

I. Who Are The Proper Subjects of Christian Baptism?

Tonight we're debating about who the proper subjects of Christian baptism are. Gene's position is that professing Christians alone are to be baptized. I believe that professing Christians as well as their infant children are the proper subjects of Christian baptism. Since both Gene and I agree about baptizing professors, I'll focus on the infant portion of my argument. My argument is simple: (1) All members of the visible Church are proper subjects of Christian baptism. (2) Infants of one or more professing Christian parent are members of the visible church. (3) Therefore, infants of one or more professing Christian parent are proper subjects of Christian baptism

Since the above argument is logically valid, that means the conclusion follows necessarily from the premises. If the premises are true, then the conclusion is unavoidable. I believe a good case can be made for each premise. I admit that given the information we have in the Bible, we cannot achieve some sort of epistemological certainty regarding the conclusion. Both sides must admit this. We are finite and fallen. We could be mistaken. Nevertheless, I believe we have good reasons to accept each premise.

I take it that both sides accept the first premise. That is, baptism is for all those who join the visible church. It is an initiatory sign. As reformed baptist Wayne Grudem writes in his *Systematic Theology*, "baptism is the sign of entering the fellowship of the visible church" (984). In the recent book *Believer's Baptism* (2007), reformed credobaptist Mark Dever asks and answers his own question. "Was baptism required for church membership? The answer would seem to be yes." He goes on to say, "To require [baptism] for membership [in the church] is to do no more than Scripture does of Christians" (341). Reformed baptists Fred Malone (2003: 118), Tom Schreiner (2007: 71, 78), Shawn Wright (2007: 2), Steven Wellum (2007: 113, 157), and many others also agree with the principle that baptism was the sign of joining the visible church.

Reformed paedobaptist also agree with their baptist brothers on this premise. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* states, "baptism is the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church." Note also that the Bible assumes this principle. One example is found in Acts 2, where we read that all those baptized were "added to their number that day." It is surely possible that not all of the 3,000 baptized were elect, thus they were "added" to the roles of the *visible* church. If you join the visible church, you ought to be baptized. That's the model.

Since premise one has been established I will move on to argue for and defend premise two – that infants of one or more professing Christian are considered church members. How should we answer the question about the status of believer's children? Should we flip through the Bible, find an example of, say, the adult Ethiopian eunuch and make him our *paradigm* for the proper subjects of baptism? An adult believer who had no children? Or, should we look at what the Bible has to say about *children* and their place in the church and covenant? That is, should we derive our theology of the status of children from texts that do not mention children? Or, should we do a systematic and exegetical study of the Bible and see what the entire Bible has to say about the children of believers? And, when we read the Bible, how should we do so? Should we read it as 21st century Americans, imposing our modern categories of thought onto the Bible? Or, should we

try to put ourselves in the sandals of the audience originally addressed? It's the latter approach I'll take.

As Christians who hold to sola and tota Scriptura, we frequently go to both the old and the new testaments to get answers. We are, and we should be, whole Bible Christians. Like contemporary writers, ancient writers wrote within a conceptual milieu that requires some knowledge of the culture, mindset, and verbiage, to be able understand what is being conveyed. Interpreting the Bible this way is known as the "Grammatical-historical method." About this method, reformed baptist Fred Malone says that we should interpret the Bible "with strict attention to the grammar of the original languages, including the ordinary use of grammar from secular sources and, historically, with regard to the historical backgrounds of the text; this includes the secular and biblical resources that enlighten historical events, customs, language usage, and so forth" (p. 29). Thus, we shall follow the same hermeneutical principles our reformed Baptist brothers follow.

Having stated the interpretive grid I shall assume, it would be helpful for us to briefly look at the cultural ideas of family and religion in the time of both the old and new testaments. Since the days of Genesis, a person's status and identity was grounded in the family. Family (defeasibly) determined career, land, and religious affiliations. Thus Edesio Sanchez could note that, in the Ancient Near East, "the family was the religious center for religious instruction. As a religious community, the family preserved the traditions of the past and transmitted them by means of instruction and worship" (Family in the Bible (ed. Hess et al. 2003: 41). We also see these ideas running through the ancient Greco-Roman world as well. In Marriage and Family in the Biblical World, Baugh notes that, "the common worship of certain gods in the Greek world, especially of ancestral gods, was seen as the tie that bound the family together" (112-113). Reformed baptist Andreas Kostenberger notes that in the early church there was a "close relationship between church and family, and that the New Testament, by linking family so close to the church, presents the latter as the eschatological extension of the former" (Ibid: 277). This is why David Tsumura states that "The Biblical concept of family is more than a physical and cultural one; it is a spiritual community in the Redeemer. God's family includes both earthly family and heavenly family. The very basic principle in the Bible is this: even if other people chose to serve other gods, 'As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord'" (Ibid: 79). Therefore, we can see that the basic assumption throughout the ancient world, both Jewish and Gentile, was that family members are included as followers of, and members of, the same religion as the heads of those families.

Thus, the idea that children were no longer considered members of same religion as their parents' would have been a major change to the entire conceptual scheme of both Jew and Gentile. In Jeremiah 44:7 we read: "Now this is what the LORD God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Why bring such great disaster on yourselves by cutting off from Judah the men and women, the children and infants, and so leave yourselves without a remnant?" Michael Horton notes that the idea of being covenantally cursed included: "No descendants, mothers with empty breasts, [and] a siege of such severity that parents would cannibalize their own children" (*The God of Promise* 2006: 53). If the first century Christians had their children removed from the covenant, surely the Jewish apologists of the day would have pointed out that leaving Judaism for Christianity involved being cursed and without a remnant! But, no Jewish apologists have been known to make this argument.

Why not? Given this, it is interesting to note that there is not even a peep in the Bible correcting the way people had thought for the past few thousand years. No one tells the Jewish Christians that they are not cursed because their children have been removed. In fact, we find the opposite.

A basic rule that I and reformed Baptists hold to, as adherents of covenant theology, is that God's covenants are essentially the same through the ages unless changed in some way by God himself. We all assume this even in our own laws, don't we? When we wake up on January 1st, 2009, and Hillary Clinton is president, will we all speed on the freeway assuming that the speed limit signs need to have the new administration reaffirm their validity before we assume them binding in the new administration? Of course not! We assume binding unless told otherwise.

Regarding this basic covenantal hermeneutic, reformed baptist Wayne Grudem writes that, "A covenant is an unchangeable, divinely imposed legal agreement between God and man that stipulates the conditions of their relationship. The phrase 'divinely imposed' is included to show that man can never negotiate with God or change the terms of the covenant" (*Systematic Theology*: 515). In the Reformed perspective, God is the lawgiver. We do not dare presume to change things around for Him unless he authorizes us to do so. This is why we frequently read that man is not to "add or subtract the words" of the covenant. Paul tells us, "Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise." Keeping this basic and agreed upon fact in mind, let's proceed to see how this bears on the issue of the place of children in the visible church.

My reformed baptist brothers and I would disagree with a dispensationalist understanding of the church. Dispensationalists Ryrie, Feinberg, Blaising, and Bock all list the uniqueness of the church as a characteristic of dispensationalism. Though disagreement may exist over some of the details of this distinction, dispensationalists are agreed that the church began with Pentecost and is not to be identified as Israel. In response, the first thing to keep in mind about the visible church is that it didn't begin in Acts. It didn't begin with Moses. It also didn't begin with Abraham. The visible church began in the garden. Gene Cook agrees with this. He writes on his Fide-O blog, "Adam and Eve were the first members of the bride of Christ, the congregation, i.e. the church." In its most basic form the church is a community of people who worship God and profess the true religion. Cain and Able brought sacrifices to Jehovah, showing the existence of a worshipping community. We also see in Genesis 4:26 that people were "calling upon the name of the Lord." Thus there has always been a community worshipping God. As we move through history, children are still included in this visible worshipping community that worshipped the true God. Noah included his family. Job includes his family. Abraham includes his family. And, with Abraham, we see family members marked out by circumcision as members of the visible people of God. At this point, an 8 day old is given a sign that says that Jehovah is his God. He didn't even need to profess faith in order to have it truly said of him, "Jehovah is my God, and I am his people."

In Israel we see a more developed and organized church than these earlier iterations. The New Testament views Israel as a church. When the people are gathered before the Lord in Deuteronomy this is called the "day of assembly." The Septuagint translates the word for assembly

as “ekklestiazo.” In the New Testament Stephen speaks of the people in the wilderness as the church (ekklestia) in the wilderness. As before, God includes the children of those professing the true religion. Deut 30:12 reads, “Assemble the people—men, women and children, so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God.” And again we read about the “ekklestia” in Joshua 8:35, “There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children.” And about the ekklesia in II Chronicles 20:13 we read, “All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.”

This visible church is continued on into the New Testament. Wayne Grudem writes, “This present Church age is not an interruption in God’s plan, but a continuation of his plan expressed throughout the Old Testament” (*Systematic Theology*: 861). All of Israel, even the apostate wilderness generation, is called our forefathers (I. Cor. 10:1). This is interesting because I Corinthians is addressed to “all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 1:2). Thus we have ethnic Israelites, apostate included, mentioned as our forefathers, while there is no genetic link, only an ecclesiastical one! Anthony Thiselton notes in his commentary on I Corinthians that the Greek word for forefathers “often denotes spiritual ancestor in a sense which denotes not necessarily blood ties but reproduction of character” (724). Both the character of the faithful and the apostate are present in the church of Corinth, and sadly, in many of ours today.

So, we have seen that God’s church is one throughout the ages. The church has always consisted of professing adults and their infant children. As the church develops, we see a more detailed and orderly church in the Israelites. This church also included children. We have nowhere seen the children removed from God’s visible people. There is not one text that has as its exegetical purpose the removal of professing believer’s children from the church. We have seen that even reformed baptists and the Bible teach that we should assume that the way God worked with his people previously should be assumed to be intact until He tells us otherwise.

But, the argument doesn’t stop here! It’s not as if the reformed paedobaptist is left asking for revelation from God *removing* the children from the congregation of his visible people, all who have a right to baptism upon entrance into the church, even though lacking such a command to remove the children he put in the church would be enough to conclude that they’re still in. By the paedobaptist’s lights, God has also positively revealed to us that our children are part of the church today. Let’s turn to that argument.

Speaking of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 30 we read: “This is what the LORD says: ‘I will restore the fortunes of Jacob’s tents and have compassion on his dwellings; From them will come songs of thanksgiving and the sound of rejoicing. I will add to their numbers, and they will not be decreased; Their children will be as in days of old, and their community will be established before me, Their leader will be one of their own; their ruler will arise from among them. So you will be my people, and I will be your God.’” Speaking about the time of the New Covenant, Jeremiah says “At that time, saith Jehovah, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people” (Jer. 31:1). Again, referring to the times of the New Covenant, the Lord says through the

prophet Ezekiel, in chapter 37: “My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them.” Zechariah 10 teaches us that God “shall strengthen the house of Judah, And I shall save the house of Joseph, And I shall bring them back, Because I have had compassion on them; And they will be as though I had not rejected them. And their heart will be glad as if from wine; indeed, their children will see it and be glad, Their heart will rejoice in the LORD. I will whistle for them to gather them together, for I have redeemed them; And they will be as numerous as they were before. "When I scatter them among the peoples, They will remember Me in far countries, And they, with their children, will live and come back.” This does not appear to be how one would go about conveying the thought that the New Covenant would exclude the infant children of its members. Instead, we seem to be being taught the opposite.

Consider the last book of the Old Testament, where we read about John the Baptist and part of what his mission entailed: Mal 4:5 “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. 6. And he will **restore** the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.” Now what, according to the New Testament, is the reason for this? Luke 1:17 tell us, “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 their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” This is in contrast to the breakdown that would happen between the fathers and children of the Old Covenant in virtue of God’s covenantal curses brought upon them. Thus Ezekiel 5:10: “Therefore in your midst fathers will eat their children, and children will eat their fathers.” Hence, being an idolatrous, covenant-breaking people had the consequence that the relation between father and child would be one of enmity, and of covenantal disunity.

The New Covenant, by contrast, *restores* the people of God. As Jeremiah had stated – at that time I will be a God to the families of New Covenant Israel, and that they will be my people. So Zech 10:8-10: “I will whistle for them to gather them, they will remember Me in far countries, And they, with their children, will live and come back.” Mary, the Mother of Jesus, applies the Old Testament idea of covenantal succession to her day and every day after that: Luke 2:48 “For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. 49 For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name. 50 and his mercy is upon generation after generation, toward those who fear Him.”

In Jeremiah 31:33 New Covenant members will have God’s law written upon their heart. Baptists argue that this means that children are excluded from the covenant. Why would this mean a removal covenant members’ children when Hosea says that because the law was *not* on the Old Covenant members’ hearts, this meant their children were cast off?! “Because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children” (4:6). Wouldn’t New Covenant Jews, who were familiar with Hosea mind you, *at least* have asked for clarification if the Apostles had told them that their children were not part of God’s people? We can imagine the question arising quite naturally: “You mean the law is on our heart, but our children are still forgotten!? They

don't, as Jeremiah said, return with us? Please explain!" Perhaps they didn't ask that because they were too busy having numerous debates about the inclusion of Gentiles. Note that. The New Testament portrays numerous, heated debates the church had over Gentiles being *included* among the covenant people. It was so unexpected that even the Apostle Peter had to have a private talk with God in order to get with the program. But what did these Jewish Christians do when they found out their own children had been excluded? Surely they debated much more vigorously than they had about the inclusion of the Gentiles, right? If the Jews were debating over the inclusion of the Gentiles, how much more would they have debated the exclusion of their own children? Yet in the New Testament, we find utter silence. *But* that silence is deafening. (There's a Bayesian argument in the offing here. Given our background knowledge we would expect to have these sorts of questions recorded, yet we do not have them recorded. This raises the probability that they children were still assumed to belong to God's covenant people.)

