

**“Eucharist Participants in the Early Centuries:
Biblical and Historical Evidence for Paedocommunion”**
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Eating and drinking, meals, the table, even bread and wine — these not only enhance our enjoyment of life, they are substantial to life.

I have three children, sweet, beautiful girls, Joy (12), Jenna (10) and Julie (8). (I have pictures, too.) With this paper on my mind, I was carting them to cello and violin lessons. I interrupted a talk about summer camp options and asked them what they remembered about being in churches which didn’t serve them at the Table of the Lord. They said they felt “excluded.”

“Do you think it is important that you are given communion now,” I asked.

“Of course,” said Joy, “I am part of the body of Christ.”

“Are you sure,” I asked.

“Yes, are you sure you are part?” she came back.

“Yes,” I said. “But do you always act like your are part of the body of Christ?” I asked her.

“No, not always. Do you?” She said in turn.

“No,” I said, wishing I had a more sophisticated answer.

“But would you choose French, Fencing, and Archery or Canoeing, Nature, and Knitting,” she asked, jumping back to the previous talk.

* * *

The matter of children at communion evokes strong convictions on both sides of the practice (inclusion and exclusion). In light of the current debate being waged, and writing in the Calvinist tradition, I will address the warrant for paedocommunion with selected historical and exegetical evidence. Bold actions of several Reformed denominations have addressed this topic in recent years.¹

Currently, paedocommunion is not the received tradition of the West, generally, nor Reformed and Presbyterian traditions specifically. Nevertheless, from the third century there is much evidence showing that the Western Church regularly communed little children. In the last few decades, though, there has been recordable growth among various Reformed congregations.²

¹For a more detailed study and consideration, see my forth coming book, *The Case for Covenant Communion* (Athanasius Press, Monroe, LA). See also the audio debate on this issue at www.wordmp3.com between Drs. Ken Gentry (anti) and Rob Raburn (pro).

²G.I. Williamson (Orthodox Presbyterian Church, OPC) and Robert Rayburn (Presbyterian Church of America, PCA) led study committees and produced substantial defenses of the practice. However, their conclusions to embrace the practice (by the “majority” of the committee of OPC and “minority” in PCA) have been rejected by the larger assemblies, see Robert S. Rayburn, “Report of the Ad-Interim Committee to Study the Question of Paedocommunion,” in PCA Digest Position Papers 1973-1993 Part V, ed. Paul R. Gilchrist (Atlanta: Presbyterian Church in America, 1993). There is a grown number of paedocommunist leaders, well-known in Reformed and Presbyterian churches, including R. C. Sproul Jr. (RPCGA), G. I. Williamson (OPC), James Jordan (PNP), Peter Leithart (PCA), Robert Rayburn Jr. (PCA), C. John “Jack” Collins (PCA), and Douglas Wilson (CREC). Other prominent paedocommunitists include N. T. Wright (Anglican), William Willimon (United

What is Paedocommunion?³

It is my understand that the Lord's Supper or Eucharist (*eucharistia* - "thanksgiving") is a sacrament instituted by Christ as a sign and seal of His redemptive work. By eating bread and drinking the cup we renew our mystical union with Him and have *koinonia* in the blood and body of Christ (*koinwnia estin tou/ai[natoj tou/Cristou..koinwnia tou/swmatoj tou/Cristou*, 1 Cor.10:16). We acknowledge His redemptive work on our behalf, share in His kingdom, and renew our thankfulness for His saving work. We also realize our union with others in His body. I am in agreement with Calvin's original view of the presence of Christ. But contrary to Calvin and the ordinary Reformed tradition, I hold that all baptized children are qualified for the Table by covenant membership and therefore should participate as they are able. Christian children are then to be raised in the *paideia* of Christ, the full culture and nurture of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). I believe such nurture requires access to Christ as He offers Himself at the Kingdom Table. (I also believe in Lord's Day, weekly communion, and if one does this, then nurture by admission to the Table is critical to the Christian identity of believers' children.⁴)

