

ANTI-PAEDOCOMMUNION

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When I leaned toward paedocommunion 20 years ago, one sentence shook me away from its attraction: “It was in the context of participation [in the Passover] that the children were prompted to ask . . . ‘Why do we do this.’”¹ I asked myself: Why did the author change the pronoun? The child in Exodus 12:26 did not ask, “Why do *we* do this, (i.e., Passover)?” Rather, he asked his father, “What does this rite mean to you?” Had the child used the first person pronoun, he would have implied that he had participated in the Passover with his father. However, he used the second person pronoun, which indicated that he had not participated. This change of pronoun caused me to reconsider the whole issue. After having done so, I have found the Westminster Larger Catechism Question 177 thoroughly biblical when it says that the Lord’s Supper should be served only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves.

INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING PASSOVER

The Passover of the Old Testament is the backdrop and prototype of the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:7, 15-20).² Because of the continuity of the covenant and the church in both testaments, the principles involving

¹ Sutton, Ray, “Presuppositions of Paedocommunion,” *The Geneva Papers*, Special Edition Tyler, Texas: Geneva Divinity School, 1982), p. 1.

² See Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., “Paedocommunion: Faith or Fad?” (Set 1), audio tapes on the Passover argument.

admission to the Passover help identify the principles of admission to the Lord's Supper. Exodus 12 is emphatic: The Passover meal was to be eaten by all the congregation of Israel (Ex. 12:3), which did not necessarily include small children (Num. 14:1; 14:29, 35; 35:24; Josh. 22:12).³

Children As Observers Not Participants

In Deuteronomy 16:1-17, Moses gives Israel regulations governing the celebration of Passover at the Tabernacle, 16:1-8, the Feast of Weeks, 16:9-12, and the Feast of Booths, 16:13-15. The Feast of Booths is to be celebrated by "you and your son and your daughter"(v. 11). The Feast of Weeks is to be celebrated by "you and your son and your daughter" (v. 14). The Passover is to be celebrated by "all your males"—i.e., adult males (v. 16). Not one time in Deuteronomy 16 does Moses include children in the Passover, as he does in the other two feasts. The adult males comprised all the congregation of Israel who were commanded by the Lord to celebrate the Passover, as the representatives of the whole people (Ex. 12:3).

Paedocommunionists go to Joel 2:16 to find little children in the congregation, since they cannot find them in Exodus 12. It says, "Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the

³ Some paedocommunionists contradict themselves when they keep their newborns and toddlers from the Lord's Supper for the reason that they cannot digest bread and wine. To use their argument against the anti-paedocommunionists: "Infants and toddlers need to eat. Why spiritually starve them just because they are infants?" They offer no exegetical argumentation for this practice, only pragmatic reasons. However, other paedocommunionists distort the meaning and purpose of the sacrament by bringing baptized infants to the Lord's Table, practicing instinction, i.e., the softening of the bread in wine so infants can participate.

children and the nursing infants.” If, however, the congregation necessarily included children, why did Joel add the phrase, “gather the children and nursing infants”? He is not defining the congregation of the Lord, but is warning the total nation of God’s judgment.

In Exodus 12, Moses instructs “the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel” to kill the Passover lamb (v. 6). “Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said to them, ‘Go and take for yourselves lambs according to your families and slay the Passover lamb’” (v. 21). When Moses spoke of the assembled “congregation of Israel,” he was speaking of it covenantally or presbyterially, i.e., as represented in the elders. In slaying the Passover lamb, the elders were acting on behalf of Israel. Hence, in Exodus 12 “the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel” is comprised of all the elders of Israel, excluding women and children.

Each household was to have a lamb “according to the number of persons” (Ex. 12:3-4). The elders were given the responsibility to count how many in each household would be eating (v. 21), and then kill the lambs, according to the count. In their counting they were to exclude “foreigners” (v. 43), and “hired servant(s)” (v. 45). Here we see elders “fencing” the table, excluding some in a house and admitting others to the Passover meal.

Each household was to have a Passover lamb, one “according to the number of persons...according to what each man should eat” The size of the lamb would be determined by the number of persons in the household who would be participating in the Passover. If a particular household was “too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them, according to what each man should eat . . .” (v. 4).