Not only, therefore, do we have no texts that remove the children from their place in the visible people of God, we have texts that specifically include them in the New Covenant! This, in and of itself, should be enough to show that the infants of Christian parents' are to be counted among the New Testament people of God. But, the paedobaptist argument doesn't stop there! I feel like a salesman, I keep saying, "But wait! There's more!" First, we see that, as the New Testament progresses, the children of believers seem to have the same status as their Old Testament counterparts. For example, we read in Luke 18, "People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." About the kingdom of God Reformed Baptist Wayne Grudem writes, "We should recognize that there is a close connection between the kingdom of God and the church. The kingdom manifests itself through the church." Baptist George Eldon Ladd writes, "The kingdom is never identified with its subjects. They are the people of God's rule who enter it, live under it, and are governed by it. The Church is the community of the kingdom, but never the kingdom itself." And John Frame agrees, "The Church is the headquarters of the kingdom of God, the base from which God's dominion extends and expands." Thus if Jesus tells us that to the children of covenant parents belong the kingdom of God, then surely they should be regarded as church members considering the relationship the church and the kingdom have. Some baptists have replied to this by telling us that Jesus is just giving us an object lesson; he's merely saying that the kingdom belongs to people who have an infant like disposition. But I side with credobaptist Paul King Jewett's comments on this passage. Jewett says of this interpretation that it is "correct as far as it goes, [but] can we say that this interpretation exhausts the meaning of the text? Does it not seem forced and arbitrary to say that Jesus meant, 'Let the little children come to me, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to people who are like them, people who resemble them in spirit?' The Greek by no means implies the exclusion, but rather the inclusion, of the ones mentioned. When the Jews cry out against Paul, 'Away with such a one!' they could hardly have meant 'away with someone like this man.' Rather, they meant away with Paul, and everyone of his kind! Surely if parents brought their children to Jesus when he was in the flesh, we may bring them to the [church] where he meets with his people. Therefore, one may say that in all Christian churches the children of confessing parents belong to the congregation" (59-60, 62).

Second, the children of New Testament Christian parents are instructed just as were their Old Testament counterparts. Old Testament fathers were supposed to teach and train their children, bringing them up to embrace their faith. In Deuteronomy 11 we read, “Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” This training of children is known as discipling them. *Manthano* is the root word from where we get the noun “disciple.” The root word simply means “train” or “learn.” The Israelites knew that they were to “disciple” their children. We read in Deuteronomy 31:12: “Assemble the people, the men and the women and children, in order that they may hear and learn (*manthano*) and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law.” Likewise every father was to disciple his child, as the book of Proverbs tells us: “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn” (Prov. 22:6). We find this idea of discipling children confirmed in the New Testament as well: “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Did Paul just mean for fathers to bring up their “mature, professing Christian children” in the “training and instruction of the Lord?” Thus fathers would bring up their “pagan” children in the “fear and instruction” of Dionysus?

Third, the responsibilities of the parents of both covenants are the same, as are many of the promises to the children of those parents. Why did God choose Abraham? Genesis 18 tells us, “For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD.” He circumcised them and then taught them. This, by the way, is the same order Matthew 18 tells us to make disciples in. Baptize and then teach. So, Abraham directed his children in the way “of the Lord” and in Ephesians 6 we read that Christian fathers are to “bring [their children] up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” Old Testament children were given the law to honor their mother and father (Ex. 20:12), and New Testament children are given the same law (Eph. 6:2). Old Testament children had promises attached to that law (Ex. 20:12), and the New Testament children have an almost identical promise (Eph. 6:3). Families followed the lead of their federal head in the Old Testament (Josh. 24:15), and so did families in the New Testament (Acts 16:34). Old Testament families would have the sign of covenant inclusion given to the members of their family (Gen. 17:27), and so did New Testament families (Acts 16:32, 34). The duration of covenant mercy was the same for Old Testament children (Deut. 7:9) as it is for New Testament children (Lk. 1:50). The Old Covenant was for the “good of” the Old Covenant parent’s children (Deut. 4:40), and for the “good of” the New Covenant children as well (Jer. 32:39). Perhaps this is why we see that virtually every time someone who had a household present was baptized, the household was also baptized.

We have seen that ever since Adam and Eve’s time, children have been considered members of their parents’ religion. This holds true of both Jew and Gentile. Not only would Jews have thought it odd that their children were not part of their religion anymore, so would the pagan Gentile converts. We have seen that the children of believers have always been included in the visible church. We have seen that they have been explicitly put into the church. We have seen that they have nowhere been removed from the visible people of God. We have seen that their removal constituted covenantal a curse. We noted that the removal of the children would have at least called for some explanation, especially when the law not being on the heart was cause for the

removal of the children. We have seen that not only is there no revelation removing them, their explicit inclusion in the New Covenant, the church, and the kingdom, has been positively revealed. We have seen that they still have the same status as their Old Covenant counterparts. We have seen that New and Old Covenant parents have the same responsibility to their children. *Everywhere we turn* we find continuity on top of continuity on top of continuity. We have seen that when one looks at *the Bible's* theology of children, rather than isolated texts describing baptisms of childless Ethiopian eunuchs, and 3,000 males at Pentecost, we have no warrant to exclude our children from the sign of church, covenant, and kingdom inclusion. Thus, if we assume continuity we have no reason to exclude the children from God's visible people. And, even if we assume a discontinuity, we have no reason to exclude the children of believers from God's visible people since their inclusion has been positively revealed. The one who holds to Covenant Theology, or New Covenant Theology, or even Dispensational Theology, should accept my above argumentation.

Therefore, if baptism may properly be given to those the Bible says are members of the visible church, and if the infants of professing Christian parents are counted as members of the visible church, then infants may properly be given baptism. And thus we can conclude by agreeing with the eminent B. B. Warfield: "The argument in a nutshell is simply this: God established His Church in the days of Abraham and put children into it. They must remain there until He puts them out. He has nowhere put them out. They are still then members of His Church and as such entitled to its ordinances [at their appointed times]."

II. Expel the Wicked From Among You!:

The Exclusion Principle and its Bearing on a Continued Internal and External Aspect to the New Covenant as an Historical Administration of the Covenant of Grace

Introduction

Brian Rosner concludes his discussion on exclusion in the *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* by recognizing that,

"Few topics do more to emphasize the corporate dimension of the Christian faith, the seriousness and consequences of sin and the holiness of God, than exclusion. In the Bible serious offenders are excluded from the community because of its solidarity, in order to maintain its holiness, because of breach of covenant, [and] in hope of their restoration... [Exclusion] reminds us that ... certain standards of conduct cannot be continually transgressed with impunity. The gift of being included in God's people demands appropriate behavior. In the present evil age, in anticipation of the age to come, God uses various means to call out and purify a people for himself, one of which, ironic as it seems, is exclusion. He deals with this people, not only as individuals, but also primarily as groups. Exclusion is a powerful reminder that such groups, or churches, are responsible to one another as well as to God. Their behavior, whether doing good or committing sin, affects the community's well being; exclusion undermines the profound interrelation and interdependence of believers in the body of Christ."

It is my contention that in the biblical notion of the “Exclusion Principle” (EP, hereafter) we have, as it is found in the NT, warrants us in concluding that there is still an external/internal aspect to the covenant and, therefore, people can break the covenant. As the Calvinist understands this, these covenant breakers were never saved in the first place; they were merely, to use Bavinck’s terminology, “in but not of the covenant.” Without getting into a discussion about the various arguments and details regarding what is sometimes referred to as “Covenant Theology,” we should be able to agree that we — NT Christians — are in New Covenant times; and thus, if a professing Christian can be said to have “violated (broken, transgressed, not continued in, etc.,) the covenant,” where this covenant is not the covenant of works, then said professing Christian has violated the New Covenant (as opposed to the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, etc.). I will attempt to argue that the EP provides warrant for the belief that there is a basic continuity between the older covenants and the New Covenant; namely that, at this current stage of redemptive history, the covenant is still a “mixed community.” This is contrary to the nature of the New Covenant community as understood by reformed baptists. As Steven Wellum (2007) puts it:

“[I]n a Baptist view of the church, what is unique about the nature of the new covenant community is that it comprises a regenerate, believing people, not a mixed people like Israel of old. Therefore, Baptists only view as true members of the new covenant community those who have actually entered into union with Christ by repentance and faith and as such are partakers of all the benefits and blessings of the new covenant age.”

For my purposes, we will not take our time to analyze Wellum’s claim, nor the rest of his paper critiquing infant baptism. The purpose of my argument is not to establish infant baptism, but simply to establish the existence of a “mixed community,” which, as you can see in the above quote, simply means a covenant community that numbers both regenerate and unregenerate among its members. So, though we could quibble over claims like: “Baptists only view as true members of the new covenant community those who have actually entered into union with Christ by repentance and faith,” by inquiring into the meaning of the phrase, “*true* members of the new covenant,” as somehow inconsistent with what paedobaptist teach when, depending on how terms are defined and fleshed out, I should think the vast majority of reformed paedobaptist would agree that only the elect are “true” members of the new covenant; it would be beyond the scope of this paper to quibble over such claims.

Furthermore, it is not my contention that if one substantiates the idea of a New Covenant “mixed community,” one has *automatically* substantiated the claim that “the children of professing Christian parent(s) are in said covenantal community.” (To clear away any ambiguities, I will henceforth substitute “infant” for “child” of professing Christian parent(s). To the best of my knowledge, many baptists do baptize their children when their children are able to make a credible profession of faith and so, technically, the baptist can believe that (some) children of professing Christian parent(s) are proper subjects of Christian baptism.) I recognize full well that substantiating the one does not automatically substantiate the other; they are logically distinct. Many reformed Baptists also point out this concession of mine, and Fred Malone is representative. Says Malone, “Even if it were true that [the apostates mentioned in the book of Hebrews] were

considered in the New Covenant by their profession, they were not infants” (p. 102). But if this is granted, then the “mixed community” is granted, and Malone would be at odds with fellow reformed Baptists like Dr. Wellum.

Nevertheless, I have always understood the use of these “mixed community” passages to function as defeater-defeaters to the baptist’s original defeater of the belief that the infants of professing Christian parent(s) are still considered to be in covenant with God. It has been the Baptist who has argued that since the New Covenant consists of only the elect (or, regenerate, there is no universal agreement here), and since a sincere profession of faith is the best evidence-indicator that God has given us to discern the elect or regenerate (or, covenantal) status of a professing Christian, then baptism, the sign of the New Covenant, should only be given to those who profess faith. Therefore, the Baptist has used the idea of a completely elect or regenerate covenant community (pure, not mixed, that is) to undercut the paedobaptist position that the infants of professing Christian parent(s) ought to be assumed to still have covenantal status when there is no evidence-indicator of said infant’s elect or regenerate status; thus providing no warrant for the Church to assume that said child is in the covenant.

It is in that dialectical context that that argument for a mixed community is meant to apply. If successful, this argument defeats the original argument that the New Covenant is not a mixed community, and therefore the Baptist may not use it as an *objection* against infant baptism. I do not use it as a *positive* argument to establish the covenantal status of infants. (At best, the principle of a continued mixed covenant community is used to *explain* how there could be non-elect (or, non-regenerate) in the New Covenant community.) If the baptist promises to never object to infant baptism on the grounds that we are epistemologically hindered from discerning the covenantal status of our infants (as best we can, using the evidence-indicators God has given us) because we have no idea as to whether they are elect or regenerate, then I promise not to bring up arguments for a continued mixed covenant community. I doubt this will happen, though, especially considering that it is the theological bread and butter of many reformed baptist polemics.

Thus, without overstating my case, I will attempt to show that the New Covenant is a “mixed community,” while agreeing that this does not prove that infants are members of the New Covenant. That argument is made elsewhere. However, if I can establish this point, I will have put a dent in one of, if not *the*, main argument(s) reformed baptists use in their case *against* infant baptism. Therefore, Baptists will not be able to use the “pure” nature of the New Covenant as a *reason* to *reject* infant baptism. They will need to look elsewhere for those arguments. I will make my main case from I Corinthians 5:1-13. I will then briefly look at some other passages which seem to imply a “mixed community.” I will then follow up with a response to some anticipated objections.

The Argument Stated

In his excellent monograph *Paul, Scripture, & Ethics*, Brian Rosner offers an exegetical case for the function the Old Testament scriptures played in forming the theological presuppositions which

undergird and inform Paul's approach to the scandal the Corinthian church was going through in the "ongoing sexual relationship of a member of their congregation with his unbelieving stepmother" (Rosner 1999: 61). Paul's response is that the Corinthians should, "Purge the evil person from among you" (I Cor. 5:13). Why does Paul say this? How does he view the Corinthian church in relation to the Old Testament church? Why does Paul's comment echo the expulsion formula found in the Old Testament? Is this all Paul links to from the Old Testament?