The Problem of Theological Consistency

As a well-known representative of the Reformed tradition the basic objection to paedocommunion is voiced by Berkhof, "Children, though they were allowed to eat the passover in the days of the Old Testament, cannot be permitted to partake of the table of the Lord, since they cannot meet the requirements for worthy participation. Paul insists on the necessity of self-examination previous to the celebration...[1 Cor. 11:28]."⁵

Paedocommunionists find the reasoning lacking however since on infant baptism, he argues the "covenant is still in force and is essentially identical with the 'new covenant' of the present dispensation."⁶ "Just as there were analogies to Christian baptism among Israel, there were analogies of the Lord's Supper.... [he cites sacrificial meals, particularly the peace offerings and passover]. They were expressive of the fact that, on the basis of the offer and accepted sacrifice, God receives His people as guests in His house and unites with them in joyful communion, the communal life of the covenant."⁷

But then why does not this covenant continuity and inclusion require paedocommunion, as well as

Methodist), and of course there are several longstanding traditions practicing paedocommunion, such as Eastern Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Reformed Episcopalian (Discretion of local church), Evangelical Catholic Church (Lutheran - subscribes to the Formula of Concord), much of Anglicanism, as well as some Lutheran bodies. For keeping track of all of this gratitude is due to Tim Gallant (CRC) www.paedocommunion.com. See also Tim Gallant, *Feed My Lambs* (Grande Prairie: Pactum Reformanda Publishing, 2002).

³I will be using the Greek transliterated term "paedo" as in paedobaptism or paedocommunion as referring infants or little children incapable of professing their faith.

⁴I believe this can be defended exegetically, as well as theologically and historically. See my "Congregational Worship as Covenant Remembrance: An Exegetical Basis from 1 Corinthians 11:25" [Presented at the Evangelical Theological Society's Eastern Regional meeting in Washington D.C. 3/22/02], available online: www.wordmp3.com/gs.

⁵Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* 2nd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941), 656. John Murray and others disagree that little children partook of passover, however (*Christian Baptism*, P&R, 76-79).

⁶Berkhof, 633.

⁷Berkhof, 644.

paedobaptism? Since he says, “But if children received the sign and seal of the covenant in the old dispensation, the presumption is that they surely have a right to receive it in the new, to which the pious of the Old Testament were taught to look forward as a much fuller and richer dispensation. Their exclusion from it would require a clear and unequivocal statement to that effect, but quite the contrary is found, Matt. 19:14; Acts 2:39; I Cor. 7:14.”⁸

Similarly a more recent representative, Robert L. Reymond, writes, “To summarize, because little children, even babes in arms, of covenant parents are covenant children, they are not to be excluded from the church as the kingdom of Christ.”⁹ Yet he says, “I would urge that it is appropriate to draw a distinction between the two sacraments in this regard and to include infants and young children in baptism but to require them to mature sufficiently to the point where they are able to examine themselves before they are permitted to come to the Lord’s Table.”¹⁰ However, his view of the Lord’s Supper is a commemorative celebration “just as Passover was.”¹¹ But many Reformed exegetes admit that children did participate in passover or at least in other peace offering, sacrificial meals.¹²

The apparent inconsistency of permitting children to one sacrament (baptism) on the basis of covenant membership, then requiring a “profession of faith” for the other (communion) is a routine objection raised by Baptists against paedobaptism.¹³ In Fred A. Malone’s journey away from paedobaptism, he cites this as a major rationale.

Why is New Testament regulation sufficient to define the subjects of the Lord’s Supper but not infant baptism? Assuming that household children in the Old Covenant administration were allowed to participate in the Passover feast as soon as they were able to consume the elements, and assuming that household children in the New Covenant administration are not allowed to participate until professing faith and self-examination are evidenced, my questions are: What has changed in the application of the covenant family concept from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant? Why does the household child participate in the Passover and not in the Lord’s Supper? Has the New Covenant child of believers less blessings than the household Old Covenant child?¹⁴

The Problem of Historical Consistency

⁸Berkhof, 634.

