christ on the cross, propitiation for the sins of God's people has been fully accomplished. But in eating the bread and drinking the wine, the church does not feed upon the actually sacrificed body and blood of Christ; it feeds rather upon that which signifies Christ's sacrificed body and blood. It may therefore be called a sacrificial meal, not because a sacrifice is made during the meal, nor because Christ's sacrificed body is physically present in some sense, but because participants consume the bread and wine which signify Christ's sacrificed body and blood.<sup>52</sup> Hence, the basic unity between the Egyptian Passover meal, subsequent Passover meals, and the Lord's Supper is simply that they are sacrificial meals.

The Passovers following the first Passover in Egypt were more than just memorial feasts because lambs continued to be slaughtered as offerings. This annual slaughter of a lamb is "expressly termed 'a sacrifice,' Exodus 12:27; 23:18; 34:25. It was slaughtered in holy places, Deuteronomy 16:5; and after the sanctuary had been erected, its blood was sprinkled and its fat burnt on the altar, 2 Chronicles 30:16, 17; 35:11."<sup>53</sup> Thus the continued Passover feasts were sacrificial as well as memorial ones.

This Passover sacrifice of lambs, in the original as well as subsequent Passovers, was essentially a sacrifice of atonement for the forgiveness of sins. God wanted the Israelites to know that the redemption from the death of their first-born and from the land of Egypt was not granted to them because of their own supposed goodness, but because of his mercy in forgiving their sins. According to Hengstenberg:

That is was essentially a sacrifice of atonement, appears from

<sup>51</sup> The first Lord's Supper is unique in this sense because it preceded Christ's propitiatory death on the cross.

<sup>52</sup> See H. Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia, 1962, pp. 418-443 for further understanding of the Lord's Supper as this kind of sacrificial meal.

<sup>53</sup> E. W. Hengstenberg, *History of the Kingdom of God*, vol. 3, Mack Publishing Company, Cherry Hill, N.J., 1871, (reprint 1972), p. 278.

Ex. 12:12, 13, 23. Israel was to be spared in the divine punishment which broke forth over Egypt — the death of the first-born. But lest they should ascribe this exemption to their own merit, that it might not lead them to arrogance but gratitude, the deliverance was made dependent on the presentation of an offering of atonement. Whoever then, or at any time, should slaughter the paschal lamb, made a symbolical<sup>54</sup> confession that he also deserved to be an object of divine wrath, but that he hoped to be released from its effect by the divine grace which accepts a substitute. Where there is a continued sacrifice, offered in faith, there must also be a continued atonement . . .<sup>55</sup>

The sparing of the first-born and the deliverance from Egypt were temporal blessings resulting from the propitiatory sacrifice of the lambs. This important perspective is admirably argued by Hengstenberg:

The Passover must not be placed in too direct connection with the sparing of the first born. In harmony with its name redemption, and then atonement — or reconciliation — offering, it has to do first of all only with atonement, and the forgiveness of sins which is based on it. But where sin has disappeared, there can no longer be any punishment for sin. Again, there is no doubt that the Passover stands in a certain relation to the exodus from Egypt. But here also the connection must not be made too direct. That the Lord led His people with a strong hand out of Egypt, from the house of bondage, was only a consequence of an issue of the fundamental benefit He had conferred on them by the institution of the passover-offering for atonement and forgiveness of sins.<sup>56</sup>

And so, the original Passover in Egypt was meant to be primarily a covering of the moral guilt and sins of the Israelites and only as a consequence of this a passing over of the first-born. The sacrifice of the lambs was meant to provide redemption from sin as well as temporal redemption from the death of the first-born and from the land of Egypt.

In one sense, therefore, it is true that the continuing Passover meals were memorials of redemption once-accomplished. But they were memorials of the temporal redemption accomplished, not of the continuing redemption from sin which was to be

<sup>54</sup> The use of the word "symbolical" by Hengstenberg here may be a poor one.

<sup>55</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 279.

<sup>56</sup> *Idem.*

accomplished through the sacrifice of lambs each year. These continued sacrifices were to help maintain, not acquire, the temporal blessings of the first Passover. If redemption from sin was supposed to be achieved yearly through the sacrifice of the lambs, and if this redemption from sin was also the essential significance of the first Passover, infants and children cannot be said to have been denied the right to the yearly Passover meals because they were different in essential meaning from the first Passover meal, or because one was redemptive and the other simply memorial of that redemption accomplished.

This understanding of the Passover in Egypt and subsequent ones might be questioned because of the relationship it establishes between redemption from sin and redemption from God's temporal punishments. Probably not every Israelite repented of his sins and trusted in the blood of the lambs for forgiveness. Infants and children certainly could not. Why then were they all blessed with the relief from God's temporal punishment, if some of them had not received forgiveness of sins, which was supposed to be the basis for their temporal redemption? The study of Isaiah 1 later in this article will make clear that some *ex opere operato* working of grace cannot be presumed. And yet, it must be admitted that only the believing Israelites and their elect children had a right to the gift of temporal redemption from Egypt if that redemption was supposed to be based on the forgiveness of sins. The explanation for the temporal redemption of all the Israelites, therefore, must lie partially at least in God's desire to honor his name (Ps. 106:6-12, esp. v. 8) and in his longsuffering (Ex. 34:6-9; Num. 14:18-19; Acts 13:18; Jer. 7:21-29; Rom. 9:22-24). Throughout the history of God's dealing with his people, he has given them many temporal blessings. These temporal blessings were enjoyed by the Israelites sometimes for many years, in spite of their idolatry and disobedience. But when he could stand it no longer, God punished them by taking away these earthly blessings, always however, leaving a remnant behind whom he eventually restored. This pattern, for instance, is seen repeatedly throughout the time of the Judges and more radically in the exile and return of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. Thus when God spared all the first-born and delivered all the Israelites from bondage in Egypt, he showed his longsuffering in not immediately punishing the

unbelief of some (or many) of the Israelites. God did, of course, punish many rebellious Israelites in the wilderness, a punishment which culminated in keeping all the people from inheriting the land of Canaan for forty years.<sup>57</sup> Many unbelieving Israelites therefore were given earthly blessings by their longsuffering God even though the reception and continuance of these blessings was to be based upon the forgiveness of their sins through their repentance and faith.