There are at least three features in I Corinthians 5:1-13 which, taken together, "suggest a link between 1 Corinthians 5 and Pentateuchal teaching on community exclusion" (Rosner: 64). Pentateuchal teaching on *community exclusion* was nothing other than *covenant exclusion*. The three features Rosner mentions are (1) the handing of the man over to Satan for his destruction, (2) the verbal form of the Greek word for "destruction" (also in 5:5), and (3) the quotation of Deuteronomy in 5:13. Rosner notes that in (1) we have a "devotion" comparable to the Old Testament curses (Deut 7:26; 13:14-18; Ex. 22:19; Josh. 6:18; 7:12; Is. 43:28; Jer. 25:9; Zech. 14:11; Mal. 3:24). Contact with the "devoted things" would spread throughout the community. In (2) the verbal form of *oleqroV* ("destruction") is used four times in the Septuagint to translate "cut;" which is a "prominent term in the teachings of the Scriptures on community exclusion." And (3) is a direct quote from Deuteronomy 17:7.

Anthony Thiselton therefore notes that Paul's final appeal to Deut. 17:7 (LXX) corroborates Rosner's detailed work on the Deuteronomical background to this chapter. Thiselton goes on to quote Richard B. Hays' comments about Paul's use of Deuteronomy 17:7. For Paul

[T]here always has been and will be only one Israel. Into that one Israel the Gentile Christians such as the Corinthians have now been absorbed. For that reason Paul can deploy the words of Deut. 17:7 (LXX) as a direct word of exhortation to the Corinthians to guard the purity of their community...No introductory formula intrudes between Moses and the Corinthians, no conjunction weakens the command to a simile. Paul could have written, 'Just as Moses commanded Israel to drive out the evil person, so you....' But...the Scriptural command is treated as a self-evidently valid word addressed immediately to these Gentiles ... [a] daring hermeneutical posture: they are to stand with Israel and join in the covenant confession....Only for readers who stand within this covenant community does the immediacy of Paul's appeal to Deut. 17:7 make sense.

The OT background brings particular coherence and force to 5:1-13. As with the expulsion of Achan, of whose 'infamous' sins it is said, 'such a thing is not done in Israel' (Gen. 34:7; Deut. 22:21; Judg. 20:6, 10; 2 Sam. 13:12; Jer. 29:23). The expulsion principle expressed in Deut. 17:7 reappears in Deut. 13:5; 19:19; and 22:22, 24. Furthermore, whether the accusations and expulsions are valid or otherwise in a specific case, exclusion, Wolff comments, leaves the person who is expelled *lonely* (*yachid*) to endure "the misery of segregation and isolation, which imply wretchedness and affliction." And "This ... is what Paul hopes will lead to the turning and salvation of the offender, and still more urgently to setting things right for the corporate identity and holiness of the congregation, as the people of the New covenant," says Thiselton. Thus, for

the above stated reasons, the reference to Deuteronomy 17:7 in I Corinthians 5:13 is at least a *prima facie* reference, in Paul's mind, to removing someone from the *covenant* community.

At this time there are only two covenants men are said to be in. The (granting certain reformed assumptions) (i) Covenant of Works and (ii) the New Covenant (this could get more detailed depending on how one understand the Covenant of Grace and its relationship to the New Covenant, but for my purposes this discussion does not affect my argument). Since Paul is not talking about removing the Corinthian from the Covenant of Works(!), he must therefore be referring to a removal from the New Covenant. Since I Corinthians 5:1-13 presents the Church with general instructions for excommunication, then anyone excommunicated can be said to have been removed from the New Covenant. Since Paul (and the rest of Scripture) would not allow that someone who has Jesus Christ as their high priest could be removed from the New Covenant, we must view this removal to be removal from a *visible* or *external* aspect of the New Covenant. If the one excommunicated is regenerate (this is rare, but it can happen for myriad reasons), he is only removed from the external aspect of the New Covenant. If the one excommunicated is removed (while, for sake of simplicity, he doesn't ever return), he is only removed from the external aspect of the New Covenant; but he was never in the internal aspect of the New Covenant (where the benefits of Christ's death are given). Since excommunication is an undeniable *fact*, then one cannot argue that this is merely a "*hypothetical* warning, intended to keep the elect in the covenant."

Furthermore, given the reliance Paul has on the Old Testament covenant exclusion principle, it is extremely unlikely that he operates with a modern bifurcation of "visible church" and "external covenant," a distinction made by some Baptists. Indeed, it appears that Paul is affirming the reformed paedobaptist idea that the visible church is the visible covenant community. Just like it was in OT Israel. My guess is that if you responded to Paul's teaching in I Corinthians 5:1-13 by asking: "You mean were are expelled from the visible church, right?", he would have looked at you with a perplexed look on his face and respond, "What do you mean? There's a difference?" Therefore, since the baptist must admit that people are actually excommunicated, and since Paul says that this is removal from the covenant, and since the only covenant operating right now is the New Covenant, then the Baptist must admit that people are actually removed from the New Covenant. Since some people that have been removed from the New Covenant are not regenerate, then the New Covenant is still a "mixed community."

The Argument Developed

Above I made mention to three features in I Corinthians 5:1-13 which, taken together, "suggest a link between 1 Corinthians 5 and Pentateuchal teaching on community exclusion." Why do these three features suggest a link between the teaching on community exclusion found in I Corinthians 5 and the Pentateuchal teachings? We will answer this by looking at three reasons why someone would be excluded from the Old Testament community. Together these three reasons (or, "motifs," cf. Rosner) are reasons for the Israelites to "exclude the wicked from among them." This is known as the Exclusion Principle (EP, hereafter).

Rosner categorizes the reasons or motives for exclusion in the Old Testament as falling under three motifs: (1) the covenant motif, (2) the corporate responsibility motif, and (3) the holiness motif (Rosner, 65). We will look at them in order.

The Covenant Motif

The EP in Deuteronomy, involving the Hebrew verb translated “utterly remove,” is “consistently associated with the covenant motif” (Rosner: 65). Paul uses the LXX translation of that verb in I Corinthians 5:13. According to Deuteronomy, people are “utterly removed ... because of breach of covenant” (Rosner: 65). Deuteronomy 17 supports this understanding. In v. 2 the expulsion takes place because a man or woman has “transgressed the *covenant*.” Looking at Joshua 2 and the sin of Achan, we can, again, see that the EP is enforced because Achan “has violated the *covenant* of the Lord.” The EP and its connection between a violation of the covenant can also be seen in Deuteronomy 19:13, 19; 21:9, 21; 22:22, 24; 24:7; Joshua 23:16, etc.

Furthermore, since it has been proven that the EP finds a basis in covenantal transgression, we can cite “another reason for expulsion ... is the deterrence of further breach of covenant in the community” (Rosner: 65). In Deuteronomy 19:19-20 we read that the covenant breaker must be “purged from among them” so that the evil will never be done again in the community. If the evil were “done again,” then there would be more people “purged” and this because they too “transgressed the covenant.” Thus the EP is enforced “to maintain Israel’s obedience to the demands of the covenant” (Rosner: 65).

The Corporate Responsibility Motif

Also associated with the EP is the idea that the covenant breaching sin of the transgressor’s affects the entire Assembly of God’s people. In Deuteronomy 19:13 the EP is stated thus: “You shall purge the evil from Israel, so that it may go well with all of you.” Rosner notes that here we have “introduc[ed] the motif of corporate responsibility, in which the community is held responsible for the sin of an individual” (Rosner: 66).

More than a few texts makes that the EP is vitally connected with the corporate responsibility motif evident. “In the following prominent examples the entire nation suffers, or is threatened with, some degree of divine displeasure on account of a gravely sinning member” (Rosner: 66). Rosner offers 9 such examples. I will mention just a few. (a) In Exodus 16:27-28 it was some people breaking the Sabbath which in turn caused God to respond: “How long will you [i.e., the nation] refuse to keep my commandments?” (b) In Joshua 7:1, Achan’s sin is treated as the sin of all Israel: “But the Israelites acted ungratefully in regard to the devoted things.” The ESV says that all “*Israel* acted unfaithfully” due to the sin of a *few*. (c) When some of the entire congregation built their own alter by the Jordan they were told: “16 Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD, 'What is this breach of faith that you have committed against the God of Israel in turning away this day from following the LORD....if you too rebel against the LORD today then tomorrow he will be angry with the *whole congregation of Israel*.” (d) Nehemiah tells Sabbath breakers, “Now *you* are stirring up more wrath against *Israel*.”

Thus the EP was enforced to keep the entire covenant community safe from God's displeasure with one or more covenant breakers. "While such persons remained, the nation was implicated in their sin and, it seems, impending punishment."

The Holiness Motif

The Holiness motif was connected with I Corinthians 5:5 above. The point was made that the word used by Paul in I Corinthians 5:5 translated "destruction" has reference to Pentateuchal community exclusion practice. The Hebrew word is "associated with holy war and is a curse directed against people and objects which must be excluded because of contacts with foreign gods" (Rosner, 67). These offenses are marked out as ritual offenses (Ge. 17:14; Exod 12:15, 19; 30:33, 38; 31, 14; Lev. 7:20, 25, 27; 17:4, 9, 14; 19:8; 22:3; 23:29; Num. 4:18; 9:13; 19:13, 20; I Sam. 2:33) (Rosner: 68, n.33). Offenders are excluded from the community because of their contradiction to the holiness of God, and the requirement that Israel be holy also. A person who "takes possession of a devoted thing must himself be devoted, along with his house and even his town. In the holiness motif, a person or thing must be removed from the covenant people of God because of the holiness of God who has set apart the community. All members of the visible church have been "set apart" in at least an external sense. This is why the London Baptist Confession of Faith says that non-elect/regenerate professing Christians may rightly "be called visible saints" (LBC, XXVI: II).

Therefore, we see that in these three motifs we have three major reasons for exclusion from the community. In the Old Testament, a person (or persons) was "purged from the people" for (1) breach of covenant, (2) guilt by association, and (3) the call to remain holy. This EP had further effects in that the EP was to be a deterrent for future covenant breaking, future judgment on the people, and the contamination of the people contra their holiness. These further effects "are not, of course, mutually exclusive. Rather they form a package of three perspectives [what John Frame would call a triad!] on the identity of Israel. People are excluded because Israel is the sanctified (holiness motif), covenant (covenant motif) community (corporate responsibility motif) of the Lord, the holy God" (Rosner: 69).

Applying the Argument to Paul's Use of the EP

As Rosner (1999) notes,

Most treatments of the subject concentrate on who gets excluded (for which sins and heresies), how the exclusion takes place (the procedure to be followed), who authorizes it (a leader, the congregation or God) and what it involves (from the withdrawal of certain social contact to permanent excommunication). However, much theology is missing from such an account. In particular, the rationale for exclusion cries out for attention. Why are sinners to be expelled? What are the motives for exclusion?

Rosner (1999) notes that “Whereas in Old Testament teaching on exclusion social crimes are associated with the notions of ‘purging’ or ‘utterly removing’ the evil and the curses in Deuteronomy 27 and 28, the term ‘to cut of’ has to do with ritual and has points of contact with the cult and holiness,” “it was the laws of temple admission that did most to establish the link between exclusion from the community and the maintenance of holiness.” The exclusion of individuals from the “assembly of the Lord” on the basis of physique and descent in Deuteronomy 23:1-8 is the starting point in this connection. “However, in the progress of revelation moral requirements become critical to the question of admission.” Rosner cites the “Biblical evidence for this evolution includes the ‘entrance-torot’ (Pss. 15; 24:3-5; Is. 33:14-7), the exclusion of rebels in Ezekiel 20:38-40 from the future congregation, and the indictment of Israel for admitting the ‘uncircumcised in heart’ into the sanctuary in Ezekiel 44:6-9.” Josephus and Philo present Deuteronomy as excluding not only aliens but gravely-offending Jewish sinners.” Finally, turning to 1 Corinthians 5, Rosner states, “it is no accident that the thought of the community as God’s holy temple is introduced only 23 verses earlier in 3:16-17.” Thus, in calling for the incestuous man to be removed, “Paul effectually cleanses the temple, calling for his destruction (5:5),” for “if anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him” (3:17).

Now, as has been shown above, in both the Deuteronomic EP and the curses listed in chapters 27 and 28 (cf. Lev.26), discipline is enacted *because of failure to keep the covenant obligations*. Unsurprisingly by now, “the list of sins in 1 Corinthians 5:11 that call for exclusion is remarkably parallel to the sins in Deuteronomy which are connected to the formula Paul quotes in 5:13b” (Rosner). There is little doubt that Paul was thinking of those who had been excommunicated as having *violated the covenant*. There simply was no distinction, in his mind, between “being removed from the covenant community” and not being considered a “covenant breaker.” Paul is simply importing, in whole cloth, the Old Testament EP, along with all of its presuppositions. If Jeremiah 31 taught that no one could be removed from the New Covenant, somebody forgot to tell this to Paul!