⁹Reymond, Robert L. (1998). *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*. Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 945.

¹⁰Reymond, 958-959.

¹¹Reymond, 964.

¹²For example, Herman Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man*, vol. 2, trans. W. Crookshank (London, T.Tegg and Son, 1837), 269.

¹³On “professing the faith,” the PCA’s *Book of Church Order*, says “They then make public confession of their faith in Christ, or become covenant breakers, and subject to the discipline of the Church (BCO 54-4.j). And, “The time when young persons come to understand the Gospel cannot be precisely fixed. This must be left to the prudence of the Session, whose office it is to judge, after careful examination, the qualifications of those who apply for admission to sealing ordinances” (BCO 57-2).

¹⁴*A String of Pearls Unstrung: A Theological Journey Into Believers’ Baptism* (Founders Press: Cape Coral, FL, 1998), 12.

The same inconsistency between inclusion of covenant children at the Font but not at the Table may be found in the selective use of historical sources. Samuel Miller of old Princeton (1835) urged,

If the doctrine of our Baptist brethren be correct - that is, if infant baptism be a corruption and a nullity - then it follows, from the foregoing historical statements, most inevitably, that the ordinance of baptism was lost for fifteen hundred years: yes, entirely lost, from the apostolic age till the sixteenth century."¹⁵

Whoopi! Berith, Berith, Berith! say all the paedobaptists. But inasmuch as they are antipaedocommunion, *the noose of consistency tightens*. In my view the greatest Baptist defense was that of Paul K. Jewett. He writes,

To see that this is the case, one need only recall that the earliest express mention of infant baptism is found in Tertullian's *De baptismo* (A. D. 200-206), a document in which the author entertains reservations about giving baptism to infants. But Cyprian, on whose shoulders his mantle fell, speaks not only of infant baptism, but also of infant communion as a custom which provoked no scruples. Barely fifty years separates these two witnesses. Obviously, therefore, the initial evidence for infant baptism and infant communion shows a proximity of time (A. D. 205-250) and place (North Africa) which makes it difficult to see why the former usage should be accepted while the latter is rejected.¹⁶

Cyprian, in one account, speaks of "a little daughter under the care of a wet-nurse" who is given the Eucharist.¹⁷ *The Apostolic Tradition* (20-22) perhaps even earlier gives the account,

[On the Lord's Day] They were taken by a deacon into the water—infants (for whom their parents spoke) and children first...Coming out of the water the candidates were...dried, clothed, and brought to the assembled church. There the bishop laid his hand on each with prayer...the rite continued with a celebration of the Eucharist, in which the newly baptized participated for the first time.¹⁸

Likewise, *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (Book 8, chapter 13) dated "not later than the fourth century"¹⁹ in the chapter attributed to James, the brother of John, Son of Zebedee says,

And after that, let the bishop partake, then the presbyters, and deacons.... and then of the women...the widows; then the children; and then all the people in order, with reverence and godly fear, without tumult...let the deacon say: Now we have received the precious body and the precious blood of Christ, let us give thanks to Him who has thought us worthy to partake of

¹⁵*Infant Baptism Scriptural and Reasonable: and Baptism by Sprinkling or Affusion the Most Suitable and Edifying Mode* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1835), at www.swrb.com.

¹⁶*Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 42. I have a pointed critique of that in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* (P&R, 2003) and online at www.wordmp3.com/baptism.

¹⁷*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. V (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994 [1886]), 258.

¹⁸Cited in Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), 106-107.