Thus the Passover meal was not only a memorial, but also a sacrificial meal involving the feeding upon lambs which had been offered to make atonement for the forgiveness of sins. This Passover meal was replaced in the new covenant by the Lord's Supper which was instituted by Christ while eating a Passover meal with his disciples on the night in which he was betrayed.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Thus the reverse is true: many believing Israelites suffered God's temporal curses even though they were supposed to receive temporal blessings for their repentance and faith. God often dealt with Israel corporately as well as individually, insofar as *temporal* blessing and cursing were concerned.

<sup>58</sup> It is difficult to see how anyone who believes in the inerrancy of the Bible can deny that the meal Christ had with his disciples on the night in which he was betrayed was a Passover meal. The Synoptic gospels are clear on this point: Mt. 26:17-19; Mk. 14:12-16; Lk. 22:7-16. There are a number of ways to reconcile these passages with what is said in John 18:28 about the Israelites eating the Passover on the following day. John 18:28 could refer to the eating of the feast of unleavened bread or to one of the sacrificial meals of that feast, rather than to the Passover Supper itself: see T. Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, III, Edinburgh, 1909, pp. 273-283; N. Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, London and Grand Rapids, 1950, pp. 649-670; and A. Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*, Grand Rapids, repr. 1972, pp. 389-401. Or there may have been a calendrical difference between the Synoptics and John. The Sadducees and the Pharisees differed in their view of the day upon which the Passover Supper was to be eaten. Jesus may have been following one calendar in eating the Passover Supper on the night in which he was betrayed, whereas the Temple authorities may have been following another calendar which called for eating the Passover Supper on the following day. In recording events, the synoptic authors followed the calendar Jesus used and John followed the calendar the Temple authorities used: see L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, Grand Rapids, 1971, pp. 774-786. Whichever one of these harmonizations is correct, and they seem to be the two most likely ones proposed so far, Jesus was eating what was to him the Passover Supper on the night in which he was betrayed and this is the main point so far as this article is concerned. For further reading on this issue see the bibliographies in the volumes referred to above.

There are several reasons for believing that the Lord's Supper has replaced the Passover meal. First, the Passover meal was directly transformed by Christ into a celebration of the Lord's Supper. The very elements of the Passover meal were invested with new meaning by Christ's words of institution: "Take, eat; this is my body" (Mt. 26:26; Mk. 14:22; Lk. 22:19), and "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is to be shed on behalf of many for forgiveness of sins" (Mt. 26:27-28; Mk. 14:24). Second, Jesus identifies<sup>59</sup> both the Passover and the Lord's Supper with the messianic banquet. The Bible speaks of a messianic banquet to be enjoyed by all Christ's true disciples when He comes a second time to completely establish His kingdom: Isaiah 25:6-8; Matthew 8:11, 22:1ff, 25:1ff; Luke 13:28, 22:30. Jesus identifies the Passover meal he is eating with his disciples and this messianic banquet in saying, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it, until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Lk. 22:15-16), and "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes" (Lk. 22:18). But he also identifies the Lord's Supper which he is instituting and the messianic banquet in saying: "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Mt. 26:29; cf vv. 27-28). If the messianic banquet fulfills both the Passover meal and the Lord's Supper, there must be a direct correspondence between the Passover meal and the Lord's Supper as well, and the Lord's Supper may therefore be said to replace the Passover meal. Third and finally, Christ's sacrifice on the cross fulfilled the Passover sacrifices, for Paul says, "Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed" (I Cor. 5:7). If the Lord's Supper is a feeding upon that which signifies the sacrificed Christ, and if the sacrificed Christ is, among other things, a Passover sacrifice (according to Paul), then the Lord's Supper is a feeding upon that which signifies a Passover sacrifice and should thus be considered a Passover meal. For these three reasons one must conclude that the Lord's Supper has replaced the Passover meal.

The question then becomes in what sense is the Lord's Supper

<sup>59</sup> The identification is one of fulfillment.

essentially the same in meaning as the Passover Feast. That common meaning lies in their both being sacrificial meals, in which participants feed upon what has been sacrificed as an atonement for the forgiveness of sins (Mt. 26:28). The efficacy of the Passover sacrifices however rested ultimately in the sacrifice of Christ, which they foreshadowed (I Cor. 5:7), for the "blood of bulls and goats, could not possibly take away sins" (Heb. 10:4) and therefore had to be repeated over and over (See Heb. 9:26). There is a basic double reference, therefore, in the Passover meal: one to animal sacrifices; the other to the "true" sacrifice (Jn. 4:23 and 14:6; See also Heb. 10:19,20). There is also a secondary double reference: one to deliverance from the death of the first-born and from the land of Egypt; the other to deliverance from bondage to sin, including ultimately freedom from the terrestrial aspect of God's curse (Rom. 8:22-23; Rev. 21:1ff); but deliverance in both cases rests upon the prior sacrifice of atonement and the forgiveness of sins obtainable therefrom.

The Lord's Supper is certainly more than a fulfillment of the paschal meal, but it is at least that, and the two meals are essentially the same in meaning. If then circumcised infants and children were commanded to eat the Passover meals if physically capable and if the Lord's Supper replaces and has essentially the same meaning as the Passover meals, why should not baptized infants and children be required as well to eat the Lord's Supper, if physically capable? A pedobaptist might agree to the premises of this argument, but reject the conclusion because of what Paul says in I Corinthians 11.

*Does I Corinthians 11 deny to infants and children a right to the Lord's Supper?*

Perhaps the most common argument by pedobaptists against the right of infants and children to eat at the Lord's Table is based on what Paul says in I Corinthians 11:28-29. Paul, they argue, requires all communicants to examine themselves and to discern the Lord's body, and since infants and children are not able either to examine themselves or to discern the Lord's body, they should not, therefore, be allowed to eat the Lord's Supper.