Some baptists have responded that a major difference between the Old Testament EP and excommunication in I Cor 5 is the idea of *restoration*. Paul notes that the incestuous man is to be removed *for the salvation of his soul*. But Rosner points out that the idea of restoration was not completely foreign from the Old Covenant mind. Thus, Rosner points out “That exclusion might have a reformatory effect is perhaps implied in the Qumran modification of the death penalty for gathering sticks on the Sabbath (Nu.15) into seven years in a sectarian’s guard. Hence “discipline at Qumran was based on the community’s self-conception as the holy camp (cf. Num. 5:2ff.; 19:11).” Nonetheless, as Rosner notes, “Exclusion is not always undertaken, however, with a remedial intent. Sometimes individuals are excluded or exclude themselves, usually on the basis of false belief rather than conduct, because they do not belong to the company of the saved.” Nevertheless, these people are said to be part of the community. Part of the New Testament people of God. Paul had to conceive of these people as belonging to the New Covenant, and as Hebrews indicates, such people will suffer a greater fate than your mundane, run-of-the-mill unbeliever. These people had “tasted the heavenly gift.”

The EP, as presented in the New Testament, provides extremely strong support for a continued external dimension to the New Covenant community. Only in the new heavens and earth will the covenant community be a pure, unmixed community. As for Baptist Robert Strimple used to say, baptists are jumping the eschatological gun here. The findings of Rosner have many practical applications too, and should drive us to greater corporate responsibility. It is worth concluding this section by citing Rosner's conclusion in his (1999) paper, "Drive out the Wicked!":

With respect to exclusion, few topics in biblical theology do more to stress the corporate dimension of the Christian faith, the seriousness and consequences of sin and the holiness of God. In the Bible, to reiterate the main lines of our study, serious offenders are excluded from the community because of the solidarity of the community, in order to maintain the holiness of the group, due to a breach of covenant, in the hope of restoration and because of the prospect of salvation. We have presented an overview of the theology of exclusion in the Bible. But to return to the remarks, which opened our study, what place or relevance does this material have for a biblical theology? To cite the two most obvious areas of interest, exclusion teaches something about both God and the people of God. The topic of exclusion is a case study of how the holiness of God works itself out in relation to his purposes. It reminds us that God's grace in election cannot be taken for granted and that certain standards for conduct may not be continually transgressed. The gift of being included in God's people involves the demand of behavior becoming that people. In the present evil age, in anticipation of the age to come, God uses various means to call out and purify a people for him, one of which, ironically as it sounds, is exclusion. He deals with this people, not only as individuals, but also above all as groups. Exclusion is a powerful reminder that such groups, or churches, are responsible to one another as well as to God. Their behavior, both in terms of doing good and committing sin, affects the community's well being; exclusion underlines the profound interrelation and interdependence of believers in the body of Christ. What relevance do our findings have for church life today? The practice of church discipline today varies widely, from a complete absence and ignorance of the concept to a terrible abuse of it in cruel and harmful ways. It depends largely on the more basic question of ecclesiology and the relation of the church to society as a whole. Some churches have so blurred the boundary that it is difficult to distinguish any longer the church from the world. The church must avoid being censorious and unrealistic, for people's growth in holiness is not uniform and according to our findings the Bible at most calls for exclusion as a last resort in only the most serious cases where a lifestyle of open rebellion threatens to destroy the church and with the explicit goal of restoration. On the other hand, if our synthesis represents the Bible's teaching fairly, to fail to undertake some form of discipline in such cases puts in jeopardy not only the individual's salvation but also the continued blessing of God for the church as a whole. A refusal to exclude cannot be based on a supposed difference between the testaments. Some modification and mollification of the teaching is evident, but the New Testament confirms the basic mandate and rationale.

This is a very interesting suggestion. The church itself is an entity over and above its members. It will be presented to Christ a spotless bride, after a period of sanctifying. Just as believers mixed, being both sinner and saint, the church herself should be seen as mixed. Just as we have a duty to engage in practices that personally sanctify, we have a duty to sanctify the bride too. If the New Testament excommunication principle, in its essence, *just is* the continuation of the Old Covenant expulsion principle (and it is), there is little reason to doubt a continued external element to the New Covenant, such that some people can be removed from it, even finally removed.

III. A Dozen (or so) Responses to Common Credobaptist Arguments

A. The New Covenant Consists of Only The Regenerate:

This idea faces several objections:

- 1) The “they” who broke the Old Covenant is not universal in scope (Moses, Joshua, Caleb, etc.,). So, why take the “they” who are in the New Covenant to be so?
- 2) Jeremiah frequently uses the phrase “from the least to the greatest” to refer to *classes* of people, rather than everyone individually (Jer. 6:13, 8:8-10, 42:1). If the baptist wants to say that it must mean every single person individually, then he must believe that infants can approach elders, talk, and ask for people to hear their prayers. This is what “*all the people from the least to the greatest,*” did in Jeremiah 42:1. And if infants can do *that* then why would baptists say that they couldn’t make a profession of faith!
- 3) This view, as Robert Strimple says, is like “jumping the eschatological gun.” The only time all God’s people will know God, will be regenerate, and will be saved, is in the New Heavens and the New Earth. Gene isn’t a theonomist, but it seems like he’s trying to do to the covenant people of God what theonomists are trying to do to all the people of the earth! But in “this present age” the tares grow among the wheat and it is *God* who separates them. The baptist may reply that we should try to have the visible church match the invisible. But since the invisible consists of all the elect for all time, then it most certainly includes some children of believers. By not receiving them into the church they will never, at any time, and in no way, match the invisible church. They refuse membership to over half its members!
- 4) It doesn’t seem that the New Testament writers understood Jeremiah’s prophecy to be saying that only regenerate people are in the New Covenant. This is simply seen in the apostasy passages. The New Testament writers seem to imply that one can apostatize from the New Covenant. Heb. 3:12-14 (along with other warning passages in Hebrews) is emphatically clear that we might ultimately fall away, and so thus we need to daily encourage one another to continue in belief. Paul calls this the “good fight of faith” in 1 Tim. 6:12 and exhorts Timothy to “take hold of the eternal life” (6:12) and to “hold faith” (1:19), because some had already “made shipwreck of their faith” (1:20), and some have “abandoned their former faith” (5:12), and others have “swerved from the faith” (6:21). This is why he exhorts Timothy to “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.” (4:16) This is

why so often Paul and other Scriptural authors do not boldly assure their readers of their personal sharing in Christ, rather they hold out before them their duty to persevere. See all the conditional statements in the following statements: Col. 1:23—"if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast," 1 Cor. 15:2—"by which [the gospel] you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain"; Heb. 3:6—"and we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope"; Heb. 3:14—"we share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end"; John 8:31—"if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples"; Mark 13:13—"the one who endures to the end will be saved"; 2 Tim. 2:12—"if we endure, we will also reign with him"; Rom. 8:13—"if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live"; Gal. 6:9—"in due season we will reap [eternal life (see 6:8)], if we do not give up"; Heb. 12:14—"holiness without which no one will see the Lord"; James 2:26 (with 14)—"faith apart from works is dead" and "can that faith save him?"

Some baptists say that these are merely a "means" God uses to keep his elect in the covenant. Well, this is not the universal position because reformed baptists like Roger Nicole, and Wayne Grudem, among others, disagree with it. But, even if these passages are a means of perseverance for the elect, and thus hypothetical warnings for them, since it is read to the *entire church*, and since there are some non-elect in these churches, what purpose do these warnings serve for them? Indeed, even though non-elect cannot repent and believe the gospel, the gospel call is still a sincere and well-meant offer for them. Are these warnings real warnings for everyone they are read to? Furthermore, why would we take these warnings seriously if we viewed ourselves as regenerate? Since it is impossible for a regenerate to apostatize, why should he take the warnings seriously? I mean, since it is *possible* that fire could shoot out of our eyes, how serious would we take someone who told us to *watch out* (!) and make sure we didn't burn our house down? How much less serious should we take a warning about something that is impossible for us to do? We wouldn't take serious a warning sign in the middle of the Sahara Desert, which read "Keep off the Grass!" would we?

Also, what do we do with the actual examples of apostasy? There really are people who seem to fit the descriptions of the people in Hebrews. In fact, many commentators argue that the author of Hebrews had actual people in mind while writing the warnings. Now, some baptists will say that this can be answered by the doctrine of the visible church. That is, people really apostatize, but their status is not that of covenant member, but simply of visible church member. The problem with this response is that the New Testament seems to make no distinction between the two. In 1 Corinthians 5:13 Paul uses the exact same terminology, as does the Old Testament for removal from the visible covenant: "expel the wicked from among you." Here is continuity between the covenants. To deny that Paul treats the visible church as a covenantal organism, the same as the external covenant in the Old Testament, is to show that one's theological assumptions rule out clear examples of continuity. But if one can do this, why even ask the paedobaptist for continuity? In fact, it now seems that even if the paedobaptist had a verse that explicitly said, "baptize them and their children," the baptist could spiritualize this and say that only "spiritual children" are referred to here. Indeed, new believers are called infants. Thus if Paul had said that he baptized the infant Demetrius, a baptist could consistently get around this by claiming that Paul only meant a "new believer!" It thus appears that someone's tradition has got a hold of one's exegesis.

5) Some say that there is no need to evangelize New Covenant members because they all know the Lord. They are individually saved (Malone, 94). This is subject to a serious *reductio ad absurdum* by this unfortunately ever-so-real case: Say a man comes to your church. He hears the preaching of the word. Tell the pastor and elders that he believes in Jesus. They tell him to repent and be baptized. So he does. His repentance is genuine. This means he has been regenerated. He is thus a New Covenant member. For 2 or 3 years this man plays a vital role in the congregation, serving, tithing, and even helping other new converts in their growth. This man is growing in sanctification and knowledge. But, as often happens, Satan attacks this man. God has chosen to discipline his son. As the London Baptist Confession says,

"And though they may, through the temptation of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins, and for a time continue therein, whereby they incur God's displeasure and grieve his Holy Spirit, come to have their graces and comforts impaired, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves..."

And so this man commits adultery on his wife. He refuses to repent, despite the pleas of his elders and friends. He leaves his wife and is subsequently excommunicated. For two years we hear reports about this man; how he's living with his lover, not attending church, and even saying he doesn't believe. But one day you, a member of the church and a one time good friend, run into him at the local Starbucks. You guys chat a bit about how life is treating the both of you. It looks like a door may be open enabling you to get more personal in your conversation. What do you say to this man? Well, I think every Christian would agree that we would evangelize him. Tell him to know the Lord. Tell him that he needs to be saved. But here's the rub, this guy, and you, *are New Covenant members!* My question is, what is one member of the New Covenant doing telling another New Covenant member to "know the Lord?"

Not only do we have a clear cut case of a New Covenant member telling another New Covenant member to "know the Lord," the corollary of my *reductio* leads to a dangerous presumption. Say a member of your church is the most "holy" person you know. He is always giving of himself. Evidences what appear to be the fruit of the Spirit. Has continued to attend church for 35 years. Is always seen every morning reading his Bible and praying. Despite all of this, this man is deceiving everyone. He is putting on an outward show. To be consistent, the Baptist who interprets Jeremiah 31 in this overly realized way cannot tell this man to "know the Lord." Otherwise, he'd be telling someone he thought was a covenant member to "know the Lord," and this is staunchly forbidden. Therefore the Baptist cannot tell a person to "know the Lord," *even if this is precisely what this person needs to hear!*

The Baptist may say that we should tell everyone to "know the Lord" because we don't know who the elect are. I agree, but this goes against their claim that in the New Covenant it is currently realized. If the New Covenant is fully realized then how is our telling New Covenant members to

“know the Lord”, “not like” the Old Covenant? You see, only in the New Heavens and Earth will “each man no longer teach his brother or his neighbor to know the Lord.”

I should also add that *even if we grant* that only the elect are in the covenant this doesn't get you to baptizing professors *alone*. For one, the Bible nowhere says that we are to baptize “professors alone.” Second, not all who profess are elect (or regenerate). So, the baptist is going off of a probabilistic indicator. That is, the probability that one professes is high that he is elect. That is expressed thus, $P(E/P) = .6$ or higher. But has anyone done the math? Out of the billions that have professed how many are elect? It may be low! Or, at best it is inscrutable. That is, we can't figure out the probability.

But why does "professing" give us a clue as to election?

Even baptists recognize that God "works in families," and so why doesn't "born to believing parents" give us a clue as to election? That there have been many children who have strayed away is something that can *equally* be said of professors. And so since the baptist recognizes that God works in families (primarily even?), what is it about "profession" that gives us a clue to "election" that "being born to godly parents" does not? Indeed, since it is not a requirement to be 100% certain that who you baptize is elect, then the fact that the child "may" not be elect cannot count as evidence against his receiving the sign of baptism.

And so why does "indications of being on the covenant" mean that, "you can say x, y and z?" Why doesn't being born to godly parents give "indications" that one is in the covenant?

And so even on baptist assumptions how can one deny baptism to children of believers? Can they explicitly lay out what it is about "profession" that "indicates" that one is "elect" that "being born in a godly home" does not "indicate" about election?