¹⁹*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. VII, 388.

these His holy mysteries.²⁰

Moreover, that “Protestant” Father, Augustine, “makes similar claims for apostolic authority for the practice of infant communion.” Augustine refers to “ancient and apostolic tradition” saying, “If then as so many divine testimonies do agree, neither salvation nor eternal life is to be hoped for by any, without baptism and the body and blood of Lord, it is in vain promised to infants without them.”²¹ Elsewhere Augustine writes, “They are infants, but they share in his table, in order to have life in themselves.”²²

In this brief survey of early evidence, the judgment of Thomas Lee is evident,

From the third century until the twelfth and thirteenth century there is overwhelming evidence that the Western Church regularly brought her infants and young children to participate in the Lord’s Supper. This is evidenced by several primary sources and substantiated by numerous secondary sources.²³

Indeed it is difficult to accept paedobaptism as historical, while all the while rejecting paedocommunion as unhistorical.

There are many evangelicals that are quite willing to veto all of the historical church, recreating the wheel of their own sacramentology. So I must fight with two swords. With one hand toward those who are antipaedobaptist and with the other those that are inconsistently covenantal by being paedobaptist but antipaedocommunion (such as the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition).

Let me show my cards now. There is no *explicit Scriptural basis* for baptizing or communing the children of believers. The way we address the sacramental question must be based on principle and implication. Yet, this knife cuts both ways. Neither is there an explicit case of a Christian’s child who grows up and is baptized and admitted to communion as a believer. The explicit cases of baptism are of adult converts and their households (whoever they included).

Who’s in Covenant?

Jesus told us, in effect, that communion is the sign and seal of the new covenant (“this cup is the new covenant in my blood,” *Touto to pothrion h’ kainh. diaqhkh en tw/ aifmati*, Luke 22:20).²⁴ To develop

²⁰*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. VII, 490.

²¹Jewett, 17-18.

²²*The Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle, 11 vols. Part III-Sermons. (New Rochelle, New York: New City Press, 1992), 5:261.

²³Tommy Lee, “The History of Paedocommunion: From the Early Church until 1500,” *Oringally in the Westminster Theological Journal*, now widely available online. http://www.reformed.org/sacramentology/tl_paedo.html

²⁴The language of covenant sign, in Hebrew *tla* and *shmeibn* in the LXX and the NT, is first seen in the Noahic covenant. The rainbow is the “sign of a covenant between Me and the earth” (Gen. 9:13). In the Abrahamic covenant, circumcision “shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you” (Gen. 17:11) and for Abraham it was “a seal of the righteousness of the faith he had while uncircumcised” (Rom. 4:11). In the Mosaic administration of the covenant, the sacrifices

a case for who participates in the sign, we must consider *inclusion in covenant*. I believe generational inclusion is explicit in all covenant administrations in Scripture. Reviewing the Biblical information on various covenantal administrations, we find the explicit inclusion of children or generational inclusion. The covenant with Adam involved all of the children of Adam. “As in Adam all die” (1Cor. 15:22, Rom. 5:12). The covenant with Noah included the “salvation of his household” (Heb. 11:7). The sacrifices of the patriarchs (including Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) were for the whole family. Job offered “burnt offerings according to the number of them all [his children]” (Job 1:5). Similarly, “Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his kinsmen [$\chi\alpha$] to the meal” (Gen. 31:54).²⁵ Circumcision was given to Abraham as a representative sign of God’s covenant for “you and your descendants after you throughout their generations” (Gen. 17:9). Under Moses the Israelites were commanded to put the blood of the Passover lamb on their doors to preserve the firstborn in the household. Israel was to observe Passover “as an ordinance for you and your children forever” (Ex. 12:24). The passover sacrifice portions took “into account the number of people...to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat” (Ex. 12:4). Even in the promise to David, the Lord said, “I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant, I will establish your seed forever, and build up your throne to all generations” (Ps. 89:3-4).

