

Editorial: More on Baptism (2)

Michael Kimmitt

The Baptism of Disciples Alone: A Covenantal Argument for Credobaptism versus Paedobaptism

Fred Malone

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Dr. Fred Malone's book is an altogether superior work. He is the pastor of First Baptist Church, Clinton, Louisiana. The volume comes as a substantial and well produced hardback; well footnoted and with appendices, bibliography and indices. This is a significant work from the baptist position.

The circumstances of its production are interesting. Fred was a young Calvinist and a longtime Southern Baptist who studied at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. Here he accepted the Reformed faith and was ordained by the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and became pastor of the First Presbyterian Church PCA of Eutaw, Alabama.

Apparently Dr. Malone was not alone. Clearly the situation in the United States is very different from the UK. There they have numerous churches and many Presbyterian ones holding biblical positions on worship and order while many of their baptist churches are Arminian and dispensational. There is therefore a natural tendency for thoughtful young men to gravitate in the Reformed direction and accept pastorates in Presbyterian churches.

It was apparently the issue of paedocommunion that caused Malone (not, I think, entirely logically) to reconsider his position and painfully to return to his baptist roots. This book, then, is written in part as his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* and in part to enlighten his baptist brethren. But the main point he is making is against our confessional position: "Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized."

We have already remarked that the issue is not, as in his subtitle, *Credobaptism versus Paedobaptism*, simply because all Reformed Churches practice as the norm the baptism of professing believers.

Following a "Foreword" by the late Ernest Reisinger and a "Preface" and an "Introduction," Chapter 1 is devoted to a discussion of John Murray's case for infant baptism. He disagrees with Murray's position that John's baptism is separate from Christ's and here I think Malone, along with Calvin and against Trent, is correct. He rejects Murray's argument on what by "good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture" (*Westminster Confession of Faith* 1:6). This then leads to a discussion of the biblical principles of interpretation and infant baptism in chapter 2. After a discussion of hermeneutics, the Reformed are accused of the same errors as "dispensationalists, proponents of normative worship, and theonomists!"

In Section II of his book, he introduces his concept of the string of pearls taken from an earlier pamphlet. What he has in mind are the various links which make up the Reformed argument. Undoubtedly such exist, as may be seen, for instance, in the eight propositions Charles Hodge gives in defence of infant baptism in his *Systematic Theology*.¹ Malone asks, "How can a strong chain be made of weak links?" But, of course, the answer is that it is not so much a chain but a rope each strand of which strengthens the whole. Chapters 3-12 then discuss each of these points.

Chapters 3-4 deal with the covenant theology of the Bible. I am not alone in finding the discussion somewhat dense, perhaps understandably as Malone's doctoral dissertation was *A Critical Analysis of the Use of Jeremiah 31: 31-34 in the Letter to the Hebrews*. He draws on John Owen's magisterial commentary but while recognising his position does not seem to interact with his piece "Of Infant Baptism" which is printed after this article. However the fact that baptists are increasingly willing to discuss the issue of the covenant marks progress in the discussion.

Chapter 5 treats "The Relationship Between Circumcision and Baptism." Unlike the previous review where the baptist Brian Russell says, "But in the New Testament baptism has replaced circumcision as 'the sign and seal of the righteousness of the faith' promised to Christians under the new covenant," Malone twists and turns over 15 pages to avoid that conclusion. But surely if we stand back and view the Bible as a whole we see that the two sacraments of the old covenant (circumcision and the passover) are simply replaced in the new by baptism and the Lord's Supper. This is obvious from I Corinthians 5: 7-8: "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not

¹Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, repr. 1993), vol 3, pp. 546-558.

with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” And it should be equally obvious from Colossians 2:11-12:

“In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”

Here baptism is called “the circumcision of Christ.” And it is baptism with the Spirit not baptism with water—the reality not the ritual—that is in view in Colossians 2, and incidentally in Romans 6. Both the OT sacraments involved the shedding of blood and pointed forward to Christ’s atonement, but under the NT there is now no more shedding of blood, so appropriate alterations had to be made.