Baptists will say that it is a "great advantage" being "born into a godly home." But why is this a great advantage? Because the child will more likely believe? But if the child believes then the child was elect, since this is ordained from the foundation of the world. And therefore we see that according to the baptist it is therefore "more likely" that children born in godly homes are elect. And for profession the baptist argues that though this is not a 100% indicator of election, a profession makes it "more likely" that one is elect. Perhaps they mean that "profession" is *more* more likely than "having the great advantage" of being born in a "godly home." But how is this "probability" discerned? Where are the calculations that go in to showing that "professions" are a more probably indicator of election than "the great advantage of being born in a godly home?"

I would say that the probability calculus in both cases is inscrutable (I am granting some things here. I could make arguments from prophecy that teach that our children will be in heaven with us (e.g., Is. 65, Eze. 36, etc).

Anyway, it seems as if there are defeaters for the idea that we have good reason to believe that those who profess are members of the New Covenant. This is especially the case if we want to

baptize immediately (this is the pattern of the NT, and so it might seem arbitrary for the Baptist to argue from examples of only professors being baptized by then not use the examples of immediate baptisms. That is, if the latter isn't normative, why is the former?). So, immediate (or even soon one, say, 3 weeks) baptisms present a problem.

Specifically my responses to Gene in the context of our debate. His belief, which is determinative for our discussions, is that he would baptize a professor immediately, if water were near buy. At worst he'd wait a week. This is too soon to "know" that a professing subject S is "regenerate."

Now, just because we do not hold to an infallibilist constraint on knowledge, that doesn't mean that we can just say that we know any ole proposition. This gets into a whole host of epistemological questions and problems, though.

Suffice it to say, here's an example:

Say you walked into a factory and saw a bunch of widgets coming down the assembly line and they were all colored red. So, you form the belief you are being appeared to redly. At this point, given this info, I'd say that you knew they were red. Now, say that a floor supervisor told you that there was a red light illuminating the widgets so as to detect otherwise unnoticeable hair line fractures. Actually, only about 15% are red. Thus you'd now have a defeater for your belief that the widgets were red. So, it wouldn't be wise to say, "Oh there's a red widget. I know it, and just because I could be wrong doesn't mean that I know it!"

See, there are other things to take into account. And this is the same kind of argument I'd make about your argument for "knowing" that so and so is elect/regenerate.

So, the information about the red light and the probability of a particular widget being a red widget served as a defeater for your belief that any one particular widget was a red widget.

Do we have these kinds of defeaters in the Bible? I think so:

Matt 13: 24 He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, 25 but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. 26 So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. 27 And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' 28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' *So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them.'* 29 *But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them.* 30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn."

So, say there was a field that had dogs to protect the sheep, but there were wolves too that looked almost exactly like the dogs from a distance of 100 meters (and this was as close as you could get to the field). So, when you met the owner of the field you tell him you saw one of his dogs. He

informs you that there are almost just as many wolves as dogs, and they look almost similar. You now have a defeater for your belief that you actually saw a dog. At this point you say, "Let me shoot the wolves so that your sheep will be safe." The owner of the field responds, "No, doesn't shoot them because you may just as easily hit a wolf instead." This should be an undisputed case of epistemic defeat, this applies to the claim that we "know who is regenerate."

The second analogy really bears on the Baptism issue since Gene is for immediate baptisms (and he must since he relies so heavily on arguments from example as normative).

Matt. 13: 18 "Hear then the parable of the sower: 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. 20 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. 22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. 23 As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

Note that only one of the seeds "immediately" reject the word. These people are immediately unfit subjects for baptism.

Now, out of the other 3, only one of them "truly believes." And, the text does not say how long they act as if they accept the word, but we know it is not "immediate."

Therefore the probability that Gene (or anyone who agrees with him) is baptizing an "elect person" on the basis of the profession they see is *low*, roughly .3!

Now, if the probability that belief B is the case is low, then you have a defeater for B. This can be seen in another paradigm case of defeat. Say that you ingest a hallucinogenic drug called XX. Say that only .3% of those who ingest XX are immune to his hallucinogenic causing properties. Thus if you formed the belief that you took XX, and if you also came to believe that the probability that you are hallucinating is .7, then you have a defeater for most of your beliefs!

So I have established the argument that "only elect are in the covenant" has no bearing on "how we know who to baptize."

(Also, see arguments from I Cor. 5)

B. The Information Contained in the Household Passages Lead to the Assumption that No Infants Were Present:

This objection proceeds this way: Because the household passages tell us that (a) the whole household believed, or (b) the whole household served the saints, or (c) the whole household had the word preached to them, it is thus reasonable to conclude that no infants were present. The implicit assumption is that these things could not be said of entire households if the households had infants included as members among them. But this is Vulcanizing the New Testament. That is, these objections treat the biblical writers as if they were inhuman robots, making sure to be as precise as a Mr. Spock or a Lt. Data. But, when we look at how the Bible applies these terms, as well as how normal humans talk this way, we can see that the objection is a paper tiger.

For example, in answering the first criticism, take the case of the Philippian jailer. The grammar of the Greek in that passage only tells us that the jailer believed. It is going beyond what is exegetically demonstrable to say that every single person made an intelligent profession of faith. In fact, the great precisionist, Dr. Luke, could have easily used just one Greek word to make Acts 16:34 say that the believing was done by all the members of the household. The language here thus makes the baptism of a Christian family, including an infant, in the 2,000s totally compatible with what happened in the Jailer's house.

Moreover, I would point out what appears to be an inconsistency in the application of Federalistic ideas ascribed to the people in the New Testament. Take the local commission in Matthew 10. Jesus tells his disciples to go out to all of Judea. To go and preach the good news to the "*towns and households*." Jesus says that if anyone in that "*town or household*" rejects the word of the disciples, then the disciples are to leave that "*town or household*" and it would thus be more terrible for that "*town or household*" than it was for Sodom and Gomorrah. In his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, New Testament scholar (and Baptist) Craig Blomberg notes that in "Treating an entire home or town on the basis of the actions of one person within it reflects the corporate solidarity common in much of antiquity and in many parts of the world today, in which the decisions of a key individual are owned by the entire community" (p.173). But apparently "corporate solidarity" is "out the window" when it comes to "treating an entire home on the basis of the actions of one" believer.

Now, unless we are going to say that there were no infants in all of Judea, then it appears that the infants of these towns that rejected Jesus were considered rejecters of the Gospel because of the decision of their federal head. They were thus numbered among the "Synagogue of Satan." They did not personally reject Jesus, but they were counted among the rejecters and regarded as such. But how come this idea isn't transferred to households that accepted Jesus? When the Philippian jailer's household accepted the Gospel, why wasn't the household, as such, considered as acceptors; counted among the synagogue of God's people? If it could be said that the "town or household" that included infants rejected the Gospel, then it's not saying anything controversial to say that a household that included infants accepted the Gospel. It appears that when it comes to rejecting Jesus the parents' decision is good enough to include the children among the rejecters, but when it comes to accepting Jesus the parents' decision isn't good enough to include the children among the accepters! But if Federalism is done away with, then it's done away with! One cannot have his individualistic cake and eat it too.

The next objection, that it is said that the households baptized “served” the people of God and so infants couldn’t have been among them, is easily seen as imputing a robotic mindset onto the biblical writers. If consistent, would these people tell me that I am wrong to say that my family “celebrated” Christmas in Grand Rapids Michigan if I had a two-month old? Would they call me a liar for saying that my family “watched” a movie together? In fact, we talk this way all the time, don’t we? At our churches don’t we say that the “Jones family is always helping out with things at the church?” Do we seriously think that we should not talk this way about the Joneses because they have two two-month old twin daughters? What about Joshua? Could he say that he and his house serve the Lord only when he had no infants? If his wife gave birth to a baby boy 9 months after his great statement to the Israelites, could an Israelite have went up to him and said, “Well, what about now Joshua, you’re not so cool as you thought you were 9 months ago, are you? Now you have to say, ‘But as for me and *some of my house*, we will serve the Lord.’”

The last objection is that we read that the word was preached to some of these households, and thus there couldn’t have been infants there, or present, or taking part in the reading. But the Bible doesn’t see things this way. We read in Joshua 8:35 that “There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not *read* to the *whole assembly* of Israel, including the women *and children*, and the aliens who lived among them.” Thus, all of the above objections rest upon a rejection of the corporate ideas running through the conceptual and linguistic milieu of the day, and hence constitute a begging of the very question up for debate, i.e., have Federalist attitudes been done away with due to the inauguration of the New Covenant? It seems the biblical and common sense evidence militates against this view.

C. The Typological Nature of Israel:

I must admit some degree of confusion when baptists bring up the typological nature of Israel as an objection to paedobaptism. The objection seems to suggest that paedobaptist do not believe that the nation of Israel was typological. In fact, though, this issue has been promulgated by paedobaptists down through the ages. Many a reformed paedobaptist has used the typological nature of Israel as an argument against dispensationalism, for example. But one is left scratching his head when one hears that children of those who professed the true religion were “types.” And, even if they were typological, it does not follow that they cannot be covenant members. Ethnic Jews were typological, can ethnic Jews no longer be in the covenant!? If one says, “Yes, they can, they just can’t be born into it,” we must point out that this is a huge *petitio principii*. How about humans? Old Testament Israel consisted of humans; do humans not make up the New Covenant?

Thus we must be sure that this argument is made clear. But, even after the argument is made clear, it does not follow that if something is a type, it is nothing else. Certainly Davis was a “type” of Christ, but he was also a real king. And, that something is a type does not mean that there is no present, physical, New Covenant expression of that type. The physical land was typological of, ultimately, the New Heavens and Earth. But, with the passing of the shadows and the Old Testament administration, do we not presently have physical land as the New Covenant people? Sure we do. We have the whole earth, even the cosmos, and ultimately the New Heavens and Earth. Abraham was promised that the families of the earth would be blessed in him. The Great

Commission extends throughout the entire earth. Indeed, the concept of physical land extends further back in history than the down payments mentioned to Israel. The theological significance begins in the Garden with the loss of land. As we await fulfillment and consummation of the already and not yet elements of the promises, we certainly see that the concept of a promised here and now physical land has not been abrogated, it's been expanded.

Moreover, I find it interesting that the New Testament nowhere says that the place children held in the Old Testament was typological. We read that the sacrifices were, the priests were, the tabernacle was, the wilderness generation was, and much more. We read in the New Testament that these have been fulfilled in Christ. Nowhere do we read that "children of believers have been fulfilled in Christ." After mentioning the tabernacle and the priesthood in the Old Testament, O. Palmer Robertson goes on to list other Old Testament types. He writes that

"Other example may be cited to substantiate the same principle. The sacrifice of animals and foodstuffs anticipated the offering of the body of Jesus under the New Covenant. A temporary priesthood anticipated the permanent priesthood of Christ. The mobile tabernacle foreshadowed the abiding presence of God's glory in the person of Jesus Christ. As the Israelites journeyed through the desert, God provided them with manna from heaven, water from the rock, and a serpent on a taller pole. All these images found their New Covenant fulfillment in the redemptive realities that these Old Covenant forms foreshadowed."

There is nary a word about "children" finding their "fulfillment." Indeed, what we have instead is Jesus saying that to infants belongs the kingdom of heaven. Notice too that these fulfillments are still ongoing. They have a New Testament corollary. Israel as the church. Jesus is our tabernacle. Jesus is our high priest. Jesus is our sacrificial lamb. How are "typological children" still present in their final form? Perhaps has "new believers" or "young converts?" Though we're now starting to stretch credulity here, the problem with this answer is that Israelites and proselytes were often called "infants" and "children!" Thus this argument from typology doesn't have the theological muscle to do the heavy lifting the credo-baptist is requiring of it.

D. The Bible Explicitly Commands us to Baptize Disciples Alone:

Actually, it doesn't. If it did, there would be no debate. Just as there would be no debate if the Bible said to baptize the infants of believer's, there would be no debate if the Bible said "Baptize only mature, self-conscious, and professing disciples." Thus the practice of "baptism of disciples alone" is an *inference* from other texts.

This is particularly embarrassing considering the claims made by many Baptists. Reformed Baptist Fred Malone complains that paedobaptist have set inference over against the explicit statements of Scripture. Malone says that the paedobaptist position "negates the only instituted baptism *expressly* set down in Scripture, that of disciples *alone*, by an illegitimately applied good an necessary inference from the Old Testament" (35). Malone thus claims that since there is no "express command" to baptize infants, then "Because no such revelation exists, infant baptism is a violation of the regulative principle" (xvi). Malone even goes so far as to say that he is "certain" about the

theology that “disciples alone” should be baptized, while paedobaptist cannot be since they have a “possibly erroneous inference.” Unfortunately for Malone, there is no “express” or “explicit” or “positive command” which tells us that mature and professing disciples, and these disciples *alone*, should be baptized.

Consider Matthew 28:18-20 briefly:

(1) The word “alone” is not in the passage.

(2) Them does not refer to “disciples” since “make disciples,” in Greek, is a verb. It refers to the nations.