When was a household “too small for a lamb”? What is “the number of persons” required to have a Passover meal? According to Nigel Lee,

Exodus 12:4a is thus *not* saying that the man and his wife and their children are all to go share their Passover with all their next-door neighbors, according to the total number of souls altogether in both houses. No! Instead, the text specifies that the ‘count for the lamb’ is to be made according to that ‘number of souls’ which was constituted by each mature male—alias every ‘man accustomed to eat.’ It refers to the minimum ‘number’ of mature males (ten) required to constitute a [local] ‘congregation of Israel,’ Exodus 12:3-4 & 18:12-21. The sacramental principle here—where ten mature male communicants are gathered together in the Name of Jehovah—is thus the very opposite of an...all-inclusive non-sacramental household meal enjoyed by one whole family (or even by two families meeting together)!⁴

Exodus 12 makes clear that this required “number of persons” consisted of mature men.⁵ This was the headship principle at work in the

⁴ Lee, F. Nigel, *Catechism Before Communion*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, , p. 37. Keil and Delitzsch in their *Commentaries on the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, Vol. II, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. G. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 11, and George Bush in his *Notes on Exodus*, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: James Family Christian Publishers, 1979), p. 137, agree with F. Nigel Lee on the number of ten mature men as necessary to celebrate the Passover as a “paschal society.”

covenant community of Israel. Moses addressed the congregation of Israel represented in their elders (vv. 3, 21), who were men, and instructed “each one” of these men to choose a lamb “for themselves and their fathers’ households” (v. 3). Verse 4 explains that if a household is too small, that is, if it does not have a sufficient number of men, then *he*, the head of the household, is to go to *his* neighbor nearest *his* own house and gather a sufficient *number*, and provide for them a *male* lamb the size of which “is according to what each man should eat.” The Hebrew word translated *man* in the NASV is *iysh*, which does not mean simply “person,” or “man generically, i.e., human being,” but rather, it denotes a “mature male,” as the context makes clear.⁶ So then, when verse 4 says that each house is to take a lamb “according to the number of persons in them,” it is not referring to the total number of persons living in that household (newborns, the seriously ill and the very elderly could not eat the roasted lamb, bitter herbs and unleavened bread required at the Passover meal); rather, it is referring to the “persons” of the “men” who were to eat the Passover meal.

⁵ Paedocommunionists use 1 Samuel 1:1-28 to substantiate their view. However, no reason exists in the text to make one think that this incident is referring to the Passover. Some aspects of the text intimate that this is not the Passover. Richard Bacon thinks that this passage, read in the light of Deuteronomy 12:17-18 and 14:22,26b, could be referring to the command that a Hebrew was “to go up to Shiloh (and later to Jerusalem) annually, (i.e., year by year—the exact wording of Deuteronomy 14:22 and 1 Samuel 1:3, 7, 21) to pay his tithes and vows. This is precisely what we are told Elkanah was doing. And at that feast, the entire household was to partake of the offerings.” *What Mean Ye By This Service?* (Dallas, Texas: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1989), p. 18.

⁶ Contrary to the claim of some, *iysh* in Job 42:11 and 1 Chronicles 16:3 does not refer to women.

These men are described (literally) as “each man according to the mouth of his eating.” This does not mean merely that each person with a mouth was to eat the meal but instead means “each man who will be eating the Passover.” In addition, conceivably some family members would be ceremonially unclean for a variety of reasons, e.g., because of funeral attendance. The Levitical laws excluded such people from the Passover for a certain time. They have mouths, are members of the household, and some may have been circumcised, but they would be excluded in the count. The number of those who would participate in the Passover in each house would determine the size of the lamb obtained for the meal, requiring a careful count. Not everyone in the family would be eating; in fact, only the circumcised, mature males would be eating.

When the phrase, “each man according to the mouth of his eating,” is used in Exodus 16:16, 21 regarding manna, it implies the same idea as in Exodus 12:4. The Israelites were to calculate how much manna they would need in order for it all to be eaten at one time, according to how many in the family would eat it. How much manna would a newborn eat? None. Therefore, he would not be counted.

Little children did not take the Passover because it was not designed for them. Isaiah 7:15 prophetically describes the Messiah as a child—“He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good.” The food infants and toddlers eat is appropriate for their

needs and capabilities; hence, instead of roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread, they eat soft and sweet “curds and honey” until they mature.