Chapter 6 deals with household baptisms and the “*oikos* formula” (*oikos* being the Greek word for “house”) and offers splendid examples of eisegesis. We must return to this later in the discussion but here we quote Malone’s final paragraph:

I conclude that neither the *oikos* formula nor the household baptisms recorded in Scripture offer any example of or authority supporting infant baptism. Rather, upon closer inspection, the baptism of disciples alone is fully maintained.

With some such flourish he concludes each chapter, but here, as I hope to demonstrate, the “closer inspection” has simply not been close enough!

Succeeding chapters are entitled: “Answering the Infant Baptism Proof-Texts,” “Jesus’ Attitude Toward Children,” “The Weight of Precept, the Argument of Silence, and the Regulative Principle of Worship,” etc. He concludes with “Postlude: A Final Appeal to Build Baptist Churches,” though the thought of nothing but a multitude of independent baptist churches will scarcely appeal to those who “believe one, holy, catholic and apostolic church!”

Appendices are “Spurgeon on Baptism,” “The Proper Mode of Biblical Baptism,” a “Book Review of Pierre Marcel’s Classic Treatment,” and the “Appendix to the 1689 London Baptist Confession.” There are also a “Selected Bibliography” and indices covering author, subject and Scripture.

Some years ago, before I started writing on the baptist controversy, I looked round for material on the baptist position. There were the classic treatments of Alexander Carson and Johannes Warns and a not very helpful volume by Beasley-Murray, and, of course, numerous little booklets, largely repeating inaccuracies from one another, some of which inaccuracies regrettably appear in this volume. But taken all in all this is a substantial and serious volume. The author has done his best with the baptist cause and the volume deserves to be taken seriously. If it does not convince those of us in the Reformed camp that is because he has overlooked some significant issues. To the discussion of these we must now turn.

Discussion. The importance of the family lies on the face of Scripture. It was the only ordinance instituted by God before the fall!

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed (Gen. 2:21-25).

It has now continued for more than six thousand years in every part of the globe and has proved a haven of refuge and a bastion of stability in an uncertain world. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). Its current breakdown in Britain and America is clearly a sign of increasing apostasy and a large contributor to failure in schools and the increasing breakdown and lawlessness in our society.

As we turn the pages of Scripture we see the Spirit carefully tracing out the line of Cain and the covenant line from Adam through Seth down to Noah. Then we read: "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." (Gen. 6:1-2). The inevitable result of these mixed marriages was the imminent demise of the covenant line, the necessity of the flood, and the ark. We are familiar with the story, perhaps from our earliest years. But do we realise the significance of God's words: "But with thee will I establish my covenant; and

thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee" (Gen. 6:18)?

Theologians make much use of such terms as covenant of grace, covenant of life, covenant of redemption and covenant of works, etc. But this is the first mention of "covenant" in Scripture. With whom was this covenant made? With Noah—"with thee," singular. Whom did it cover? "... thou and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee." In short, the family. Note that though they all were saved from the flood, the outcome shows that not all were regenerate.

From the line of Shem in due time came Abram. We read of God establishing with him an everlasting covenant. Just such a covenant had earlier been established with mankind: "And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth" (Gen. 9:16). But now it is specific to a particular line: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17:7).

Then follows the instruction about circumcision. Abraham was to be circumcised. "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also" (Rom. 4:11). We might reasonably call that "believer's circumcision." But the covenant also included his household. "He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant" (Gen. 17:13). We may call this "household circumcision." Also, "And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed" (Gen. 17:12). Here we have "infant circumcision." As two thousand years passed adult circumcision and household circumcision became relatively rare being mainly limited to proselytes and their children. Infant circumcision is seen as the norm. Just how important in God's sight it is, we learn from Exodus 4:24-26:

And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a

bloody husband art thou to me. So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.

We read, of course, of other covenants. There was the covenant at Sinai which gave us the ten commandments. But note: "And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect" (Gal. 3:17). Then there is the predicted new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34:

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hears; and will be Their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

In Malachi 3:1 we read, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the lord of hosts." This speaks of John the Baptist. When he came, his father Zacharias prophesied by the Holy Spirit,

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy *covenant*; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham (Luke 1:67-73).