Indeed, they would be in danger of coming under God's judgment if they were to do so.<sup>60</sup>

The trouble with this argument is that its first premise is inaccurate, for there is nothing said in I Corinthians 11 which *necessitates* the application of Paul's requirements to infants and children. The crucial thing to understand about I Corinthians 11 in regard to infant and child participation in the Supper is not the meaning of such words as "remembrance" (vv. 24, 25) or "examine" (v. 28), or "judge" (v. 29). The important thing to determine is to whom these statements and warnings are specifically<sup>61</sup> addressed. If his specific audience includes infant and child members of the Corinthian church, as almost all the Protestant churches have assumed, they should certainly be excluded from the Lord's Supper; for infants and children are physically and intellectually incapable of remembering, examining, and discerning.<sup>62</sup> But should this be Paul's assumed audience?

A key to determining Paul's specific audience is to understand the range of application of such terms and phrases as "whoever" (vs. 27), "let a man" (vs. 28), "he who" (vs. 29), and "anyone" (vs. 34). In some contexts, these phrases are unlimited in application, and so our first inclination might be to say their range is unlimited in every context, including I Corinthians 11. But there are times when these phrases are not universally applied.

<sup>60</sup> See Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4:16:30, for a typical statement of this argument.

<sup>61</sup> A preacher may address his congregation by saying, "Husbands, love your wives . . .," and although he is speaking to the whole congregation, his *specific* audience is husbands.

<sup>62</sup> There is an important distinction between incapability as the result of the creation, which is physical, mobile, verbal, mental, etc., and incapability as the result of the fall, which is moral. The incapability considered here is that which results from the nature of God's creation. When they do become capable (by creation) of remembering, examining, and discerning, children have reached what this article has termed an "age of discernment." This age will vary with each child, and the parents are perhaps the best judges of when it is reached. To say that there is an age of discernment, however, is not to say that there is also an age of responsibility at which children become responsible for the sinful nature with which they were born (Eph. 2:3; Ps. 51:5). God holds the unregenerated child responsible not for unbelief (of which he is incapable due to creation), but for his sinful heart.

Romans 10:13, for instance, uses the same expression, ὅς ἄν, that is found in I Corinthians 11:27: "Whoever (ὅς ἄν + πᾶς) calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved" (cf. ὅς ἕαν in Acts 2:21 and πᾶς in Jn. 3:16). Those who say "whoever" must always have an unlimited application (i.e. including infants, mentally damaged, etc.) run into great difficulty here. If "whoever" referred in Romans 10:13 to literally everybody, no infant would be saved, and those dying in infancy would be lost forever because they are intellectually and physically incapable (due to creation) of calling upon the Lord or believing in him (v. 14). But who would accept any of these conclusions? Does not Christ say, furthermore, in Luke 18:15-16 that the kingdom of God belongs to babes, βρέφη (meaning that God has His elect among infants as well)? Thus the "whoever" of Romans 10:13 cannot have universal application; it must refer only to adults (the same may be said for Acts 2:21 and John 3:16).

Romans 3:28 is another instance. It uses the same word for "man" employed in I Corinthians 11:28: "For we maintain that a man (ἄνθρωπος) is justified by faith apart from works of the law" (cf. Gal. 2:16). Again, "man" cannot be unlimited in reference, for that would mean no infant saved and all infants dying in infancy lost because of intellectual incapability of exercising faith. John 3:36 is a further instance. The same participle construction is used as in I Corinthians 11:29, "He who believes (ὁ πιστεύων) in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey (ὁ ἀπειθῶν) the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." The same problem arises here concerning infant salvation, if it is assumed that the reference area of the participle is universal.

One final example is 2 Thessalonians 3:10, which uses the indefinite article found in I Corinthians 11:34: "If anyone (τις) will not work, neither let him eat." Is this "anyone" unlimited? If so, infants would starve, as well as the crippled, the weak, and the elderly. Paul, however, warned that, "if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (I Tim. 5:8).

Now if words such as "whoever" and "anyone" and phrases such as "let a man" and "he who" are used in I Corinthians 11, why must it be assumed that their reference is unlimited, when



we have seen that in other portions of Scripture their application is not unlimited? If one were to be exegetically unbiased, he would have to say from looking at I Corinthians 11 alone that these terms could apply in an unlimited or a limited way. Thus the range of application in I Corinthians 11 remains an open question unless some other portion of Scripture throws light on the matter (as Luke 18:15-16 and I Tim. 5:8 did upon the similar problem passages considered above).

But the analogy between the Lord's Supper and the Passover Feast *does* throw light upon the question of application in I Corinthians 11. The Lord's Supper has taken the place of the Passover feast and is essentially the same in meaning. Circumcised infants and children were allowed to partake of the Passover meal, and therefore one would presume baptized infants and children would be allowed to eat the Lord's Supper. If then I Corinthians 11 is ambiguous concerning whether infants and children are to examine themselves and discern the Lord's body, and if the analogy between the Lord's Supper and the Passover feast indicates that this spiritual discernment is unnecessary for them, it would mean interpreting Paul's warnings in I Corinthians 11 as being specifically addressed to the adult members of the church alone.

It might be argued, on the other hand, that the spiritual requirements were less stringent for participation in the Passover meals, which would be why infants and children were admitted to them. And yet, the same two conditions of self-examination and discernment of the food's spiritual meaning were required in the old covenant for eating the Passover. The Lord complained to Isaiah: "I hate your new moon festivals and your *appointed* feasts" (Is. 1:15). Now the Passover was one of Israel's appointed feasts (Deut. 16:16). Why did God hate Israel's observances of the Passover? It was because Israel's hands were "full of bloodshed" (Is. 1:15e). Israel was an iniquitous people (Is. 1:13d). What does the Lord require of them to eat the Passover properly but to "wash," "make clean," "cease to do evil," "learn to do good" (Is. 1:16-17a); and these requirements call for self-examination and repentance, based upon a discernment of the atoning significance of the lambs, the very thing Paul commanded in I Corinthians 11:28. The same judgment from God that Paul speaks of in I Corinthians 11:29, 31,

32, 34 was to be expected by the Israelites for failure to meet these requirements: "If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword" (Is. 1:19-20).