Other Considerations

How did the elders take the count? Numbers 1:2-18 describes a similar census of “all the congregation . . . by their families...according to the number of names, every male, head by head from twenty years old and upward So Moses . . . took these men . . . and they assembled all the congregation together.” This census was a counting of mature males. These men were assembled as “all the congregation of the sons of Israel” (v. 2). In Exodus 12:37, we are informed that the count of those leaving Egypt in the Exodus amounted to “six hundred thousand men on foot, *aside from children.*”

John 6 records Jesus feeding “the Five Thousand” near the time of the Passover in Jerusalem. More than five thousand people were fed miraculously by Jesus that day. John makes clear that five thousand “men” were counted (v. 10), not including the thousands of women and children who were fed as well. These five thousand men were in Jerusalem for Passover (Ex. 16:1-17), and the official count had been taken of the number of men who would be eating the Passover meal (Ex. 12:1f; 16:1f). The women and children were there as companions and observers, not participants.

The experience of Jesus as a youth confirms that young children were not counted because they did not take the Passover. It was customary for the Jews of the first century to take twelve year old boys to the Temple to be instructed by the elders in preparation for Passover when they reached the age of thirteen. Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem each year; but, the Bible explicitly says that Jesus had not gone with them prior to his twelfth year: “And His parents used to go to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And *when He became twelve*, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast” (Luke 2:41-42). Although Joseph and Mary had gone yearly, Jesus did not go until He became twelve to be prepared by the elders through catechetical instruction for taking the Passover when He turned thirteen: “And it came about that after three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions” (v. 46).⁷

Back to the Passover

Returning to Exodus 12, we learn that circumcision as the sign of the covenant (Gen. 17:7), was a necessary requirement for all participants in the Passover meal: “no uncircumcised person may eat of it” (v. 48). Because participation in the covenant meal presupposed membership in the covenant, no foreigner was allowed to partake unless he had received

⁷ Mary’s attendance with Joseph at the Passover in Jerusalem does not contradict the regulations of Exodus 12 that require only mature males to partake of the Passover. A person’s presence at a religious rite or sacrament does not necessarily imply participation.

circumcision and been assimilated into the covenant community. Circumcision was the sacrament of initiation into the covenant community, while the Passover was the sacrament of communion, life and growth. Moreover, since circumcision was a prerequisite for taking the Passover, no female was admitted to the Passover meal. Females were represented by their mature males. However, when the Passover was celebrated, all present would rejoice in the Lord although not all those present would participate in the meal.

The Passover meal was not an ordinary meal. It was a special meal because it was a sacrament (Ex. 12:10-11, 14, 17, 24). It was to be celebrated “in a solemn assembly to the LORD your God” (^{Deut} ~~Ex~~ 16:8), in the Tabernacle of Moses, and later in the Temple in Jerusalem (^{Deut 16:2} v. 2). In fact, the Passover meal was so special, as a sacrament of the Lord, that if anyone who was qualified and able to take it, deliberately refused to do so, he would be “cut off” from the covenant community (Num. 9:13).

The question the child asked his father in Exodus 12:26-27—What does this rite mean to you?—indicates that young children present at the Passover were learning observers who did not partake of the Passover meal. Although circumcised, the child identifies himself as an observer not a participant at the Passover. Surely he was anticipating the day when he could participate and, therefore, asked for more instruction from his father on redemption, the covenant, and the sacrament. “This verse . . . implies

that covenant children received some degree of catechetical instruction in preparation for meaningful participation in the Passover.”⁸

We learn, therefore, from Exodus 12:26-27, that circumcision, although a precondition, was not in itself sufficient for admittance to the Passover. One also had to be catechized in the meaning and implications of the Passover in order to participate in that holy meal. This point is confirmed in Exodus 12:48, where we learn that a foreigner in Israel could not eat the Passover unless he and all the dependent males in his household were circumcised. However, even then, only he, not the circumcised males of his household, was allowed to participate: “then let him come near to celebrate it.” Although circumcised, the dependent males in his household did not participate until they were instructed in the significance of Passover and showed intelligent faithfulness to the covenant Lord and Savior (Ex. 12:26-27; 13:8, 14). As Calvin aptly put it,

Since then the Paschal Lamb corresponds to the Holy Supper . . . we may gather from hence that none can be duly admitted to receive it, but those who are capable of being taught He [Moses] forbids all strangers from partaking of it; because a promiscuous permission to eat of it would have been an unworthy profanation For strangers could not testify that they were sharers in that redemption This law remains in force now, viz., that no polluted or impious person should intrude himself at the Lord’s Table Only the faithful