Therefore, at least in the Old Testament, the pattern of covenant administration includes a principle of family inclusion and successive generations in both covenant content and covenant recipients of the signs. The visible portrayal of covenant promises in signs and seals is inclusive of children. Those who come into that household by birth or adoption would also have a *right to the rite*. No one can deny that the “old covenant” revelation of redemption includes children as recipients, not least because the very content of the covenant promise was that the Lord shall be the saving God “to you and your descendants” (Gen. 17:7). The original promise to Abraham was at its core generational inclusion in the blessings of the righteousness of faith.

In the more fully developed life of Israel it should not be overlooked that the tabernacle rituals did not treat children as exempt from any of the laws of purity and exclusion based on ritual uncleanness. And the straight forward text regarding Passover certainly includes children at the Table. Certainly children were included in the peace offering, sacrificial meals of the tabernacle and temple (Lev. 10:14). After all, passover is an example of peace offering. Just as Warfield writes,

The Lord’s Supper in its fundamental significance is just what the Passover Meal was: the symbols are changed, the substance remains the same. . . .it was, not technically a sin-offering at all, but rather what is generally called a peace-offering.²⁶

The New Covenant

Now hands may be waving the back of the room. The objection is that the new covenant is different from previous covenants in just this sense: the promise of the new covenant excludes successive generations.

and festival days are carefully defined and the covenant meal is given. In the institution of the covenant meal, Passover, the Lord said, “the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live” (Ex. 12:13).

²⁵The next verse indicates that this included children: “And early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place” (Gen. 31:55).

²⁶“The Fundamental Significance of the Lord’s Supper,” *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield, vol. 1*, Edited by John E. Meeter (P&R, 1970), originally from *The Bible Student, III*, 1901, 77-83.

That was, indeed, my own argument as a “new covenant” Baptist.²⁷ Let us ask, then, are the children of new covenant believers explicitly included in the new covenant promises? David Kingdom, like Paul K. Jewett, argues, “I would argue then that the principle of believers and their seed no longer has covenantal significance, precisely because the age of fulfillment has arrived.” He goes on to say, “Nowhere in the content of the new covenant is the principle ‘thee and thy seed’ mentioned.”²⁸ “The age of fulness,” in their view, demands that only individuals who are capable of self-conscious faith are permitted to be heirs of these promises. As Jewett says, “. . .the temporal, earthly, typical elements of the old dispensation were dropped from the great house of salvation as scaffolding from the finished edifice.”²⁹ Among the ruins of the scaffolding lies the fruit of the womb, which was so jealously included in past eras. This reading the NT yields the conclusion that *both Jews and Gentiles no longer should consider their children members of the covenant.*

I want to turn this over to see the price tag. The cost of this is a fire sale on the whole of the covenant conception. Such a change in covenant recipients and covenant promises could hardly be more drastic! Covenant membership has always and ever included “you and your children” and covenant content is most fundamentally that the Lord is “God to you and your descendants” (Gen. 17:7, Deut. 7:9, 30:6, 1 Chr. 16:15, Ps. 103:17, 105:8). But, in fact, it is demonstrably false. There are many explicit statements about the new covenant which expressly include the “offspring,” “children,” “descendants,” and “you and your children.”

In the very first word about the new covenant was in Deuteronomy 30:6: “Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants...”³⁰ Jeremiah alludes to the above Deuteronomy passage throughout his prophecy. He emphasizes the inclusion of children in the new covenant promise. Notice that in Jeremiah 31:36, *the classic text of the new covenant*, the offspring of covenant participants are explicitly included.

Jeremiah 31:33-37: “But this is the covenant which I will make with *the house of Israel* after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within *them*, and on *their* heart I will write it; and I will be *their* God, and they shall be *My people*.” “If this fixed order departs From before Me,” declares the LORD, “ Then *the offspring of Israel* also shall cease From being a nation before Me forever. “ 37 Thus says the LORD, “If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all *the offspring of Israel* for all that they have done,” declares the LORD.”³¹

Likewise Jeremiah 32:37-40 promises “I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good, and for the good of their children after them. And I

²⁷For a bit of my pilgrimage, see www.wordmp3.com/baptism New covenant theology seeks to be distinct from dispensationalism and covenant theology and has become of growing movement among baptistic, Calvinists. See John G. Reisinger’s seminal manuscript, *Abraham’s Four Seeds* (Webster NY: Sound of Grace, 1990) (www.soundofgrace.com) and *New Covenant Theology*, Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2002).