The Lord was not saying in Isaiah 1 that he wanted Israel to discontinue their sacrifices and sacrificial meals, any more than he was saying that he wanted them to stop praying (v. 15). What he wanted rather was for the Israelites to offer up their sacrifices and prayers and to attend the sacrificial feasts with sincere hearts, truly repenting of their sins and desiring to be reconciled with God and to please him. Isaiah 1 is not an isolated passage either in calling for true repentance and faith on the part of those offering sacrifices and eating sacrificial meals; see, for example Leviticus 23:27-29; Psalm 51:16-17, 19; Isaiah 66:2-4; Amos 5:21-24; Jeremiah 14:12; Hosea 5:6; Micah 6:6-8; I Samuel 15:20-23.

And yet even though God required spiritual examination, repentance, and faith on the part of those eating the Passover meal, we have seen that infants and children, who are incapable of such spiritual discernment, were allowed to eat the Passover. Hence the spiritual requirements mentioned in Isaiah 1 for eating the Passover meal applied only to the adult members of the Israelite congregation. These essentially same requirements, therefore, which are mentioned by Paul in I Corinthians 11 as requisites for participation in the Lord's Supper, may equally well be supposed to apply only to the adult members of the Corinthian congregation. And so, if the same conditions for worthy participation mentioned by Paul in I Corinthians 11 did not prevent infants and children from eating the Passover meal neither should they prevent infants and children from eating the Lord's Supper which replaces the Passover meal. Nor is there a statement or new set of conditions in the New Testament which would call for the exclusion of baptized infants and children from the Lord's Supper. To say that Paul's requirement of self-examination and faith are such a statement or new set of conditions would be to fault God for allowing circumcised infants and children to eat the Passover meal.

An analogous situation exists in the case of infant baptism. Many baptists have deduced that only adults should be baptized from such passages as: "*Repent*, and let each of you be baptized

in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38); and "He who has *believed* and has been baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16). They argue that since infants and children are incapable of repenting and believing, they should not be baptized. Pedobaptists, on the other hand, rightly interpret these passages to be referring to adults only. There is nothing in them which necessitates an application to infants. The range of their application, therefore, should either remain ambiguous or be determined from some other portion of Scripture. That additional light from Scripture is provided by the analogy between baptism and circumcision (similar to the light thrown on I Corinthians 11 by the analogy between the Lord's Supper and the Passover meal). Repentance and faith were required for circumcision of strangers for their membership in the old covenant (which conditions were necessary, of course, for Abraham as well, Romans 4:9-12 and Gen. 18:19). Membership in the old covenant for an adult always required self-examination and spiritual discernment; it was never meant to be merely a physical, earthly kingdom (Rom. 4:12, 2:25, 28-29). If adults did not repent and believe, they were supposed to be cut off (Deut. 13:6-11; Lev. 18:3ff; Is. 1:13, 15, 16-17, and the other passages mentioned above concerning judgment for improper giving of sacrifices). Infants and children, nevertheless, who were incapable of such spiritual understanding and commitment, were circumcised as members of God's covenant. Thus the conditions of the old covenant for proper administration of circumcision — repentance and faith — applied only to adults. Baptism replaces circumcision in the new covenant (Col. 2:11-12); the same conditions for its proper administration remain; and there is no scriptural indication that these conditions are suddenly required of infants as well as adults. Infants, ought, therefore, to be baptized. This very same analogous reasoning should be applied to the question of worthy participation in the Lord's Supper.

Before baptists begin to rejoice over admitted pedobaptist inconsistencies,<sup>63</sup> they should realize that Isaiah 1 is truly double-edged. The spiritual self-examination and cleansing required by God of adult Israelites in verses 16-17 and 19-20 help to expose

<sup>63</sup> See Jewett's somewhat humorous criticism of Calvin on I Corinthians 11, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

not only a pedobaptist fallacy, but also a major inconsistency in baptist thinking. It uncovers what can be a common error for us all: an underestimation of what were the spiritual requirements for membership in the old covenant. Baptists generally argue that infants and children were members of the old covenant because the requirement for membership in the old covenant was simply physical descent from Abraham. Membership in the new covenant, on the other hand, requires repentance, faith, and a spiritual birth. Thus they argue that it was proper for infants and children to be members of the old covenant, but not members of the new covenant, since they are unable to repent and believe.

Even Reformed baptists, who admit the unity of the old and new covenants, argue in this general way. Jewett, for instance, asserts that pedobaptists fail to see clearly the diversity of God's covenant. He agrees that there is a basic unity in spiritual meaning between the old and new covenants: "Admitting that the New Covenant in Christ's blood is the unfolding and fruition of the covenant made with Abraham, so that baptism in the new economy corresponds to circumcision in the old, admitting with Samuel Miller that the 'same divine head . . . the same atoning blood . . . the same sanctifying Spirit in which we rejoice as the life and glory of the New Testament Church, we know from the testimony of Scripture was also the life and glory of the church before the coming of the Messiah' (Infant Baptism, 10) . . ." <sup>64</sup> But he also argues that there were temporal, terrestrial, and national aspects of the old covenant which make a difference insofar as membership in that covenant and membership in the new covenant is concerned: "In other words, circumcision as a sign and seal of the covenant made with Abraham, had a double reference corresponding to the twofold aspect of the covenant as anciently administered. To him who was an Israelite indeed, who walked in the steps of Abraham's faith, his circumcision was the sign and seal of the righteousness of faith. Yet it belonged to all the seed of Abraham after the flesh, insofar as the covenant blessings had an earthly and temporal reference . . . It just must be supposed that even as the literal blessing contained within it a spiritual blessing, so there was a spiritual Israel contained within the literal Israel and a man could be an Israelite

<sup>64</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

in the latter sense without being one in the former. . . . In other words, there was a *de facto* participation of the covenant according to which a man might be circumcised, of whom no more was presupposed than that he was a member of the commonwealth of Israel after the flesh."<sup>65</sup> Thus according to Dr. Jewett, not only could children of unbelieving Israelites be legitimately circumcised, but also unbelieving Israelite adults could be citizens of Israel in good standing. The only necessary requirement for membership in the old covenant was descent from Abraham after the flesh, for the blessings of the old covenant were temporal and terrestrial. The argument against infant baptism is concluded by saying that in the new covenant, the temporal and terrestrial aspects of God's covenant with Abraham have terminated, and that since the blessings of the new covenant are spiritual and can be inherited only by those spiritually conceived, evidence of this spiritual birth (i.e. repentance and faith) must therefore be required from all who are baptized.