⁸ Gunn, Grover, “A Letter on Paedocommunion,” <http://capo.org/cpc.paedoltr.htm> , p. 4.

should be received, after they have professed themselves to be followers of Christ.⁹

Normally the Passover was to be celebrated in the first month; but God instituted a “second month” Passover for those men who could not take the “first month” Passover, being ceremonially unclean because of attending a funeral (Num. 9:1-14; 5:2-3). Richard Bacon rightly observes, “The Passover had a significance which required examination of the would-be participants”¹⁰ The Levitical priests, after careful examination, would admit the clean to the Passover and exclude the unclean. A person could not determine these issues for himself and so admit himself to the meal. Even though a person was circumcised, only the priests could admit and exclude from the Passover due to ceremonial cleanness or uncleanness.

If someone ate the Passover sincerely but in uncleanness, because he was ignorant of the ceremonial rules, he sinned and his sin of partaking in ignorance had to be atoned. This happened during the great Passover in the days of Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 30. At that Passover many faithful believers from the Northern Kingdom had come to Jerusalem for Passover. Out of ignorance they had not followed the requirements for ceremonial cleanness. They “had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than prescribed” (v. 18). To turn away God’s anger from them

⁹ Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1960) Book IV, Chapter xvi, p. 30f.

¹⁰ Bacon, Richard, *What Mean Ye By This Service?* (Dallas, Texas: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1989), p. 13.

for eating the Passover while unclean, Hezekiah interceded in their behalf: “‘May the good LORD pardon everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though not according to the purification rules of the sanctuary.’ So the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people” (2 Chron. 30:18-20). Partaking of the Passover in ignorance of its Biblical regulations was sinful. Therefore, it would be unwise for small children to participate.

The point is that some measure of a mature understanding of the complex of ceremonial regulations “fencing” the Passover would have been essential for those taking the Passover. This required training and catechetical instruction beyond the capacities of most small children (Deut. 1:39). Furthermore, individuals and families could not decide on their own whether or not to eat the Passover, when to eat it or where to eat it. The stipulations are clear. Beginning in Deuteronomy 16, Passover was to be celebrated only at the Tabernacle/Temple (Deut. 16:2, 5-7), in the first or second month. Not to eat when qualified and able brought excommunication. To eat when unqualified brought down God’s anger.

The cleanliness required to take the Passover not only was ceremonial, but also was spiritual. Knowledge of the rituals *and* spiritual maturity rising from understanding rooted in a heart yielded to God were required. We learn from the Passover in the reign of Hezekiah that lack of consecration to the Lord disqualified someone from the Passover. The

priests must be “consecrated” to God and His service (2 Chron. 30:3); “yielded to the LORD” (v. 8), “ashamed of themselves” for their sins (v. 15). “Many in the assembly who had not consecrated themselves” had to be purified to participate in the Passover (v. 17). From this Bacon concludes, “This account teaches us that something more than ceremonial cleanness could keep an ancient Israelite from the feast. An unyielded heart also disqualified the ancient Israelite from the feast, even though he had been previously circumcised”¹¹

The institution of the “second month” Passover in Numbers 9:1-14 makes no reference to women being made ceremonially unclean by funeral attendance. Surely women were present at funerals. But, their attendance at funerals was irrelevant to the regulations since only circumcised, catechized males could participate.

If the women of Israel were admitted to the Passover, about twenty-five percent of them would have come to Moses with the same kind of question the men had. These considerations lead Bacon to conclude:

for twenty-five percent of the women . . . in each of the four weeks of every month would have been unqualified to partake . . . due to their menstrual period (Lev. 15:19-20). Additionally, because Israel observed a lunar month, the solution that God gave to Moses would have been absolutely no relief for menstruating women. They would have been unclean on the fourteenth of the following month as well. However, there is no such complaint to Moses in Numbers 9. Are we to believe

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

that these unclean mothers cooked and served the Passover to their Levitically clean infants? Surely this is a thought so completely out of keeping with the nature of the meal that even paedocommunionists will reject it. Rather, it makes much more sense both theologically and hermeneutically to maintain that neither the mothers nor the children ate the meal sacramentally.¹²

Application to the Lord's Supper

How do these Old Testament requirements relate to the Lord's Supper of which the Passover meal was a prototype?