(3) Those in the times of the New Testament would have understood “nations” a bit differently than we do. For example in Amos 3:2 Jehovah tells Israel that He has chosen them over all the “families” of the earth. But the passages which speak about Jehovah choosing Israel takes place in the context of choosing Israel over against all the *nations* of the earth (Ex. 19:6; Deut. 4:32-37). Thus the passage could have read “Therefore go and make disciples of all the families of the earth, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

(4) The same root word for the verb that is translated “make disciples” has been used in the LXX to refer to teaching and training *children*. *Manthano* is the root word from where we get the noun “disciple.” Without attaching the specialized rabbinic usage of the word “disciple” (which would have excluded *women* from the command), the root word simply means, “train” or “learn.” The Israelites knew that they were to “disciple” their children. We read in Deuteronomy 31:12: “Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, in order that they may hear and learn (*manthano*) and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law.” Likewise every father was to disciple his child, as the book of Proverbs tells us: “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn” (Prov. 22:6). We find this idea of discipling children confirmed in the New Testament as well: “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the *training* and *instruction* of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). In his commentary on Ephesians, Baptist scholar Peter O’ Brien says, that the word “children” used in the text “has in view children who are in the process of learning and growing up” (440-441). And, “Although children’s duty to obey their parents was taken for granted in the ancient world, disobedience to parents, according to the apostle, was indicative of Gentile depravity (Rom. 1:30), or a sign of evil in the last days (2 Tim. 3:2)” (441). But, “The obedience of Christian children to their parents is all of a piece with their submission to Christ: the additional motivating phrase, ‘in the Lord,’ is virtually synonymous with ‘as to the Lord’ or ‘as to Christ’ and indicates that their obedience is part of their discipleship. It is not rendered simply because of their parents’ greater authority status” (441).

The idea of discipling our children goes all the way back to Abraham. Abraham was chosen “so that he will *direct* his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just...” (Gen. 18:19). It was common knowledge that parents had the job of

making their children disciples. As Mathew says, we make disciples by “baptizing and teaching” people.

(5) Mathean scholar (and Baptist) Craig Keener writes in his acclaimed commentary on Matthew that “what is important to remember is that the Gentile mission extends the Jewish mission - not replaces it; Jesus nowhere revokes the mission to Israel (10:6), but merely adds a new mission revoking a previous prohibition (10:5)” (p.719). I had argued in (B) that the “minor commission” is dripping with Federalist assumptions. Entire families and towns were considered disciples of Jesus, or rejecters of Jesus, on the basis of the decision of the representative head of those families or towns.

(6) Notice that Malone says that paedobaptist make inferences from the Old Testament and that this is “illegitimately applied” to the question of the proper subjects of baptism. This objection is in spite of his citing the hermeneutical method of the analogy of faith (p. 30). The analogy of faith says that the final interpreter of Scripture is “the *rest* of Scripture, i.e., the *whole* council of God” (p. 30). This seeming inconsistency aside, Malone makes an argument for “credo-baptism alone” from the “Disjunctions of John’s and Jesus’ baptism with Christian baptism (157). He makes an inference from the subjects of these baptisms to the subjects of New Covenant Christian baptism. The problem is that John is the last prophet of the *Old* Covenant! And, Jesus hasn’t inaugurated the New Covenant, yet. This means that Malone is making an “inference” from the “Old Covenant;” but this is precisely what he criticizes the paedobaptist for doing!

(7) The disciples interpreted this command by baptizing “entire families” in the household baptisms. In fact, virtually every baptism of a Gentile was a baptism of the Gentile’s *household*. The baptisms of people without households seem to indicate they had no household present, or none at all. Paul and the Ethiopian eunuch obviously had no family. The Israelite men in Acts 2 were just that, about 3,00 *men*. The 12 male disciples of John were just that, 12 men. The Samaritans are an exception, including both men and women. Thus it looks like anytime a convert had a household, it was baptized also.

Thus (1) - (7) constitute enough evidence to show that Baptists are making an *inference* from texts like Matthew 28 to the conclusion that baptism is for “disciples alone.” There is no “explicit command” to “baptize disciples *alone*.”

E. The Examples of the Apostles:

Some baptists, like Malone, will argue that they do not always need express or explicit commands, Apostolic examples will suffice. This is said in spite of Malone correctly pointing out that “A didactic or systematic discussion of a subject is more significant for that subject than a historical or descriptive narrative. It should be obvious that when a historical narrative reports something as happening under some specific circumstance, one cannot draw theological conclusions from it” (p. 33). It is not always safe to draw normative conclusions from factual observations. We should all agree that just because every example of a person who has held the office of the American

presidency is of someone who is a white male, that does not mean that “only white males should be president.”

Furthermore, reformed baptists like Malone, and others, do not practice speaking in tongues, even though we have this as an example of the apostles and the first century church. In response to the clear examples of the Apostles, non-charismatic baptists baptists will argue from a *theological system*, which, if assumed, is intended to show that the example is not normative for the life of the church today. The application of theological constructs, systems, and/or inferences to justify theological practices, of which we have no biblical example, or examples to the contrary, can be greatly multiplied. A few examples being: we only have examples of prophets and apostles and miracle workers doing the baptizing. We only have examples of baptisms that take place outside Sunday Morning church services. We only have examples of baptisms done immediately after professions of faith, even a couple hours after midnight, while no examples of baptisms after a week or more of intense scrutiny by the elders of the church. In all these cases theological inferences win the day over against historical narrative.

F. The Argument From The Regulative Principle:

Malone states,

“This regulative principle teaches that God-approved Christian worship includes only elements and practices “instituted by God Himself limited by his own revealed will [and not] any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture.” In other words, speculation, invention, imagination, and uncommanded practices, etc., cannot be permitted to change or neglect instituted worship.”

Therefore since “the sacraments” which “baptism” is one of is part of “instituted worship” then we must have a “command” telling us to baptize infants. There are a couple things to say in response:

(1) How should we understand scriptural “commands?” Malone seems to suggest that Scripture can only “command” something if it is “explicitly stated” in Scripture. Thus he argues, “Infants are included only by ‘good and necessary consequence,’ a normative addition which is never commanded in the Bible. The practice of baptizing babies violates the regulative principle.” Now, it is important to remember that Malone says Presbyterians have an internal inconsistency with what the confession states and what they practice by way of infant baptism. Unfortunately for his argument, the confession nowhere uses the words “explicit” or “express” when talking about the regulative principle in XXI. I. Also we should balk at the idea that a “command” cannot be something gained by inference. Does Fred Malone believe that Scripture commands *him* to repent? His name is nowhere stated in Scripture, and so he makes an inference from “God commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30), by adding the extra-biblical premise, “Fred Malone is a man,” and thus concluding, “Scripture commands Fred Malone to repent.” Therefore a “command” need not be “explicitly” or “expressly” stated to function as a biblical command. Reformed paedobaptist believe that they have been commanded to baptize their children, and thus are not in any obvious violation of the regulative principle. Of course if this inference is wrong, then the paedobaptist has introduced non-biblical elements into worship. But isn’t this the very

debate? Thus the argument from the regulative principle must first prove that infant baptism cannot be found (implicitly or explicitly) in Scripture. But if this argument is accomplished, the added argument from the regulative principle seems a bit superfluous.

(2) What the *confession* tells us is that *baptism* is part of worship. Even if we grant the explicit/express requirement, all we are saying is that *baptism qua sacrament* must be explicitly commanded. The *confession* nowhere teaches that the *subjects* of the ordinances need to be explicitly mentioned. For if *this* is the move the baptist wants to make then he's in a real bind. This is because nowhere are the *subjects* of the *Lord's Supper qua sacrament* explicitly stated to be both men and *women*. Therefore, if the baptist argument from the regulative principle refutes the idea that *infants* are proper subjects of Christian baptism because their inclusion is not *explicitly stated* in Scripture, then the baptist must also deny *women* entrance to the Lord's Supper because their inclusion is not *explicitly stated* in Scripture.

G. Inference Bad, Explicit Statement Better:

Fred Malone frequently argues that he is on better theological grounds because he (thinks) he has explicit commands telling him to baptize believers alone while paedobaptist simply have "possibly erroneous inferences." He says that inferences are okay, as long as they don't contradict express commands. But this is assuming he's proven his case. Obviously I don't think the Bible "expressly" commands that "mature, professing disciples alone, and no others, are the proper subjects of Christian baptism."

But, there is another assumption he makes when he implies that we cannot be mistaken about "express commands" while we can be mistaken in our "deductions." In response to the above, Reformed baptist Dr. Michael Sudduth comments:

"Reason (broadly speaking) and inference in particular is utilized even at the level of arriving at the meaning expressed by the sentences written in Scripture. Hence, the distinction between "proclaimed by God" and "derived by us" is not a real distinction in epistemic fact, except for those instances when God directly communicates truth to us. But the existence of *Scripture* implies that this is not the norm. Divine truth is revealed to us mediately through Scripture. Hence, even though we do not derive what God proclaims, our *knowledge* of what God proclaims is derived by us in most cases. This explains why solid Christians so frequently disagree about what Scripture *says*.

[...]

If you begin with the premise that divine revelation is objectively given in Scripture you then have to explain how subjects can know or access the objective truth. (This is just a special case of the broader epistemological problem of realism). Put otherwise, one must come to grips with the subjective conditions of accessing the objective and how this affects how the objective is perceived. The operation of reason is one of those conditions whereby we access the "objective." So when cutting down the tree of reason, we should probably consider what good fruit we are sacrificing."

H. Circumcision and Baptism:

Men like Malone and Wellum make the argument that baptism has not replaced circumcision. The argument is that circumcision was a “type” of *heart*-circumcision. Furthermore, circumcision had a national and physical element attached to it. It also signified the true seed of Abraham, Christ. Christ was the fulfillment of circumcision. Many argue that there is not a one-to-one spiritual identity between the two signs, and thus it is inappropriate to baptize infants because baptism doesn’t mean what circumcision did. In fact, since circumcision has been done away with, we have no basis to baptize our children.

There are a few responses I can give. If my above argument is correct, then it doesn’t matter if baptism and circumcision mean the same thing or not. If infants of one or more professing Christian parent are New Covenant members, and visible church members, then they are entitled to its sign. Even Steven Wellum says that baptism “is the covenant sign of the new covenant church” (P.113). Wellum also says that there is “No doubt baptism is analogous to circumcision in that it is an initiatory rite” (p.157).

Second, it is not enough to show that a *particular* sign has been revoked, what must be shown is that giving our children *a sign* has been revoked. Reformed paedobaptist all agree that circumcision is nothing, what matters is a new creation. So, we do not circumcise our children. But, where have we been told not to include our children in our religion? Where have we been told that they have been removed from the visible covenant community? If they are still in, then they still are proper subjects of the sign, *whatever* sign it is.

Third, I don’t know many reformed paedobaptist who say that circumcision is *completely identical* to baptism, matching at every *conceivable* point. The point is that the reformed baptist argument seems to run thus: “Baptism signifies X. X is of the type that we shouldn’t assume that infants possess X without a profession of faith. Since baptism signifies X, and we cannot presume that infants have X, then we should not baptize them.” X is supposed to be spiritual realities that we are not warranted in believing infants currently possess. At this point the rejoinder is that circumcision signifies X (the variable is the same, but what it stands for in cases of baptism and circumcision need not be. All that matters is that “X” stands for “spiritual realities we cannot presume infants possess”).

No doubt there are some similarities between baptism and circumcision. Credo-baptist apologist Paul King Jewett states,

“If anyone will look a little more deeply beneath the surface, he will perceive that the Old Testament is clearly concerned with the theological and ethical meaning of circumcision, which, as elaborated in the New, lies too close to that of baptism to be depreciated. [...] This ethical and theological meaning, as the New Testament interprets circumcision, is not lost but taken up in the meaning of baptism (p. 86).

Paul describes the Ephesians as uncircumcised in the spiritual sense, that, prior to their conversion, they were apart from Christ. But if to be apart from Christ is to be spiritually uncircumcised, ‘alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise,’ then to be in Christ must be to possess those blessings which circumcision in the flesh was no less certainly the sign of in the Old Testament than is baptism in the New. ...[O]ne can hardly doubt that baptism has the same essential significance [as circumcision] for Christians in the New Testament (p. 87-88).

[T]he only conclusion that we can reach is that the two signs, as outward rites, symbolize the same inner reality in Paul’s thinking. Thus circumcision may fairly be said to be the Old Testament counterpart of Christian baptism” (p. 89).

Furthermore, as P.D. Woodbridge points out in his article on circumcision in the New Dictionary of Biblical Theology,

“Circumcision was a physical expression of *faith* which distinguished those who belonged to the Lord and those who did not. [...] [Circumcision was not meant to be understood as a sign of racial purity. [...] In Joshua 5:2-8 the necessity of circumcision is again underlined, as God commands that the generation of Jews born on the journey through the wilderness, who had not been circumcised, should now undertake the rite. Verses 6-7, and 11-12 may also indicate that the people should *re-dedicate* themselves to the Lord before occupying the land promised in the covenant. [...] It is clear even from these passages that circumcision is never merely a physical act. It is not sufficient to merely be physically circumcised. The Israelites in Deuteronomy are instructed to circumcise their hearts as a spiritual response to God’s choice of them as his people. This response involves *fearing, serving and holding fast to him* (v. 20); it is the opposite of stubbornness. *Heart commitment is a necessity, not an option.* [...] The limitations of the mere physical act are underlined in Jeremiah 9:25-26, where the prophet plays down the value of circumcision as merely an end in itself; to rely on it could lead to false confidence and therefore Israel should be circumcised in heart. A Jew with an uncircumcised heart is no different from a Gentile whose nation practices circumcision (cf. Ezek. 44:9, where entry to the rebuilt temple is forbidden to those who are not circumcised in heart and flesh)” (Woodbridge, p. 411-412).