But such an understanding of the requirement for membership in the old covenant is glaringly contradicted by Isaiah 1. If physical descent from Abraham was the only requirement for membership in the old covenant, repentance and faith would not have been required of either infants or adults, for otherwise there would have been two requirements for membership: physical descent *and* faith. Repentance and faith, furthermore, would have necessitated a prior spiritual birth (Jn. 3:3,5), and thus the baptist distinction between a natural birth required in the old covenant and a spiritual birth required in the new covenant would be contradicted. In Isaiah 1, however, the Lord clearly condemns Israelite adults for their absence of repentance and proper faith. God did not want the Israelites to presume that they had forgiveness of sins and were at peace with him simply through the mechanical offering of lambs. God instituted the whole sacrificial system to help restore the Israelites to the relationship with God they were created to have — a relationship of love, obedience, reverence, and joy. Thus when the Israelites offered sacrifices to God with disobedient unrepentant hearts, they made a mockery of the whole purpose of sacrifices. They showed no fear of God; they refused to repent; they were stiff-

<sup>65</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

necked. In Isaiah 1, therefore, God insists upon spiritual cleansing and threatens judgment upon those who do not repent and sincerely trust in the sacrifice for forgiveness of sins and peace with God. Jewett is fundamentally wrong, therefore, when he claims: "While it is no doubt true that the devout Jew approached the Passover in this faith, there is not a word in the Old Testament to imply such a faith was required of all who partook, and that without it the participant desecrated the holy things."<sup>66</sup> Although he makes this remark in the context of a discussion concerning infants, it is phrased in such a way as to teach that unbelieving Jewish adults as well as unbelieving Jewish infants and children could eat the Passover meal with impunity. And yet the Lord declares in Isaiah 1:14 that he hates the participation of unbelieving Israelite adults in the Passover feast (as well as in other appointed feasts). He calls it a "trampling" of his courts (v. 12) and threatens them with the sword of judgment (v. 20).

Thus more than physical descent from Abraham was required for membership in the old covenant. Isaiah 1:10-20; Leviticus 23:27-29; Psalm 51:16-17, 19, and similar passages already mentioned, make clear that God required repentance and faith of adult Israelites in the old covenant. This repentance and faith, furthermore, required a new heart, a cleansed heart (cf. Deut. 10:16; Rom. 2:28-29). Thus it is a hermeneutical error to say physical birth from Abraham foreshadowed spiritual birth in the new covenant. Rather the spiritual rebirth and trust in animal sacrifices foreshadowed the same spiritual rebirth and trust in the "true" sacrifice, Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 10:19-22 and Romans 4:12). In making his covenant with Abraham and Moses, God promised to give his people the blessings of the covenant, both spiritual and physical, on the basis of their obedience to the terms of the covenant. If obedient, they were to receive the blessings of the covenant; but if disobedient, they were to receive the curses of the covenant (see, for instance, Gen. 18:19; Deut. 27-32). The unbelieving and unrepentant Israelite adult as well as the non-elect child, received the temporal and terrestrial blessings of the covenant, even though these were to be the result of repentance and faith and the forgiveness of sins. They

<sup>66</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 221.

received these blessings not because they had a right to them as descendants of Abraham after the flesh, but, as has already been suggested, because of God's longsuffering and for his honor's sake. These temporal, earthly blessings, however, were removed from Israel by God at various times (for instance, during the time of the Judges and in the exile of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel) because of the unbelief and absence of repentance on the part of the Israelite adults. These blessings, therefore, were removed from the Israelite children as well. Thus the Israelite children had a right to the terrestrial blessings of the Old Covenant only so long as God showed patience and longsuffering towards his people when they were disobedient.

And so, it cannot be maintained that infants and children were members of the old covenant simply because they were members of the temporal and terrestrial "aspect" of that covenant, for when they reached an age of discernment they had to meet the spiritual requirements of the old covenant. But if they had to fulfill these spiritual requirements, they must have been members of the spiritual "aspect" of the old covenant as well as the temporal and terrestrial "aspect." Otherwise, why would God hold them responsible for having repentance and faith? Thus circumcision was a sign of membership in the spiritual aspect of the old covenant as well as in the terrestrial aspect. Actually, one could not be a member of one aspect without being a member of the other aspect at the same time, for possession and enjoyment of the temporal blessings depended upon the repentance and faith of the Israelite adults (Deut. 6:16-19).

Why, it might be asked, were infants and children included in a spiritual covenant before being capable of spiritual discernment? The answer lies in God's view of the solidarity of the family. When God made his covenant with Abraham, he made it with Abraham's seed as well. Physical descent from Abraham, however, was not the requirement for infant membership in the old covenant. The Lord, because he demanded repentance and faith of Israelite adults, made the requirement for infant membership in the old covenant depend not on physical descent as such, but rather on membership in a family whose parents were believers. In the old covenant, it is true, believing parents were predominantly descendants of Abraham after the flesh, but it was

the faith these parents had, not their pedigree, which allowed them to be members of the covenant, and because of the solidarity of the family, allowed their children to be members as well. Infant membership in the old covenant, furthermore, was never a guarantee of the infants' right to eternal reward. Infants and children of the covenant were the inheritors of the curses or the blessings of the covenant depending upon God's electing grace and, when adults, their obedience to the requirements of the covenant, which would include as we have seen, the necessity of repentance and faith.