The continuity of administration between the Passover and the Lord's Supper is obvious. First, one must receive *the sign of the covenant*, which in the Old Testament was circumcision, and in the New Testament is baptism, as the public initiation into the church of Christ, in order to be admitted to the Lord's Table.

Second, although baptism is a prerequisite for taking the Lord's Supper, some baptized people may not partake, just as some circumcised people in the Old Testament could not partake. Baptism, like circumcision, is not the only requirement for taking the Lord's Supper. Some measure of *maturity* is necessary, since the Lord's Supper, like the Passover, (but, unlike baptism), is not for the immature.

Third, knowledge of the meaning and implications of the sacraments, those spiritual and historical realities of which they are signs and seals, and the responsibilities to which partaking in the Supper obligates us, are also

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

preconditions for taking the Lord's Supper, just as *catechetical instruction* was a precondition for Passover in Exodus 12:26-28. Small children usually are not capable of apprehending such instruction.

Fourth, candidates for church membership and even baptized children of the covenant must be *admitted by the elders' approval of their credible profession of faith in Christ*. This duty of elders is pictured in Numbers 9. It is also illustrated by the Old Testament elders making the count of those in a household who could partake of the Passover and those who could not, Exodus 12. Like the priests and elders of the Old Testament, so the elders of the New Testament church are to be the guardians of the Table. Precisely because it is The *Lord's* Table, it is to be administered by His representatives.

Fifth, the Lord's Supper is for those who are *consecrated* to the Lord Jesus Christ with yielded hearts. This is what King Hezekiah demanded of those who would celebrate the Passover according to 2 Chronicles 30:2-3, 8,15,17.

We also see the discontinuity of administration between the Passover and the Lord's Supper in the admittance of godly baptized women in the church to the Lord's Supper because of the expansion of blessings and privileges in the New Covenant—"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all

one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). The sacraments have been changed so as not to exclude women, who with their families were members of the New Testament church (Eph. 5-6; Acts 8:12). In the New Testament church, all those who *are of years and ability to examine themselves*, including men, women and youth, are enjoined to receive the Lord’s Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:23-31. According to Nigel Lee, “The admission of mature women to the Holy Table occurred only when Christ reversed the Fall, at His advent and death and resurrection.”¹³ He goes on to observe:

But Paul does not say [in Galatians 3:28] that there is neither child nor adult. He leaves in place the prohibition against infants and young [immature] children partaking of the sacrament. In fact, Paul uses the distinction between adult [mature] understanding and childish [immature] “understanding” to illustrate spiritual truths in I Corinthians 3:1-3 and I Corinthians 13:11. The writer of Hebrews has a similar distinction in mind in Hebrews 5:12-6:2¹⁴

INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING THE LORD’S SUPPER

In 1 Corinthians 10:14-22 and 11:17-34, Paul sets forth the requirements for taking the Lord’s Supper in a worthy manner so as not to be “guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” (11:27, 30-32). The partakers must flee idolatry (v. 14), reject the table of demons (v. 21), partake in remembrance of Christ (vv. 24-25), proclaim the Lord’s death until He

¹³ Lee, F. Nigel, *Catechism Before Communion*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, (Lakeland, Florida: Whitefield Theological Seminary, 1988), pp. 26-27.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

comes (v. 26), examine themselves (v. 28); judge the body rightly (v. 29), judge themselves rightly (v. 31), and wait for one another (v. 33).

Paedocommunionists respond by saying that infants are not even under consideration in 1 Corinthians 11:23f. Paul is correcting those adults who are abusing the Lord's Supper. Furthermore, they tell us, little children are incapable of understanding his exhortations. Therefore, Paul has no intention of excluding little children by his remarks.

How interesting that the paedocommunionists switch from emphasizing the inclusion of little children in the statements in 1 Corinthians 10 to the exclusion of little children in the exhortations in 1 Corinthians 11! However, they are correct in saying that Paul is addressing adults committing adult sins and that he is exhorting them to adult responsibilities because little children were not admitted to the Lord's Supper just as they were not admitted to the Passover. Therefore, the Lord's Supper should not be taken by anyone who is incapable of fleeing idolatry, rejecting the table of demons, remembering Christ, proclaiming the Lord's death, examining himself, judging the body rightly, judging himself rightly and waiting for one another. To those who come in this manner, the Lord's Supper is nourishing spiritual food; but to those who come otherwise, either deliberately or ignorantly, it is poison (11:27, 29).