²⁸David Kingdom, *Children of Abraham: A Reformed Baptist View of Baptism, the Covenant, and Children* (Sussex, UK: Carey, 1973), 34, 35.

²⁹Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 91.

³⁰The italicized portions of Scripture indicated my emphases for the sake of clarity.

³¹For an exposition of this text see Jeffrey Neill’s chapter in the *Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, Gregg Strawbridge, ed. (P&R, 2003) or my appendix in *Infant Baptism: Does the Bible Teach It?* at www.wordmp3.com/baptism.

will make an everlasting covenant with them” (See also Isaiah 44:3, 59:20-21, Joel 2, etc.).

In the New Testament, we find repeatedly the principle of “you and your seed” in the advent of fulfillment.

Luke 1:17: “And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, *to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children*, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Luke 2:49-50: For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name. and His mercy is upon *generation after generation toward those who fear him*.

Acts 2:39: For the promise is *for you and your children*, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself.

Acts 13:32-33: “And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled *this promise to our children* in that He raised up Jesus . . .

These texts provide overwhelming, explicit Biblical support across a range of new covenant prophetic texts and NT fulfillment texts for the belief that the children of believers are included in the new covenant. Hence, the good dispensational chart. (Why wasn’t this in Clarence Larkin’s *Biggest Book on Dispensational Charts?*)

Covenant (Administration)	Visible Signs	Descendants Included
Creation/Adamic	Tree of Life	1Cor. 15:22
Noahic	Rainbow	Gen. 7:1
Abrahamic (Other Patriarchs)	Circumcision Sacrifices/Meals	Gen. 17:11-13 Gen. 31:54
Mosaic	Passover (blood, then meal)	Ex. 12:24
Davidic	* * *	Ps. 89:3-4
New Covenant	Baptism (entrance) Lord’s Supper (continuance)	Acts 2:39 1 Cor. 10:17, 12:13

Fulfillment in Gentile Inclusion

Paul’s refrain throughout the epistles was *Gentiles are equal heirs with Jews*. For the apostles, the demonstrable proof of this was that uncircumcised (unproselytized) Gentiles (as households) received the Spirit just as the apostolic Jews did.³² We also know that these Gentiles were baptized, and in every explicit case of their baptism, it was of their households. *Every Gentile baptism expressly recorded, is a*

³²If this seems striking I urge you to review, Acts 11:9, 14-15, 15:3-9, 16:30.

household baptism.³³ As it turns out, real meaning of Jewett, Kingdon, and others in the new covenant baptistic vein have the real emphasis of the new covenant as not so much *Gentile inclusion* as it as *child exclusion*. But this progeny exclusion project is lacking an explicit basis in the NT. It is also refuted by Paul's insistence that the Abrahamic promise is "certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, 'A father of many nations have I made you')" (Rom.4:16-17).

Certainly the Jews had reason to think their children were in covenant in Paul's day — even the Judaizing distortion points to this since they were seeking the circumcision of Gentiles, and not just adult Gentiles. Their misguided enforcement of the circumcision of believing Gentiles was manifestly of Gentile boys, as well as men (e.g., Acts 15:5). But here Paul does not take away from the Gentiles the very promise so jealously held by the Jews, the inclusion of their children. Given the known beliefs of the Judaizers, if the situation had really been (as the anti-paedo must argue) that in the new covenant there was *no covenant inclusion for children whatsoever*, it is a loud silence that the Judaizers did not protest! The Judaizers would have "freaked." If they protested against Gentile adults (and children) not having to be circumcised (a sign of inclusion for the whole household), how much more would they have protested that *their own children were no longer considered in covenant with God!*

I acknowledged there is no explicit basis for how to deal with the children of believers in baptism or communion. Yet, there are numerous explicit texts on the inclusion of believers' children in the new covenant (Deut. 30:6, Jer. 31:36-37, Acts 2:39), in the church (Eph. 1:1/6:1-4, Col. 1:2/3:20, 1Cor. 7:14), and the kingdom (Matt. 19:14, Mark 10:14, Luke. 18:16). Moreover, no one can produce even one verse that explicitly excludes children of believers from baptism or communion.