Now when John was about thirty, the age at which he was entitled to start his priestly ministry, he came not circumcising and sacrificing (both of which involved the shedding of blood) but baptizing. In this, in due course, he is joined by our Lord's disciples. When our Lord's public ministry is concluded, the passover feast changes to the Lord's Supper as the new covenant in His blood is celebrated on the eve of His crucifixion. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). After His resurrection His earthly ministry concludes with the command of Matthew 28:19-20:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

For the next forty years all four sacraments ran in parallel. We know that some (most?) Jewish Christians continued to circumcise their children and attend the passover and ceremonies whereas Gentiles were forbidden to circumcise. When in AD 70 our Lord returned to destroy the temple and take vengeance on His enemies, the sacrifices ceased. The line of division between Jew and Christian became clearer and the latter continued to baptize believing adults, households and (by obvious implication) their children as they were added to the families in the normal course of affairs. But to the proof of that assertion we must now turn.

History. Five hundred years ago at the start of that great movement of the Spirit which we call the Reformation, all of western Christendom lay in the largely apostate structure that the catholic church had become under the domination of Rome. Virtually all had been baptized as infants. There is no evidence that the great Reformers (Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Calvin, Zanchius, Tyndale, Latimer, Cranmer, Knox, etc.) were re-baptized. The Reformation creeds are equally unambiguous. The *Thirty-Nine Articles* of the Church of England declares, "The baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ" (article 27). *Belgic Confession*, article 34, reads,

... infants of believers ... ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as the children in Israel formerly were circumcised, [for] the same promises ... are made unto our children. And indeed Christ shed his blood no less for the washing of the

children of the faithful, than for adult persons: and therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of that, which Christ hath done for them: as the Lord commanded in the law, that they should be made partakers of the sacrament of Christ's suffering and death, shortly after they were born, by offering for them a lamb, which was a sacrament of Jesus Christ. Moreover, what circumcision was to the Jews that baptism is to our children. And for this reason Paul calls baptism the circumcision of Christ [Col 2:11-12].

The *Westminster Confession* states in its article on baptism, "Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized" (28:4).

Against this the Anabaptists then and the baptists now argue that such texts as Mark 16:16 ("He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but that believeth not shall be damned"), Acts 2:38 ("Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost") and others in Acts make it clear that it is, as in the title of the book under review, *The Baptism of Disciples Alone*.

Scriptural Position. It has already been remarked that we who are Reformed have no quarrel with believer's baptism. (We again refer our readers to Owen's piece.) As the gospel spread out from Jerusalem, "both men and women" were baptized in Samaria (Acts 8:12). We read of the conversion and baptism the Ethiopian eunuch and Saul, etc. Repent, believe and be baptized is the biblical pattern.²

The argument was crisply put by B. B. Warfield in his "The Polemics of Infant Baptism" in which he critiques the arguments of baptist A. H. Strong against infant baptism.³ Warfield concludes,

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. Among these ordinances is baptism, which

²Ironically the most likely place to find un-baptized believers today is in baptist churches!

³*Works* (USA: Baker, repr. 2000), vol. 9, pp. 389-408

standing in similar place in the New Dispensation to circumcision in the Old, is like it to be given to children.⁴

Household Baptisms. But, in effect, Dr. Malone says we need the regulative principle to establish infant baptism. The baptist position is clear and simple: "Believe, and [then] be baptized." No belief, no baptism! But, of course, things are never that simple. Although there were countless baptisms in the early church the book of Acts records nine baptisms and there is an additional one mentioned in I Corinthians. Two of these were of individuals: Paul and the Ethiopian eunuch neither of whom had a family. If the twelve disciples of John the Baptist had families they do not appear. But five NT baptisms are specifically mentioned as household baptisms: Cornelius, Lydia, the Philippian jailer, Crispus and Stephanas.

Today there are many baptist churches in the UK, the USA, and elsewhere. Much is made of baptism but why do we never hear of household baptisms? I am sure examples can be produced where two or three generations of one family have been converted together and are all baptized together. But does not the absence of regular household baptisms among baptists point to some defect in their practice. Indeed on their principles they can hardly exist, but they are almost the norm in the New Testament. So let us hear it from the baptists ...