Certainly if the above spiritual realities were assumed to be operating in the adults who were circumcised in the Old Testament, being signified by the physical circumcision while being such that one was not warranted in assuming that infants possessed those realities, or assented to those meanings, then it does not bother the reformed paedobaptist to assume that baptism, which signifies myriad similar and dissimilar spiritual realities in adults which we do not assume infants currently possess, can rightly be given to the infant children of believers.

Even if circumcision did not signify exactly the same spiritual realities as baptism, the point is that circumcision signified spiritual realities that we are not warranted in believing the infants of the people who professed the true religion back then, currently possessed. To say that since baptism

represents X, where X is a spiritual reality we are not warranted in assuming infants currently possess, therefore we should not baptize our infants, is to make a demonstrably false claim. Things that represent X, where X is a spiritual reality we are not warranted in assuming infants currently possess, were given to infants *all the time*. Thus the argument from meaning is not an obvious argument against infant baptism. The argument from circumcision is best put when arguing that circumcision has been repealed and so we need a positive command telling us to baptize our infants. But, I have tried to answer that charge above.

I. Nationality and Physicality:

It is often argued that circumcision was a device used to mark out infants as part of ethnic Israel, to show their national identity. With the passing away of the nation of Israel, and any link between “God’s people” being determined on the basis of simply being a physical descendant of Abraham passing away too, thus giving rise to “spiritual realities” where true children of Abraham are those who share his faith, paedobaptist should recognize that the physical link is gone, and thus one is not a covenant member by virtue of their biological descent from a professor of the true religion. Indeed, Steven Wellum argues that all that mattered was the physical link. One did not need to profess the true religion. Unbelievers therefore circumcised their children.

There’s some equivocation here. No doubt that “unbelievers” circumcised their children if “unbeliever” is taken to mean “not elect, or regenerate.” But unbelievers baptize unbelievers in the New Covenant. Not every pastor, or professor, is a “believer.” If “unbeliever” is taken to mean “non-professor,” then I think the assertion is flat-out wrong. All the Jews would profess faith in Jehovah at least twice a day by reciting the Shema.

Indeed, the very reason the prophets had a right to get so angry with God’s Old Covenant people was because it was assumed that they all had the reality behind their circumcision. If it did not matter if one was a believer or not, then why would the prophets have rebuked them so? A Jew could have responded to Jeremiah, “Sorry, Jerry, I never signed on to actually live a life honoring to Jehovah. I mean, you all know that I’m an unbeliever, why are you expecting me to act as a believer? Is hypocrisy being asked for?” We can see this in Ezekiel 44:9. Jehovah says that no one who is not circumcised in flesh *and* heart may enter his temple. It was thus assumed that if you were circumcised in flesh, you were circumcised in heart. This was your obligation. After more than 15 years of study on the book of Ezekiel, Old Testament scholar Daniel Block writes of this passage in his 1800 page commentary that “Yahweh takes the first step to safeguard the holiness of the temple and its cult: he bars all who are outside the covenant community from the sacred precinct (v.9). Obviously answering to the offenses described in vv. 7-8, Ezekiel reaffirms the Mosaic restrictions (Exod. 12:43-51) on access to the sanctuary. Resident foreigners who had not identified with Israel physically and spiritually were prohibited entry” (book II, p. 626).

As Michael Horton points out, “Israel was *not* first of all a nation, but a church, a community called out of darkness, sin, oppression, and evil to form the nucleus of God’s worldwide empire” (p. 28). The national was secondary. It was also temporary. Every learned Jew knew full well what Peter knew when he said, “You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made

with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the *families* of the *earth* be blessed.'" Psalm 22 teaches that "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the *families* of the nations shall worship before you." God covenanted with Abraham and his family, Jews and their family, and, ultimately, Gentile converts and their families!

When the expansion happened, and thus the national entity of God's people on earth faded away into a global entity, we find no hint that families were no longer called as families. We do not see in the Old Testament any precedence for concluding that God is not the God of entire households. We see the opposite. Indeed, when we see in the Old Testament down payments of Gentiles coming in to the Olive Tree by way of profession of faith, having absolutely zero physical ties with father Abraham, they brought their children in with them. Their children weren't needed to usher in the Messiah, the Messiah was to be pure Jew. Yet even their children who could not profess faith were considered members of Israel. They came into the church by way of their parent(s) profession.

This objection assumes that the inclusion of children in the covenant community was done away with when the nation of Israel was done away with. But the children were in the church before the nation ever began! (as I pointed out above). There is also no next that has as its exegetical purpose the removal of children from the promised blessing to Abraham. Indeed we have seen that the great expansion, which comes about in NT times, was to the *families* of the earth.

Lastly, though circumcision did mark out people as belonging to the nation of Israel, this is not all it did. As pointed out above, the idea of mere circumcision of the flesh, without a corresponding circumcision of the heart, was contrary to what God intended and used as a basis to judge his people. Circumcision, from its beginning, was also a sign that God was the God of the believer Abraham, and his children. This crosses national ties. God is greater than a nation. Therefore, it would be fallacious to conclude that since one part of why God-fearing Jews included their children faded away, all parts faded away. In the New Covenant, we may not have a physical spot of real estate in the Middle East that we should claim and fight for, rather we have the entire earth! We don't fight for it by means of physical warfare; we fight by means of spiritual war. Take it captive for the Lord. Likewise, since we still have a physical land (the earth), why not physical children as members of our religion? To say all aspect of corporate solidarity faded away because there is no physical nation is to confuse the parts with the whole.

Thus there was never a link that determined membership in God's family being based "solely" on physical descent. The passing away of the nation of Israel does not mean that now the fact that makes one a member of God's people is faith, simply because it never did. Without faith the Jews became, as Jehovah said, "Not my people." They weren't "halfway my people." No, without having faith, they were fully disqualified from being considered "God's people;" even if they were circumcised in the flesh.

J. Acts 16 and the Baptist Argument From Silence:

This argument runs like this: When Gentiles were coming into the church there was a charge brought forth by a group known as the “Judaizers” that said these Gentile converts must be circumcised. Now what’s interesting, according to the Baptist is the response the Apostles gave to the Judaizers. It is thought by many Baptists that if baptism has replaced circumcision then the Judaizers should have been told that, for “that would have been the most logical answer, if the paedobaptist position was correct” (Wellum, 157). Well, um, I think we have a few things we can say in response:

a) Notice that in Acts 15 it is not only circumcision that was to be kept, it was the law of Moses as well. For New Covenant Theologians, then, if NCT were the case, then you would think, according to the above line of reasoning, that the Apostles also would have said “the law of Christ has replaced the law of Moses.” Indeed, would this not be “the most logical answer,” if the NCT position were correct? The Judaizers are also not told that civil governments are not to enforce the law of Moses; that it doesn’t function in every jot and tittle as a the standard for the life of the believer; that the general equity of the essence of the laws functions in its place, and a whole host of other views on the place of the Mosaic law in the life of the believer that most reformed Baptists would hold.

b) Judaizers were also circumcising families (or, households). Indeed, Titus 1:11 says that they are “destroying entire families” by what they were doing. They were circumcising, or demanding the circumcision of, the Gentile believers and their children. So, you would think that if children of believers were not supposed to get covenant signs anymore, this would be the place to tell them! Wouldn’t “the most logical answer” have been that not only do Gentiles not need to be circumcised, their children don’t need *any sign whatsoever*? Note that in Acts 15 and in Titus 1:11 it is never the inclusion of the Gentile’s children that is disputed. Never the giving of *a* sign, but only the giving of *that* sign, i.e., the sign of circumcision. Indeed, it stretches the limits of credulity, for me at least, that if the Judaizers debated so vehemently about the giving of circumcision to Gentile converts and their children, they would not have flew into outright rage, causing more trouble and greater disputes than we ever had in the likes of Acts 15, upon finding out that *their own children* were not included in the continued church of God.

Thus, with (a) and (b), I see your argument from silence, and raise you two.

c) Let’s say the Apostles said what the Baptists think they should have said. So, everything in the story remains the same, except for the Apostles telling the Judaizers that baptism has replaced circumcision. Since the Judaizers thought that circumcision was required for salvation, then they would have thought that baptism was now required for salvation! Why would the Apostles have done such a thing? No, they couldn’t tell the Judaizers that for that would be begging the question. The Judaizers said that “circumcision was *necessary*” for the Gentiles. They knew the Gentiles had been baptized, they thought circumcision *irreplaceable*, though. To just say “it has been replaced” would have begged the question. You can’t replace something necessary.

Now, the debate was over salvation, they weren’t even talking about the proper subjects of Christian baptism in this passage. They were talking about salvation. The Apostles told the

Judaizers that the Gentiles were given the same spirit the Jewish believers were. They received what circumcision signified. Their hearts were “purified by faith.” It was well known that baptism was a sign of this purification by faith. So, they told the Judaizers that they did not need to become circumcised to be saved, they already were saved. Everyone knew that baptism signified this for them. Therefore, even though the debate wasn’t even about baptism, but salvation, a subsidiary conclusion that easily could have been drawn was that baptism had replaced circumcision.

d) Apparently Baptists believe that baptism has replaced circumcision, at least as the initiatory rite of passage into the NT church. Steven Wellum says that baptism “is the covenant sign of the new covenant church” (P.113). Wellum also says that there is “No doubt baptism is analogous to circumcision in that it is an initiatory rite” (p.157). Paul Jewett writes, [T]he only conclusion that we can reach is that the two signs, as outward rites, symbolize the same inner reality in Paul’s thinking. Thus circumcision may fairly be said to be the Old Testament counterpart of Christian baptism” (p. 89). If what these Baptists, and they represent the best of Baptist scholarship, say is correct, then why didn’t the Apostles say, “baptism has replaced circumcision?” It’s because the Judaizers were asserting something very specific, that circumcision was necessary to be saved. Paedobaptists don’t think baptism saves; we think it is, among other things, an initiatory sign marking out God’s New Covenant people. Thus saying “baptism replaces circumcision,” in this specific context, has no bearing on the question of the proper subjects of Christian baptism. If the wider context is consulted, then the Apostles have said that NT baptism replaces circumcision (as Wellum and Jewett admit) by the very practice of initiating people into the church by means of baptism. Therefore, if the Baptist wants to remain consistent, he should say that the paedobaptist position is correct since the Apostles answered how one would have given that the paedobaptist position were correct! The Baptist will not say that, though, and so the original argument loses all its force.

K. Jesus the High Priest of the New Covenant:

Hebrews never says that Jesus is the high priest of every single solitary individual member of the New Covenant. Instead Jesus mediates for is qualified. “Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost *those who draw near to God* through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them” (7:25). “Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that *those who are called* may receive the promised eternal inheritance” (9:15). It is “those who draw near” to God who “enter God’s rest.” “For anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his” (4:10).

The Christians in the book of Hebrews are told to “make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience” (4:11). This is interesting since in the Old Testament the priest would make atonement for all the members of the covenant, except those who *worked*. They didn’t *rest*. Like wise, New Covenant members who do not draw near to Christ, and find their rest in the Father, do not have atonement made for them. The Old Covenant members who worked were kicked out of the covenant. They were put to death. They were judged. Interestingly, this is what happens to those in Hebrews who continue in their sins

and do not rest (Heb. 10:30). The Old Covenant members were judged as covenant members. There is no warrant to rip this similarity apart when we come to the New Testament. Indeed, the author of Hebrews warns people not to return to Judaism, to the Old Covenant. But, from where do they *leave*? They should not *return* (implying they left) to the Old Covenant, from *where*? The New Covenant of course! It is obvious that the author of Hebrews considers these people who have left, and might leave, to be like the apostates of the wilderness generation. The apostates of the wilderness generation were *Old Covenant members*.

An element that is "new" and more glorious about the New Covenant is that every single person who goes to the high priest, and has his sins laid upon the sacrificial lamb, has their sins atoned for. In the Old Testament, not everyone whose sins were placed upon the sacrifice gained a right standing before God, salvifically. This is not the case in the New Covenant. But, this does not mean that every member of the New Covenant has Christ's atonement. Just like in the Old Testament, the atonement in the New Covenant was not made for every single member of the congregation. It was only made for those who rested and drew near to the high priest. If you worked, no atonement was made for you. Thus if you are in the New Covenant, and are trusting in your own merits, then you will be judged as a covenant transgressor. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).

L. The Individualistic Nature of the New Covenant:

The argument based off this text from Jeremiah 31,

27 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast. 28 And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring harm, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, declares the LORD. 29 In those days they shall no longer say: "'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' 30 But everyone shall die for his own sin. Each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

Malone takes from this,

When the New Covenant administration is examined by Baptists, they see ample evidence that the New Covenant does not include the organic idea in covenant membership in the same way the Abrahamic covenant did. Rather, they see a new individualistic element in the New Covenant administration that was not as patent in the Old Testament 'covenants of promise.'

[...]