On the face of it, then, why are such texts not persuasive? Dr. Malone summarizes it well,

Therefore, based on Jeremiah 31:31-34 and its description of regeneration in the New Covenant participants, and in light of Christ's definition of the entrance requirements to the kingdom (Jn. 3:5, 6) and church (Mt. 16:16-18), I cannot say that children of believers are 'in' the New Covenant or church or kingdom or 'God's people' until they show, by outward confession, evidence of regeneration.³⁴

He argues strongly infant inclusion (in this case, infant baptism) is to be ruled out of bounds since it is without explicit Scriptural warrant. Paedobaptists must rely on "good and necessary consequence" — or more poetically a twine string holding gospel pearls together.³⁵ So covenantalists must not rely on inference for their views and practices. This is a law of the Medes and Persians or perhaps an edict from Pharaoh — "So let it be written, so let it be done."

Only — Dr. Malone and all anti-paedos *infer* that little children are excluded since they cannot demonstrate regeneration. But *this inference* stands against the *explicit* inclusion of such children in the

³³The eunuch was a proselyte; Crispus is a Jew; and the 12 disciples of John are clearly Jews or at least proselytes (cf. John's ministry purpose); that leaves the following Gentile households: Cornelius, the very first Gentile convert, Lydia a worshiper of God (God-fearer), and the pagan Jailer of Acts 16 who gets a great lesson in covenant theology ("you and your household"). Less certain is Stephanas' household who may have been Gentiles as "the firstfruits of Achaia" (1Cor. 16:15), and perhaps Gaius (1 Cor. 1:14).

³⁴Fred A. Malone, *A String of Pearls Unstrung: A Theological Journey Into Believers' Baptism*, 19.

³⁵Malone, 13, 45, 46, 55.

biblical texts cited above. So should we go with the *inference of Drs. Malone and Jewett*, or the explicit statements of Scripture? Close consideration of the entrance requirements for the new covenant will demonstrate that these are directed toward apostatizing adults. And calls to repentance for covenant breaking adults cannot by any reasonable hermeneutical procedures be fairly made into entrance requirements for little ones.

In the final analysis all paedo-exclusion (antipaedobaptism or antipaedocommunion) is generated in theological inference from texts which are not explicitly addressing children. Such inferences are not good or necessary.

But What About 1 Corinthians 11?

Exegetical Considerations

Remember Paul's overall purpose in chapter 11 is to rebuke the Corinthians' sinful divisions and unworthy practice of the Lord's Supper. This is a recurrent theme in the book (1 Cor. 1:10, 3:3, 11:18). Paul addresses the Corinthians in the matter of the Lord's Supper (11:20) in verses 11:17-34. He addresses the Corinthian abuses of the Supper, namely, "schisms among you" (*schismata*) (11:18). In restating this severe problem he says, "divisiveness [literally 'heresies'] among you exists" (*hairesies*) (11:19). This is illustrated in saying, "For each individually in the supper eats ahead (before others), one is hungry and another drunk" (11:21).³⁶ In rebuking these problems Paul says they are to examine (*dokimazeto*) themselves and so eat and drink in a worthy manner (not unworthily, *anazios*). By continuing in such sin they would be guilty of "sinning against the body and blood of the Lord" (NIV) (*enoxos* – worthy of, guilty of, sinning against, caught in, cf. Matt. 26:66) and thus be judged. The stipulations for such judgment are specified: "because of this, among you many are powerless and sickly and a considerable number sleep [are dead]" (11:30).