We must now look a little more closely at some of these household baptisms because there is a point here which is being overlooked. We saw that in the institution of circumcision (Gen. 17), we have believer's circumcision (Abraham), household circumcision (his son Ishmael and the men of his house), and infant circumcision (Isaac eight days after he was born). "In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised and Ishmael his son. And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him" (Gen. 17:26-27). "And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old as God had commanded him" (Gen. 21:4). Now if it can be shown that baptism is not only given to believers, which of course all admit, but also to households (the significance of which needs to be further discussed) then it follows as a "good and necessary consequence" that it will be given to infants born into those families. The presence or absence of infants in the households (which cannot be determined from Scripture) is irrelevant.

There is an additional point of importance. Just as in science our understanding of the world has regularly to be adjusted in the light of new discoveries, so in

⁴*Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 408

theology we must adjust our view in the light of the facts. Baptists hold to believer's baptism—full stop. In looking at the incidents of household baptisms I cannot but notice the desire of baptists not to incorporate the information into their system, but to try and explain it away as inconvenient. After all, they know they are right! Why confuse the situation with some mere facts!

Cornelius: "And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:13-14). This incident is important because it shows the stages of the expansion of the gospel in accordance with our Lord's words: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The early stages of that progress have all been marked by the pouring out of the Spirit. Pentecost—Samaritans—and now Gentiles. That would seem to cover it until Paul meets a group of John the Baptist's disciples. "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied" (Acts 19:6). Subsequently the miraculous gifts begin to fade and cease. But the circumstances are not in doubt. Cornelius was waiting with his relatives and close friends. Peter preaches the gospel to them.

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter. Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:44-48).

All heard the word, were baptized by the Holy Spirit and subsequently were baptized with water. This includes Cornelius' house (*oikos*), i.e., the immediate family as well as relative and friends.

Lydia: The Lord opened Lydia's heart so that she believed the things spoken by Paul. "And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide

there. And she constrained us" (Acts 16:14-15). A great deal of speculative ink has been expended over Lydia and her household! But in fact the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture has told us just three things. (1) She was converted by an act of sovereign grace ("whose heart the Lord opened"). (2) She was baptized. (3) She was baptized "and her household [*oikos*]," her immediate family (presumably children under twelve, for whom she was responsible). Be that as it may, why are those four words in the Greek (so fatal to the baptist position!) given if it was not to convey the idea that baptism, as previously circumcision, was to be applied to the house on the faith of its head?

Philippian jailer: In answer to his question, the Philippian jailer was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Then Paul and Silas "spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." The jailer "took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house" (Acts 16:30-34). The ASV renders the last verse: "And he brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God" (Acts 16:34). Malone misses some important exegetical points in his discussion. As Robert Reymond has pointed out: "In the case of the Philippian jailer, there is sustained emphasis throughout the Acts pericope (16:31-34) upon the jailer's faith alone."⁵

I want to draw attention to two important points. First, note the latter part of the reply to the jailor's anguished question: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house*." Why did Paul mention "and thy house?" Surely because if you go into any evangelical church, Reformed or baptist, you will find converted children growing up in it. Arminians would say that they had favourable circumstances in which to grow up and hear the gospel but Calvinists know better. They recognize that "salvation is of the Lord." The promise of the gospel is to us and our children. We are partakers of the "everlasting covenant" made with Abraham and his seed. Does that mean that all our children will be saved? Of course not! All our experience recognizes that we may beget reprobates. Isaac had an Esau as well as a Jacob. But we may hope and look for converted children if we bring them up in biblical ways.

⁵Robert L. Reymond, "Paul Missionary Theologian" (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2000) p. 157, n. 9. This whole footnote merits careful consideration.