For Dr. Jewett to argue from the circumcision of Abraham's entire household that repentance and faith were not required of the adult servant is to overlook the implications of Genesis 18:19, which says: "For I have chosen him (Abraham), in order that he may command his children *and his household* after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him." Why is it so difficult to assume that the adult members in Abraham's household made a profession of faith that very day?<sup>67</sup> Did not the Philippian jailor and his whole household make a profession of faith in one night (Acts 16:34)? In addition, while not presuming to understand entirely the reason why Ishmael, Keturah's sons, and Esau were circumcised (beyond the fact that they were commanded of God to do so) the fact that they were circumcised raises as much difficulty for Dr. Jewett's view of circumcision as he claims it raises for the pedobaptist view of circumcision.<sup>68</sup> If Dr. Jewett is right in concluding that circumcision had a national reference as well as a spiritual reference, and that the national reference explains why infants and unbelieving adults were circumcised, it is still difficult to account for the circumcision of Ishmael, Keturah's sons, and Esau. They received terrestrial and temporal blessings, to be sure, but they were not the early blessings God promised to Abraham in Genesis 12, 15, and 17, and of which circumcision was the seal. Why then were they circumcised if they were not to receive the temporal blessings signified by circumcision such

<sup>67</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 82-83; also Kingdon, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>68</sup> *Op. cit.*, 83-87; Kingdon, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-46.



as redemption from bondage in Egypt and the inheritance of the land of Canaan?

Herbert Bird also argues against the view that faith was not required of adult Israelites in the old covenant. He bases his argument on what was supposed to be the exercise of discipline in Israel commanded by God: see Exodus 12:15, 21:12, 22:20, 30:33, 31:14; Leviticus 17, 18:29, 24:15.<sup>69</sup> Kingdon is simply incorrect when he says in response to Bird: "The delinquent was cut off as a breaker of the law of the theocracy, not as an unbeliever in the New Testament sense."<sup>70</sup> First, many of the laws of the old covenant theocracy which called for discipline remain as laws in the new covenant and also call for discipline (i.e. idolatry, sexual crimes, blasphemy; see I Cor. 5:11-13). Thus the same repentance called for in the old covenant is also called for in the new covenant (cf. Mt. 5:23-24). Now certainly not every Israelite believer had a clear knowledge of the person and work of Christ, but he did understand his need for a sacrifice of atonement for the forgiveness of sins. The calling of the Israelites to humility on the day of atonement, for instance, indicates that they were to understand their need for forgiveness for sins through the offering of a substitute (Lev. 23:27-29). Not to repent and humble themselves angered God because it showed they did not accept or understand their need for forgiveness. Thus the faith of the Old Testament believer was essentially the same as the faith expected of the New Testament believer — both of whom, in acknowledging their sins, put their trust in a substitutionary sacrifice. The sacrifice of animals in the Old Testament pictured and foreshadowed Christ's sacrifice on the cross (Heb. 10:1ff). Here is a true diversity of covenantal administration. Here is an understanding of the progressive character of God's redemptive covenant in Christ. This is what Christ meant when he said true worshippers are "now" (Jn. 4:23) to worship the Father in spirit and truth. But in both covenants there was required the same repentance and the same trust in an atoning sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins.

<sup>69</sup> Herbert S. Bird, "Professor Jewett on Baptism," *Westminster Theological Journal*, vol. xxxi, May 1969, pp. 158ff.

<sup>70</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 43.

And so, although Jewett is correct in noting a diversity between the old and new covenants, that diversity does not call for the exclusion of infants and children from either the Lord's Supper or baptism. A cleansed heart, repentance, and faith were as much expected of the adult members of the old covenant as of the adult members of the new covenant. Infants and children of believing parents, nevertheless, were circumcised and allowed to eat the Passover meal. Why then should the same requirements of repentance and faith in the new covenant keep infants and children of believing parents from baptism and the Lord's Supper, the two ordinances which replace circumcision and the Passover meal?

Hence both pedobaptists and baptists disobey God's command for infants and children to come to the Lord's Table. In the old covenant, circumcised infants and children were required to eat the Passover meal. This requirement was lifted temporarily as long as pilgrimages had to be made to the place of God's choosing (as was the requirement for women's participation), but now that pilgrimages do not have to be made, baptized infants and children (as well as women) are once again required to eat the Lord's Supper, which replaces the Passover meal and is essentially the same in meaning as the Passover meal. What Paul says in I Corinthians 11 concerning self-examination and spiritual discernment need not apply to infant and child members of the Corinthian congregation, just as the same requirements mentioned in Isaiah 1 for eating the Passover meal did not apply to the infant and child members of the Israelite congregation. Finally, Isaiah 1 and similar passages expose a basic fallacy in Reformed baptist thinking concerning the requirement for membership in the old covenant. The adult Israelite in the old covenant was expected to have the same kind of spiritual discernment, repentance, and faith as is now expected of adult members of the new covenant, or otherwise expect God's judgment. The explanation why unbelieving Israelite adults and their children received at times the temporal blessings of the covenant, when these were supposed to be given as a result of repentance and faith, does not lie in their being descendants from Abraham after the flesh, but resides in God's mercy and longsuffering, which was to bring them to repentance.

*The analogy between the Lord's Supper and other sacrificial meals of the Old Covenant.*

But the Lord's Supper is more than a Passover meal. Christ's words at the institution of the Supper, "This is my blood of the covenant" (Mt. 26:28) probably refer back to the blood sprinkled at the making of the covenant at Sinai, to the sacrifice there and not to the paschal sacrifice (Ex. 24:8; Heb. 9:20).<sup>71</sup> Hebrews 10:1ff teaches that the sacrifices of the law are a shadow of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Thus all the sacrifices of the old covenant foreshadowed Christ's sacrifice, which means, in addition, that all the sacrificial meals of the old covenant foreshadowed the Lord's Supper, which is itself a sacrificial meal (in the sense already explained). Now since circumcised infants and children were allowed the privilege of eating the sacrificial meals of the old covenant, and since the Lord's Supper has now replaced these sacrificial meals and has essentially the same atoning significance, baptized infants and children should continue to enjoy the privilege of eating these sacrificial meals now replaced by the Lord's Supper, for nowhere in Scripture can it be shown that God has cancelled this privilege.