The promise was that, in the days of the New Covenant, God would cease bringing generational covenantal curses upon men for the sins of their fathers as he did upon the members of Old Testament organic Israel. The link would be changed. Each would die

for his own sin, not the sins of the father. According to O. Palmer Robertson, every heart in the New Covenant Israel will be individually changed and directly responsible to God.

[...]

In other words, although the Israel of God in the Old Testament included all naturally born children under the blessings and curses, the New Covenant 'Israel of God' only includes regenerate individuals in the covenant, not the organic seed. There is a heightened individualism in the New Covenant.

My problems with the above argument are numerous:

1) Daniel Block has written what Tremper Longman has referred to the best book on the Old Testament; his commentary on Ezekiel. Block notes about Malone's type of argument,

"For more than a century this chapter has provided the primary basis for the widely held notion that one - perhaps the most - important contribution made by Ezekiel to Israelite theology was his doctrine of individual responsibility. Prior to this time sin and judgment were supposed to have been dealt with by Yahweh on a corporate basis."

So we can see that Malone's interpretation is simply keeping in step with some standard views on the claim by Jehovah made in both Jeremiah and Ezekiel. It is not disputed that they are referring to the exact same proverb. Therefore, any answer applicable to Ezekiel is likewise applicable to Jeremiah as well. Block goes on to note that,

In recent years, however, scholars have largely abandoned this view. Not only is the individualism reflected in this chapter [Ezekiel 18] evident in texts much earlier than Ezekiel; the corporate emphasis of earlier writings is never abandoned in favor of strict individualism. Furthermore, individual responsibility is much more muted here than has previously been supposed. Indeed, the aim of this dispute in the transformation of the corporate body, specifically the exilic community. These are the children whose 'teeth are set on edge' (v. 2). This corporate focus is highlighted by early references to Israel (vv. 2, 3) and repetitious later identification of the addresses as 'the house of Israel' (vv. 25, 29-31; cf. also vv. 6, 15). The call to repentance is issued to the community as a whole. To identify a new doctrine of individualism as the principle agenda of the chapter is to confuse subject with theme.

Block notes that this was a "pithy saying" that operated in both the ancient Near East as well as Israel. Malone's interpretation suffers from a few problems. First, this saying was a secular proverb. Block says that Ezekiel quotes the proverb correctly (Jeremiah was trying to highlight the anteriority of the father's actions, hence his use of the perfect verb, *akelu*). The non-perfect use of the verb represents "true proverbial style" (Block, 560). It also "expresses belief in an inevitable and uncontrollable determinism. This is how things are; one can do nothing to change it" (Block, 560).

Second, in ch. 16 Ezekiel does quote cause-effect relationship between generations, but this is just to establish that personality traits are passed on from one generation to the next.

Third, why, if this challenge by the people is intended to mock previous ways God has dealt with his people, why was the point made so “obliquely?” (Block, 560). Indeed, Ezekiel’s audience makes direct charges against God in this very chapter (v. 25).

And, fourth, since the Israelites ask why God should not punish people for the sins of their fathers in v. 19, then the traditional interpretation has a built in contradiction to it. Supposedly, in v. 2 the people reject the traditional theology, and then in v. 19 they ask for it to be implemented!

So, Block concludes that “the problem the proverb poses for Ezekiel is not with punishment that children are bearing for the sins of the fathers, or even the issue of theodicy. On the contrary, it reflects a materialistic fatalism, a resignation of immutable cosmic rules of cause and effect. ... To the extent that the charge concerns God at all, it accuses Him of disinterest or impotence in the face of the exiles’ current crisis” (Block, 561).

The response to the Israelites is an extended theology on the involvement and immanency of God. Jehovah responds by claiming that he is Lord over all life. Jewish as well as Gentile. Theocentrism is taught and fatalism repudiated. Their fate, as is the fate of every man, is in the hands of a personal God.

2) The credo Baptist who makes the argument that all people are now held responsible for their own sins (as the universal claim says, “the soul who sins shall die) and there is no more principle of children being punished for the sins of their fathers has a contradiction in his system if he holds to a covenant of works. All men still suffer, and are born with the guilt of, Adam’s sin. Even Christians. Our bodies still break down. We still sin. In fact, why would we accept Christ’s righteousness? Jehovah also states that if a man sins but his father (his own federal head) is righteous, the sinful son will still be punished (Ez. 18:5-13). Thus a *total and complete* abandonment of the traditional principle of federal headship theology cannot be accepted. It was also argued that corporate responsibility, correctly considered, was not the subject up for debate.

3) In 1 Corinthians 5 we note that the sin of one individual is counted as the entire *congregation’s* sin. If they do not take care of it, they will also be punished! In Titus 1:10 we note that entire *families* are destroyed because the heads of those families have accepted Judaizing teaching. And, in Matthew 10, we read that entire *households and towns* are destroyed because of the decision of at least one representative of that town.

4) The Baptist says that in the New Covenant people are responsible for themselves regarding *salvation*. But God has never punished a sinless person for the sins of another. That is, he has never sent anyone to hell that lived a sinless life just because their parent sinned (assuming that they didn’t already have Adam’s sin). The point in Ezekiel is that these people thought they had

done nothing wrong. And so, *ex hypothesis*, the Baptist would have to say that God *used* to send people to hell for doing nothing wrong!

5) Lastly, since the proverb was to be said “no more,” meaning from that day forward, then if the Baptist is correct that the exegetical intent is to say that the children of believers are no longer considered in the covenant until they personally profess faith, then why were they still included in the covenant for hundreds of years? Obviously no one interpreted Jehovah’s response to the proverb as saying that “people can only enter the covenant by way of profession of faith.”

M. The Disjunct Between John’s and Jesus’ Baptisms:

First, his examination of John Baptist as a transitory figure is excellent, and should be kept in mind when formulating the proper relationship of the Testaments. The fourth point is the most critical to the presentation ~ "John calls out a remnant." At no point has Mr. Kingdon determined the constitution of this remnant from Old Testament redemptive history. He was obliged to. The New Testament states that John Baptist's ministry was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Specifically, he is the precursor to a fulfillment of those prophetic portions that looked forward to the "restoration" of Israel ~ a restoration the New Testament consistently represents as having arrived through the person and work of Jesus. Now it is clear for all to see that the "remnant theme" of Old Testament restoration theology included the "seed." See Isa. 59:20, 21, for but one of many examples.

Secondly, it is claimed for John's baptism that it was *an innovation*, performed on *already circumcised people*, and not on *infants*.

1. Washing/baptism was not an innovation. The problem is that Mr. Kingdon looks at "baptism" as something distinct from "washing," which he is able to do only because he reads them as two distinct ideas in the English language. He could not do this if he were reading from the Greek New Testament. The novelty of John's practice was not "washing/baptising," as this was part and parcel of ceremonial cleansing of everything used in God's service. Rather, his "washing/baptism" was separate from the ordinary ceremonies instituted by God, which it needed to be in order to show that something greater was on the horizon.

2. Washings/baptisms were also performed on already circumcised people. So there is no difficulty in seeing the two existing side-by-side and pointing to the same spiritual reality.

3. Mr. Kingdon simply begs the question when he says that baptism was not performed on infants because he baptized those who confessed their sins. The text does not say *how* the people confessed their sins. The most likely scenario is that John was performing communal washings, to which all the people went forth in groups. Hence the sacred text says, "Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan," Matt. 3:5. This also accounts for the plural use of the pronoun in his exhortations to the people. Moreover, once it is understood that washings and baptisms are one and the same, and that John Baptist was called to separate a remnant to the Lord, which consisted of the faithful and their seed, there is no difficulty in

accepting that the infants of those who repented would have been baptized also. This is perfectly in keeping with the Old Testament picture of national repentance, which included the participation of "the children, and those that suck the breast," Joel 2:16.

Further, since John baptized "all Judea," and it is said that "Jesus was baptizing more disciples than John," then it is highly plausible to conclude that there were people receiving baptisms by *both* men. But if they were one and the same, and the same with Great Commission baptism, then why the re-baptisms?

It is also not clear that those who received John's baptisms were not re-baptized. The 12 disciples in Acts were re-baptized. To say that they were re-baptized because they didn't have all the head knowledge required is to place too high a requirement on the subjects of baptism. After all, the text does say that they "believed," right?

N. Jesus' Divisive Sword:

Some Baptists have tried to argue that the children of believer's have been removed from the visible people of God by citing Jesus words in Matthew 10:34-39

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

That the Baptist grasps at this text to somehow "prove" that the children of believer's are no longer considered part of the covenant is strange for numerous reasons:

- 1) Notice the Baptist is making an argument from hyperbolic statements. Supposedly the Baptist doesn't think Jesus was teaching that we should actually "hate" our children and wives (or, husbands). Surely he notes the point Jesus was drawing using hyperbole, right? Showing the level of devotion towards Jesus to be of the most important.
- 2) Notice that the text also refer to "fathers," "mothers," "daughters," "daughter-in-law," and "mother-in-law," as well as all other "members of his own household." Now, if the exegetical intent of this passage was that "infant children are no longer in the covenant," then surely the Baptist, being consistent, believes that "fathers," "mothers," "daughters," "daughter-in-law," and "mother-in-law," as well as all other "members of his own household" are "no longer in the covenant!"
- 3) Interestingly, the Baptist tells us on other occasions which mention household that "infants cannot have been there because all the household rejoiced (and infants can't do that), and all the household believed (and infants can't do that), and all the household had the word preached to

them (and infants don't have the cognitive ability to comprehend the preaching), and all the household served the saints (and infants can't serve saints), thus there were no infants in these households. But, if so, then can infants "turn" against (actually, the translation is mild; the Greek implies violent revolt, or rejection of authority) their father or mother? Can they be "enemies?" Can they "love their father more than Jesus?" Thus we must turn the Baptist argument against infant inclusion in the household baptism passages against them, requiring strict consistency. That is, this passage couldn't be referring to the infant children of professing believers! (On the credo Baptists own terms, that is.)

4) New Testament scholar Craig Blomberg (baptist) approvingly cites Schweizer's comments on Matthew 10:34, "God's Kingdom has *never* been the peace of the false prophets who cry, 'Peace, peace!' while avarice and meanness lay waste the earth and transform God's good creation into its opposite" (Blomberg, 180, n.38, emphasis supplied).

5) Blomberg notes that "In each case Jesus implies that an *unbeliever* is *initiating* the hostility against a believing family member" (Blomberg, 180, emphasis supplied) Since this isn't something that *infants* are capable of, then the exegetical intent here isn't the removal of the infant children of believer's.

6) The broader context is Jesus' sending out the twelve to preach the good news of the kingdom (v.7). Jesus is telling the disciples what to expect when their message is rejected. Thus the rejection of the messianic ministry is being spoken of. We read about this in Micah 7:6 "for the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house." So, there are those who accept Jesus teaching, and those who reject it. As Jesus told us earlier in ch. 10, if one leader of the town or household rejected the message, then the entire town was destroyed. This is the local (or, minor) commission in Matthew 10. Jesus tells his disciples to go out to all of Judea. To go and preach the good news to the "towns and households." Jesus says that if anyone in that "town or household" rejects the word of the disciples, then the disciples are to leave that "town or household" and it would thus be more terrible for that "town or household" than it was for Sodom and Gomorrah. In his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, New Testament scholar (and baptist) Craig Blomberg notes that in "Treating an entire home or town on the basis of the actions of one person within it reflects the corporate solidarity common in much of antiquity and in many parts of the world today, in which the decisions of a key individual are owned by the entire community" (p.173).

Now, unless we are going to say that there were no infants in all of Judea, then it appears that the infants of these towns that rejected Jesus were considered rejecters of the gospel because of the decision of their federal head. They were thus numbered among the "Synagogue of Satan." They did not personally reject Jesus, but they were counted among the rejecters and regarded as such. But why isn't this idea isn't transferred to the households that accepted Jesus? If it could be said that the "town or household" that included infants rejected the Gospel, then it's not saying anything controversial to say that a household that included infants accepted the Gospel. It appears that when it comes to rejecting Jesus the parent's decision is good enough to include the

children among the rejecters, but when it comes to accepting Jesus the parent's decision isn't good enough to include the children among the accepters!

So, the teaching of Jesus had effects on the Old Covenant families because not all accepted the messiah. This covenant unfaithfulness brought destruction on the family. In the last book of the Old Testament we read about John the Baptist and part of what his mission entailed: Mal 4:5 "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. 6 "And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers."

And what, according to the New Testament, is the reason for this?: 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 their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

This is in contrast to what would happen to the breakdown between the fathers and children of the Old Covenant because of God's covenantal curses brought upon them. Ezekiel 5:10 "Therefore in your midst fathers will eat their children, and children will eat their fathers."

The New Covenant restores the people of God. As Jeremiah had stated ~ at that time I will be a God to the families of New Covenant Israel, and that they will be my people. And Zechariah told us, "I will whistle for them to gather them, they will remember Me in far countries, And they, with their children, will live and come back."

Thus the division was between those who chose to reject Christ and those who would move forward with the one church in accepting Him! Now, of course this principle can be applied today. When I accept the gospel my wife may reject it. We have division. But, this says nothing about my infant children. Why would they be counted as a rejecter? And so we see that the Baptist cannot offer any convincing exegetical reasons for the removal of our children from among the members of God's visible people by citing this passage. Indeed, the overall context supports their inclusion.

- Paul Manata (2008) -