Second, there is misexegesis. The promise is to the “house” (*oikos*), the immediate family. The preaching is to the “household” (*oikia*), including the servants/slaves and probably the other prisoners, apparently without result. Then the jailer washes their wounds and, no doubt with water drawn from the same source, is baptized: “he and all his.” Then he sets a table and “rejoiced greatly, with all his house [*oikos*].” Malone has simply missed the careful way that the educated Dr. Luke under the guidance of the Holy Spirit has indicated what is going on! Surely we are being shown that, as in the case of Lydia, baptism, as previously circumcision, is to be applied to the house on the faith of its head?

Crispus: The facts are simply stated: “And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). We learn from I Corinthians that Paul baptized Crispus. It is a reasonable deduction that his house (*oikos*) who also believed were baptized as well. Another example of household baptism.

Stephanas: “And I baptized also the household of Stephanas ...” (I Cor. 1:16). Little is known about Stephanas, even *his* baptism is not mentioned. Certainly his *oikos*, his immediate family presumably the children under twelve, were baptized. Clearly he was a converted man for we read, “ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints” (I Cor. 16:15). Here the word is *oikia* implying the wider household: servants/slaves who carried out this service. Once again Malone (and the mistake may be found in other baptist works) draws out conclusions from the English word “household” because he has simply not done his exegesis.

Summary. Malone concludes,

In summary the accounts of Lydia’s and Stephanas’ households are inconclusive and therefore provide no support for the practice of infant baptism, while the accounts of households of Cornelius, Crispus, and the jailer favour conscious belief as evidence of regeneration before baptism. Therefore, I conclude that the weight of the household baptisms supports the baptism of disciples alone.

Let me now offer my summary of what we have discussed and seen. At least half of the accounts in Acts and I Corinthians mention household baptisms (*oikos*). As the gospel spread out it met individuals and families, and where the head was converted they and (where appropriate) their families were baptized. Doubtless we are simply given examples of what went on. Those families must have contained children of every age. We do not need to prove that they contained

infants. In some cases we learn that they were converted (e.g., Cornelius) or believed (Crispus). But in the cases of Lydia and the Philippian jailor it is clear that the households were baptized because of the faith of the head. And, of course, where children were born into the family they would be baptized as a matter of course, as Abraham circumcised Isaac at eight days.

Now what is going on? We do not know what was the previous faith of Lydia, possibly she was a Jewess or proselyte. Maybe the jailor was a worshipper of Zeus! What is certain is that when the head of the house was converted to Christ, he or she did not leave the family in heathen darkness. Family solidarity meant that as the parent went so did the children. "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

I submit that this paradigm precisely fits what we would expect on Reformed principles! We have household baptisms whenever a child is born into the family, but on baptist principles there is scarcely any place for them!

If I were to visit a Jewish or Muslim household, I would expect to find the children brought up in their parents' faith. But now suppose the gospel gains an entrance and the parents are converted. I remember a Singapore Chinese attending our church in Birmingham who told me that when he started taking an interest in Christianity, his father asked him if he had been baptized. Why? Because the father recognized that was the universal sign of his conversion to Christianity. So the parents are baptized, but what of the children? They cannot be left in their previous belief. The change must be marked and that can only be done by baptism, as with the families of Lydia and the jailor. It really is all quite simple.

But the baptist error arose inside Christendom. They saw vast hordes who showed no sign of regeneration though they had been baptized as children. They read of belief and baptism, and it seemed a better way. But it was not as good as the Reformed way, and the more radical way leads into some pretty dead ends.

In Chapter 11 Malone argues, against the Reformed position, that it is an expanded privilege for children to "be baptized as confessing disciples upon their own personal repentance." He makes much of Owen on the covenant but let us hear the master on this point.

Commenting on Hebrews 4:9, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God," Owen writes,

Obs. I. Believers under the new testament have lost nothing, no privilege that was enjoyed by them under the old.