Withholding the Lord's Supper from little children does not deprive them of any of the blessings of the covenant of grace (Gen. 17:10-14).

Baptizing an infant or small child is acknowledging that he or she is in the covenant and shares its blessings. Withholding the Supper from baptized infants and toddlers “merely denies them a special manner by which those benefits are signified and sealed during the time it does not suit their age. The Supper gives not one benefit which is not granted already beforehand through faith in the Word and baptism”¹⁵

Paedocommunionists take issue with this perspective because they understand 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 as implying a correspondence between the incidents recorded in 10:1-4 and the Lord’s Supper. Their argument is that since the children in the church of the Old Testament, who were baptized in the Red Sea, ate of the spiritual food and spiritual drink of manna and water from the spiritual rock, therefore baptized children in the church of the New Testament should be allowed to eat the Lord’s Supper.

Kenneth Gentry has shown convincingly that this argument is superficial and that 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 is irrelevant to the issue of paedocommunion.¹⁶ Paedocommunionists fail to understand this text in its context (1 Cor. 8:1-10:15), which focuses on Christian liberty. Now that Christians have spiritual freedom in Christ, how should they respond to eating food sacrificed to idols? Danger lurks in this practice for immature

¹⁵ Bavinck, Herman, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, Vol. IV, pp. 641-642, quoted by Morton Smith, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, p. 690, (Greenville, South Carolina: Greenville Seminary Press, 1994).

¹⁶ See Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., “Paedocommunion: Faith or Fad?” (Set 2), an audio tape set on 1 Corinthians 10-11.

Christians (8:7); therefore, mature Christians must be careful in their enjoyment of Christian liberty (v. 8f).

In chapter 9, Paul clarifies his own liberty and responsibilities as an apostle (v. 1). If apostles must be disciplined in their exercise of liberty, then all believers should be disciplined in their enjoyment of Christian liberty (vv. 24-27). By beginning chapter 10 with the word, "For" (NASV), or "moreover" (KJV), Paul is applying the point of chapters 8-9, namely, that some Christians make the dangerous mistake of thinking that Christian privileges and liberties are automatic protections against God's judgment. Sinful living is not a serious matter to them. He supports his point with illustrations from Israel's history (10:1-10). Then in 10:12, he exhorts those who misuse Christian liberty to examine themselves, lest they perish through a false sense of security. In 10:14, he warns them to flee idolatry. In 10:21, he exhorts them not to sit at the Lord's Table and at the table of demons. And in 10:22-33, he advises them to be more concerned with edifying a weaker brother troubled by eating food dedicated to idols than with practicing Christian liberty.

The focus of 10:1-4, supported by these illustrations (v. 5-10), exposes the error of paedocommunion. Paul is dealing with adult sins, adults in Israel's history, adult responsibilities, and adult warnings. When Paul says that "*all* [are] under the cloud, and *all* passed through the sea, and *all* were baptized into Moses . . . and *all* ate the same spiritual food . .

. and *all* drank the same spiritual drink,” he does not use “all” in an absolute sense, any more than he uses “one” absolutely in 9:24. Little children are not even under consideration here. He is calling upon those who have professed faith in Christ to be faithful. He warns them to be disciplined in their freedom in Christ or be severely judged by God. It is not that their little children are about to be judged by God. They are not the ones who grumbled (v. 10), worshipped idols (v. 7), or acted immorally (v. 8). Addressing those who “think they stand,” Paul is speaking to people with understanding, not babies. In verse 5, He reminds the church at Corinth that God was displeased with *most* of them in the wilderness, and so He laid them low. And who were these people? Everybody over twenty years of age, except Joshua and Caleb—adults! In this context of 8:1-10:15, Paul reasons with and challenges adults on the basis of adult experiences. He calls upon them to be instructed by these Old Testament examples (10:11), and to examine themselves and take heed lest they fall (v. 12). Infants and toddlers cannot do these things! Then he makes clear that he is addressing people with some understanding of covenant privileges, covenant history and covenant demands—“I speak to you as men; you judge what I say” (v. 15).