In Deuteronomy 12, the Israelites are being instructed in the new form of worship centering around the Tabernacle (vv. 5-7). Sacrifices were no longer allowed except at the place of God's choosing (v. 6). The various offerings to the Lord were also to be eaten in the place of God's choosing and were to be eaten by "households" (v. 7; cf. vv. 12, 18). This eating by households, however, was not exclusively the eating of sacrifices, but included as well such offerings as the yearly tithes (Deut. 14:22-29, esp. v. 26) and the first-born of the herds and flocks (Deut. 15:19-23, esp. v. 20). But there were also sacrificial feasts to be eaten at the place of God's choosing; these included, among others, the peace offerings (Lev. 7:11-36), the Passover Feast (Deut. 16:16), the Feast of Weeks (Num. 28:26-31), and the Feast of Tabernacles (Num. 29:12-38).

There is plausible evidence that household observance of the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles included circum-

<sup>71</sup> See: H. Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1969, pp. 425-426.

cised infants and children as well as Israelite adults. Concerning the participants in the Feast of Weeks, Deuteronomy 16:11 says: "You shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst, in the place the Lord your God chooses to establish His name." Almost identical participants are named for the Feast of Tabernacles in Deuteronomy 16:14: "And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter . . ." The type of yearly sacrifice referred to in I Sam. 1:3ff is uncertain,<sup>72</sup> and yet it is a sacrificial feast (I Sam. 1:3, 4, 21) in which portions of the sacrifice were given to Peninnah and "to all her sons and daughters" (I Sam. 1:4).

And so, if circumcised infants and children had a right to eat these sacrificial meals of the old covenant, and if the Lord's Supper replaces these sacrificial meals and has the same atoning significance, baptized infants and children in the new covenant should therefore be allowed the privilege of eating the Lord's Supper.

*Infant and child membership in the New Testament visible church.*

One final argument in favor of the inclusion of baptized infants and children in the Lord's Supper is based on their membership in the New Testament visible church. God made a covenant not only with believing Abraham, but also with Abraham's children (Gen. 17:7); thus calling in Genesis 17:11, 13 for the circumcision of all Abraham's children (as well as of his believing servants and their children). Now the same covenant which God made with Abraham continues in the new covenant in the administration of Christ. Murray defends this underlying unity by saying:

The specific covenant administration under which the New Testament church operates is the extension and unfolding of

<sup>72</sup> Although the evidence would seem to favor regarding it as a Passover sacrifice because of parallels between: I Sam. 1:3 and Lk. 2:41, Samuel's consecration to temple service (I Sam. 1:11, 22, 28) and Jesus' claim that he must be in his Father's house (Lk. 2:49), and the hymns of Hannah (I Sam. 2:1-10) and Mary (Lk. 1:46-55).

the Abrahamic covenant. This is distinctly the argument of the apostle Paul in the epistle to the Galatians when he says, 'They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham . . . .' The church as it exists in the respective dispensations is not two organisms. It is likened to one tree with many branches, all of which grow from one root and stock and form one organic life (Rom. 11:16-21).<sup>73</sup>

It is clear also that baptism replaces circumcision in the new covenant (Col. 2:11-12) and has the same spiritual meaning (i.e. regeneration, cleansing, justification) as circumcision (Rom. 4:11-13; cf. Jer. 4:4 and 14). Pedobaptists have traditionally argued, therefore, that since the old covenant and the new covenant are essentially the same, although differing in specific administrations, and since infants of believing parents were to be included in this covenant at the time of Abraham and were to receive the covenant sign, infants of believing parents should therefore be included in the new covenant (the continuance of the Abrahamic covenant) and be administered the new covenant sign which is baptism, for the New Testament does not teach that infants can no longer be considered members of the Abrahamic covenant.

If in the Lord's Supper there is one bread, and if those who partake of this one bread show that they are one body (I Cor. 10:17), baptized infants and children, therefore, who are physically capable, should be allowed to eat the Lord's Supper, for to exclude them from it would be unnecessarily to deny them the privilege of showing their unity with the visible church into which they were baptized. The Westminster Confession of Faith states that "sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God . . . to put a *visible* difference between those that belong unto the Church and the rest of the world . . ." <sup>74</sup> By continually denying baptized infants and children the right to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the pedobaptist puts them with the rest of the world. But why should covenant members be denied the covenant meal, as if they were outside the covenant?

Professor Murray seeks to answer this question by saying:

<sup>73</sup> J. Murray, *Christian Baptism*, The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia, 1962, p. 46.

<sup>74</sup> Chapter 27, section 1.

“There are distinctions between the Lord’s Supper and baptism which make it reasonable, to say the least, that the one should be dispensed to infants and the other not.”<sup>75</sup> The first distinction is that baptism is a picture of inception of union with God; whereas the Lord’s Supper portrays maintenance of union with God.<sup>76</sup> But there seems little reason why this distinction should make a difference in who receives the Lord’s Supper. If infants, apart from faith, received that which signifies union with Christ, why should they not also receive that which signifies nourishment in Christ? Jewett wonders if such reasoning makes sense: “Infants need the initial pledge that their sins are washed away, but they do not need the pledge that this benefit shall be continued unto them.”<sup>77</sup> The second distinction is even less to the point, that baptism is administered only once to each; whereas the Lord’s Supper is administered repeatedly to each.<sup>78</sup> If infants receive what signifies new life in Christ, why shouldn’t they receive as new-born children what signifies continual nourishment?

The third distinction Professor Murray draws is used repeatedly by pedobaptists, namely, that in baptism the recipient is wholly passive, whereas in the Lord’s Supper the recipient is active. Murray declares: “The two central significations of the Lord’s Supper are commemoration and communion . . . The notions associated with the Lord’s Supper, such as remembrance, communion, discerning of the Lord’s body, are of such a nature that they involve conscious intelligent understanding. It is surely reasonable to infer that such intelligent exercise of heart and mind belongs to the essence of that which the Lord’s Supper contemplates.”<sup>79</sup> In response to this argument, it is important to note first that the word *κοινωνία* is used in I Corinthians 10:16 to mean “union,” “sharing,” “being in connection with” not “fellowship.”<sup>80</sup> But actual union with Christ can come only

<sup>75</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>76</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 77-78.