Many things they have gained, and those of unspeakable excellency,

but they have lost nothing at all. Whatever they had of privilege in any ordinance, that is continued; and whatever was of burden or bondage, that is taken away. All that they had of old was on this account, that they were the people of God. To them as such did all their advantages and privileges belong. But they were yet so the people of God as to be kept like servants, under the severe discipline of the law (Gal. 4: 1). Into this great fountain-privilege believers under the gospel are now succeeded And what was of servitude in reference unto the law is removed and taken away; but whatever was of advantage is continued unto them, as the people of God. This I suppose, is unquestionable, that God making them to be "his people who were not a people," would not cut them short of any privilege which belonged before to his people as such (Rom. 9:25-26). Besides, the state of the gospel is an estate of more grace and favour from God than that under the law (John 1:17) ... Moreover, God hath so ordered all things in the dispensation of his grace and worship, that Jesus Christ should have the pre-eminence in all. All things are gathered up unto a head in him. And is it possible that any man should be a loser by the coming of Christ, or by his coming unto Christ? It is against the whole gospel once to imagine it in the least instance. Let it now be enquired whether it were not a great privilege of the people of God of old, that their infant seed were taken into the covenant with them, and were made partakers of the *initial seal* thereof? Doubtless it was the greatest they enjoyed, next to the grace they received for the saving of their own souls ... How is it, then, that this people of God, made so by Jesus Christ in the gospel, should have their charter, upon its renewal, razed with a deprivation of one of their choicest rights and privileges? Assuredly it is not so. And therefore if believers are now, as the apostle says they are, "the people of God," their children have a right to the initial seal of the covenant.⁶

Chapter 12 of Malone's book refers briefly to tradition and history. We are both agreed that theological positions must be established from Scripture, not history. Aland and Jeremias are cited, but not Wall's *History of Infant Baptism*. The account of the martyrdom of Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna is suggestive. When

⁶John Owen, *Works* (Great Britain: Banner, repr. 1991), vol. 20, pp. 320-329.

challenged to revile Christ, Polycarp responded, "For eighty-six years I have served him, and he never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" He died probably AD 167/8. This puts his baptism back to AD 81/2, presumably as a child.

Although there is no *necessary* connection between the mode and the subjects of baptism, almost inevitably, Malone argues for immersion. His arguments do not persuade. As our readers will know I have already discussed this subject at some length. My pamphlet has been criticised, but not refuted. Until our baptist brethren actually look at the dozen or so accounts of baptism in the New Testament and show that the probability of each case involved immersion, I stick to my point that when John the Baptist said, "I indeed have baptized you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost" (Mark 1:8), the natural meaning is instrumental. The water is applied to the persons, not the persons to the water. I refer our readers to the previous review.

Final Conclusions and Discussion. This is in many ways an attractive book. We agree with Malone's sentiment:

The Great Commission requires that baptized disciples be taught 'to do all that [Christ] commanded [His disciples].' Systematic expository teaching and preaching is a commandment of the great commission. This is what is missing in many baptist churches today, though commanded by Jesus Christ. I believe that the expository preaching of the PCA has attracted many former Southern Baptists who are hungry for the Word of God ... (p. 196).

To some extent I think Malone is preaching to the converted. Baptists will welcome this book as a useful piece in their armoury. He has interacted with dead authors—Marcel, John Murray, Duane Spencer—but current critics such as Adams and Strawbridge are strangely absent. Surely he should have interacted with the latter's *Infant Baptism: Does the Bible Teach It?* which has been in the public domain some years.⁷ Quite apart from the detailed discussion of household baptisms surely their mere existence as almost the majority of those recorded in the New Testament must raise a question in reflecting baptist minds. They do not have them; we in the Reformed camp do.

As a member of an evangelical church, most of whom are committed to the baptist position, it has seemed to me that our children occupy a sort of ecclesiastical

⁷www.fivesolas.com/infbapt.htm

limbo, which I do not recognize in the New Testament. Are they Christians? No, they have not been baptized. Are they converted? In some cases, Yes! How then do we treat them? Thankfully in the way Paul taught us when he wrote “to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ” and “Children, obey your parents in the Lord : for this is right. Honour thy father and mother” (Eph. 1:1-2; 6:1-2). Or “To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” and “Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord” (Col. 1:2; 3:20). But then of course Paul knew they were baptized and church members!

But one criticism of reformed writers he and others make is valid. We may agree about infant baptism per se, but there are pretty large disagreements about the practical implications in our understanding and bringing of them up. But this, if the Lord wills, is in part the subject of our next review.