In what sense were the manna and water from the rock, spiritual food and drink, 10:1-4? They were not the same “spiritual food” as the Lord’s Supper because they were *not* sacraments (Ex. 16:1f). Manna and water were physical food for satisfying physical hunger and thirst (Neh. 9:15). If

Paul had intended to find in the Old Testament parallels to the New Testament sacraments, surely he would have simply referred to circumcision and Passover. Both the manna that God rained down from heaven and the water that came out of the rock were given supernaturally and miraculously from God, just as the crossing of the Red Sea was miraculous. They were “spiritual” in the same sense that Isaac’s birth was “according to the Spirit” (Gal. 4:29). He was born to elderly parents by the supernatural intervention of God.

The historical events recorded by Paul in 10:1-15—the Red Sea, the manna, the water from the rock, the incidents of human rebellion and divine judgment on Israel in the wilderness—were “examples that were written for our instruction” (10:11) Paul did *not* draw any analogy or press any aspects of their passage through the Red Sea under Moses’ leadership or their eating the manna and drinking the water as corresponding to the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.¹⁷ Rather, he presented them as *examples* of how people can be blessed of God and still be judged by Him because of their unfaithfulness.

THE DISSIMILARITIES OF THE SACRAMENTS

The sacraments bear witness to the unity of the Church in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). But differences between the sacraments regarding their

¹⁷ Exodus 12:38 and Numbers 20:8 reduce to absurdity the argument that the manna and water from the rock were sacraments.

administration also exist which bring out their richness and practicality in the life of the church. In baptism, the recipient is passive, because this sacrament signifies regeneration by the Spirit which brings a person dead in sin to new life in Christ. In the Lord's Supper, the participant is active. He takes the bread, chews and swallows it. He takes the wine and drinks it. He then passes it to the person next to him in the pew, having received it from the person on his other side. As Ed Clowney observes,

The decisive difference between the two sacraments is that the Supper requires *active and discerning participation*. Indeed, communicants who take and eat in remembrance of Christ's death are *performing* the sacrament as well as receiving it.¹⁸

All of the participant's actions in the Lord's Supper are elements of the visual sign and all have significance. In fact, activity on the part of the person being baptized would distort the meaning of the sacrament, just as passivity in receiving the Lord's Supper would distort the meaning of that sacrament. Intelligent physical activity is necessary for the participant in the Lord's Supper in order to symbolize the spiritual reality signified by the visual sign, i.e., the intelligent and obedient activity of faith essential to Christian maturity. This maturation takes place as faith deliberately and obediently nourishes itself upon Christ in His Word. The Lord's Supper requires knowledge of God's Word and of self, along with an active faith accepting and receiving that which is offered in the Word and sacrament.

¹⁸ Clowney, Ed, *The Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), p. 284.

Seeking benefits from the Lord's Supper without this active and living faith is a superstitious misuse of the sacrament.

John Murray makes several distinctions between baptism and the Lord's Supper, which, when kept in mind, increase our appreciation of both sacraments.

- (1) Baptism signifies and seals what lies at the basis and inception of a state of salvation, to wit, union with Christ, cleansing from the pollution of sin, and cleansing from the guilt of sin. It signifies what infants may possess as well as adults and must possess in order to be in a state of salvation.
- (2) The Lord's Supper, on the other hand, signifies something that is consequent upon the state of salvation. It presupposes that which is sealed by baptism. The two central significations of the Lord's Supper are *commemoration* and *communion*. Commemoration implies the recognition of Christ as our Savior who died for us, communion the recognition that He as our resurrected and living Savior is present with us and seals that presence in the elements of the bread and wine. The notions associated with the Lord's Supper, such as remembrance, communion, discerning of the Lord's body, are of such a nature that they involve conscious intelligent understanding.
- (3) It is far from irrelevant to observe the difference between baptism and the Lord's Supper in respect of the elements used and the actions involved. Baptism is washing with water, something necessary and appropriate to the infant in the

earliest stages of life. There is nothing in the element or the action incongruous with earliest infancy. The Lord's Supper is the partaking of bread and wine. We can readily detect that there is in the elements used and the actions involved something that it not congruous with early infancy.¹⁹

CONCLUSION

We conclude, therefore, in the light of our study, that the requirements for taking the Lord's Supper are: (1) baptism, (2) catechetical instruction, (3) a mature understanding (in some measure) of the meaning and implications of the sacraments, (4) a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ which always includes the commitment to worship and serve Him alone, and (5) admittance of the candidate to the Lord's Supper after the elders examine and approve him.

¹⁹ Murray, John, *Christian Baptism* (Phillipsburg, NJ,: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1980), pp. 77-79.