<sup>77</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 215.

<sup>78</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>79</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>80</sup> See: J. Calvin, *Commentary on I Corinthians*, I Corinthians 10:16; F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1953, pp. 231-232.

through a personal encounter with the risen Christ (insofar as one is intellectually and mentally capable of knowing Jesus) through repentance and trust in Jesus as one's representative. The outcome of this actual union with Christ, furthermore, is the kind of communion (*κοινωνία*) referred to in Corinthians 10:20. It is a personal fellowship; it is a peaceful fellowship and friendship with God based upon the cleansing of sin through trust in the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ. Now if baptism represents union (communion) with Christ, why wouldn't Murray's line of reasoning call in baptism for personal acceptance of Christ as one's representative as well? But then infants could not be baptized because they are obviously incapable of personally accepting Christ as their representative. And so although baptism pictures inception of union with Christ, initial and continued repentance and faith are required for the *actual* possession of both (except for those physically and intellectually incapable of repentance and faith).<sup>81</sup> If the actual possession of repentance and faith is not required for baptizing infants of believers, why should it be required of these same infants and children for their participation in the Lord's Supper?

Romans 4:11, furthermore, teaches that Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had while circumcised. . . ." Thus if circumcision was a seal of justification by faith, baptism must also be because it replaces circumcision. Baptism, therefore, seals justification possessed as a result of *active* faith in Christ, and cannot therefore be con-

Paul argues in I Corinthians 10:18 that the Israelites were sharers (*κοινωνοί*) in the altar by eating sacrifices; that is they were united to the animals sacrificed on the altar. The animals were their representatives. But they didn't have "fellowship" with the animals in the sense of personal communion.

<sup>81</sup> See the Belgic Confession of 1561, Article xxxiv, and the way it closely connects sprinkling with water and sprinkling with Christ's blood in explaining the meaning of baptism. This brings to mind the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lambs upon the doorposts of the Israelite homes in Egypt (an outward symbol of what was supposed to be an inward sprinkling of their hearts, as in I Peter 1:2 and Hebrews 10:22) and upon the altar in subsequent Passover feasts. This close significance in meaning between baptism and the Lord's Supper (which replaces the Passover feast) would lead to further questioning why baptism is given to infants and the Lord's Supper is not.

sidered appropriate for infants simply because of their *passivity*. Marcel is certainly correct to say, "The subjective aspect of baptism cannot take precedence over its objective aspect."<sup>82</sup> Calvin says the same thing: "For this reason, to allege that it is a contravention of reason for a sacrament which is a witness of repentance and salvation to be administered to infants, is to argue against God. What then does this imply? Just this, that if we accept all that God does as being good we have a doctrine which teaches that it is not necessary for the truth signified in a sacrament always to precede, but that it is sufficient for it sometimes to follow, at least in part. For the renewing of life was well signified by circumcision and likewise the justification that we obtain by faith. In an infant there is neither repentance nor faith."<sup>83</sup> Now if pedobaptists acknowledge that it is not necessary for the truth to always go before the sign in the case of infant baptism, why will they not admit the same in the case of inclusion of baptized infants and children in the Lord's Supper?<sup>84</sup>

One further point in consideration of these distinctions brought forward by Murray as an argument against inclusion of baptized infants and children in the Supper is that the same distinctions existed between circumcision and the Passover. But these distinctions did not keep circumcised infants and children from the Passover meal. If the same aspects of remembering, communing, repenting, and believing did not keep covenant infants and children from eating the Passover meal, why should they

<sup>82</sup> P. C. Marcel, *Baptism*, Mack Publishing Company, Cherry Hill, N.J., 1953 (reprint 1973), p. 212. Nor should it be presumed of our covenant infants and children that the subjective aspect will ever be possessed; for only God knows who are His elect. God's promises of blessing to Abraham and his seed were to Christ (Gal. 3:16), and to those actually united to Christ (Gal. 3:29) as children of the promise, not as children of the flesh (Rom. 9:8; cf. vss. 1-7). A credible confession is the only legitimate ground for assuming that someone possesses all that baptism signifies and seals. Even then it is only an assumption, not a certainty.

<sup>83</sup> *Against the Anabaptists*, Opera, vii, pp. 60f.

<sup>84</sup> Hence the efficacy of the Lord's Supper, just as the efficacy of baptism, would not be tied to the moment of its administration (see the Westminster Confession of Faith, 28:6). The phrases "infant communion" or "child communion" are proper ones so long as it is understood that the "communion" the Lord's Supper signifies does not have to be the actual possession of infants and children. The sign comes before the truth, to a certain extent at least, in infant communion as well as infant baptism.



keep them from eating the Lord's Supper, which replaces the Passover meal?

And so, there should be no such thing as "non-communicant" membership in the church which tends to make infants and children second-class citizens of the new Israel (Gal. 6:16; I Pet. 2:9-12). Is not one of the real temporal benefits of infant and child inclusion in the covenant their being under the biblical discipline and teaching of the church (Eph. 6:1-4)? This temporal benefit was also enjoyed by infants and children in the old covenant (Gen. 18:19; Deut. 6, 29:13; cf. Rom. 3:2). And yet — the two most serious forms of church discipline are suspension and expulsion from the Lord's Supper. When we automatically exclude infant and child members of the church from the Lord's Supper are we not thereby exercising a wrong form of discipline upon them? If they are truly members of the covenant, should they not be allowed to partake of the covenant meal? Would not their inclusion spark perhaps otherwise lethargic parents to discipline and teach their children properly, lest by presumption they should allow their children to eat judgment unto themselves? For there is nothing magical about the participation of infants and children in the Lord's Supper; when they reach an age of discernment they should be required to have a credible confession of faith. This confession, furthermore, should be confirmed from time to time by the parents or by the church.

Hence, there are three biblical reasons for including baptized infants and children in the Lord's Supper: the analogy between the Lord's Supper and the Passover meal; the analogy between the Lord's Supper and other sacrificial meals of the old covenant; and finally, infant membership in the covenant. The writer humbly and respectfully calls upon the church to consider returning to its ancient practice of including infants and children in the Lord's Supper.