Their schisms and factions were exceedingly inconsistent with the meaning of the Table. Paul has argued this in the preceding chapter. "For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17). The Supper signifies participation in Christ and unity with our brethren. We have a common loaf. He will go on to say we have a common cup ("to drink into one Spirit," 1 Cor. 12:13). Factions of gross proportion in the celebration of the Table are radically incongruent with the purpose of communion in the body and blood (1 Cor. 10:16). Therefore, since the whole point of the discussion of the Supper shows the unity of the body, how ridiculous is it then to create a new division between "communicant" and "non-communicant" members of the "one body" who are to all "partake of that one bread"? (1 Cor. 10:17). First Corinthians 11 certainly does not explicitly forbid children from partaking. Adults are the ones causing the trouble. There is no mention of children and there is no call for the exclusion of any person. All are to be included, but are admonished to do so in the right manner.

The baptistic exclusion of children from baptism is, however, grounded on (a misreading of) many texts which address adult capacity. The Presbyterian/Reformed exclusion of children from the Table is threadbare with only one strand, 1 Cor. 11:28.

However, a moment's contextual consideration leads to the view that divisions and schisms are, in fact, that which Paul is rebuking. His point is not to prohibit them from coming to the Table. He is not creating classes of body members some of which are communicants, excluding others. In fact, he is not even warning the presumptuous not to come. Rather he says, "But let a man examine himself, and *so let him eat* of the bread and drink of the cup" (11:28). He does not say, let a man examine himself and let

³⁶Clearly then, the Biblical substance in the cup is fermented wine.

him “not eat.” The Supper is a symbol of unity of all the body — not the mature or elite in the body, not the adults or intellectually superior. Those who create schisms like “communicant” and “non-communicant” are inadvertently doing exactly what Paul rebukes. As Jeffrey Meyers argues, “If Paul's fundamental concern is the unity of the body of Christ around the Table, and if his admonition to “prove oneself” is directed at those who divide the body at the Table, then, in my humble opinion, traditional Presbyterian theologians have some serious self-examination to perform before they come to the Lord's Table.”³⁷

Paedo-Inclusion in 1 Corinthians

The 1 Corinthians objection, ubiquitous in Reformed circles, is lacking precisely because of the *anologia fidei*. The *anology of Scripture* teaches us that Scripture interprets itself and is coherent. Fundamental discontinuities must be clear and unambiguous. In this case they are not. At least three statements in the context of 1 Corinthians 11 imply that baptized children are to participate in communion.

1. Those baptized into Moses ate and drank (1 Cor. 10:1-4). This is drawn as a parallel to the Corinthian sacraments. Remember too, that aside from a few faithful adults, only the children made it out of the wilderness. The adults were judged. Paul uses this to reprove the Corinthians from the spiritual pride and dissensions.

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were *baptized* into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all *ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink*. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. (1 Cor. 10:1-4)

2. “For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread” (1 Cor. 10:17). One body, one bread. Those in the body and those that eat of the bread are co-extensive. All that are in the body partake of the bread. If baptized children are in the body, then they may eat of the one bread.

3. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). Those that are baptized, “drink of one Spirit.” This is apparently an allusion to drinking of the cup (1 Cor. 11). By the Spirit we were made to drink. Again, there is an “equal sign” (=) between the baptized and the communicant. All that are baptized drink.

Therefore, I believe that historic precedent, notwithstanding the last few centuries in the West, is grounded in a deep reading of the inclusion of the children of the faithful. All of this certainly implies that children are to partake of communion.

³⁷“Presbyterian, Examine Thyself Restoring the Entire Body of Christ to the Lord's Family Table” in *The Case for Covenant Communion*, Gregg Strawbridge, ed. [forthcoming] (Monroe, LA: Athanasius Press).