

**Responses to a Baptist Brother
on
the Subject of Infant Baptism**
by Rev. Geoffrey Willour

This paper is in response to an esteemed Baptist brother in the ministry with whom I have been dialoguing over the issue of infant baptism. In this paper I interact with issues and objections he has been raising thus far in the course of our dialogue. I offer these responses in a spirit of brotherly love and respect, and with thankfulness to God for this opportunity to explain my views on this subject in greater detail. I hope the reader will find these responses edifying and thought-provoking, even if he or she does not ultimately agree with the conclusions here offered.

1. Infant Baptism and Covenant Theology

A. The question of hermeneutics

The basic difference between the Baptist position and that of Reformed Paedobaptism is one of *hermeneutics*. (“Hermeneutics” is the science of Bible interpretation.) Most who defend believers-only baptism follow a dispensational view of hermeneutics, which sees fundamental *discontinuity* between the Old and New Testaments, with two separate peoples of God — one an “earthly” covenant people (Israel) with only earthly promises, and the other God’s “spiritual” people (the church, meaning true believers) with spiritual promises of eternal salvation. Some dispensationalists go so far as to believe that after a premillennial return of Christ the temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt and animal sacrifices will again be reinstated. To the adherent of covenant theology such a view is blasphemy against the completed work of Christ and a building up again of the “dividing wall” between the believing Jew and believing Gentile which Christ destroyed by His once-for-all sacrifice on the cross (see Ephesians 2:14).

On the other hand, Reformed Paedobaptists follow a covenantal hermeneutic, which sees a fundamental *continuity* between the Old and New Testament (though with discontinuity of outward forms and ceremonies). (A “paedobaptist” is one who believes in the practice of baptizing infants.) In the view of covenant theology as held by Reformed Paedobaptists, there is ultimately only *one* overarching covenant of grace. There is only one people of God (called “Israel” in the Old Testament and the “Church” in the New Testament). The “old covenant” was a covenant administration of the one covenant of grace that revealed Christ to come in shadows and types and promises that pointed God’s people forward to the Messiah (Colossians 2:16-17; The Epistle of Hebrews; etc.), whereas the new covenant is the final administration of God’s one covenant of grace that reveals Christ the Substance and fulfillment. This is not “replacement theology”; rather, it is “expansion theology”, since now under the new covenant both Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus belong together to the “commonwealth of Israel” (see Ephesians 2:11-22), the true “catholic” (i.e., “universal”) church.

Though it may not be immediately evident, most of the differences between Baptists and Reformed Paedobaptists are rooted in their different approaches to biblical

hermeneutics.

B. The relationship between Circumcision and Infant Baptism

Infant baptism is not a “carry over” from circumcision. Rather, baptism *replaces* circumcision under the new covenant administration. As Paul writes in Colossians 2:11-12 (where he is addressing Gentile believers): “In him also *you were circumcised* with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, *having been buried with him in baptism*, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.” (ESV; emphasis added)

Both circumcision and baptism are covenant signs of initiation into the covenant community. Circumcision was a bloody rite that pointed forward to the bloody death of Christ, which made it an appropriate covenant sign prior to the first advent of Christ. Baptism is an unbloody rite which points us back to the work that Christ accomplished in His first advent, which makes it an appropriate covenant sign for this new covenant era of completion.

Baptists sometimes argue that circumcision was only a national sign of belonging to the covenant nation of Israel (i.e., a nationalistic boundary marker). Certainly when God formed His people into a covenant nation during the Mosaic administration this nationalistic significance was added to the meaning of the covenant sign. However, the sign of circumcision was instituted in the days of the patriarch Abraham, long before Israel came into being as a nation, and it is clear that it essentially signifies God’s everlasting covenant promise, to be “an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.” (Genesis 17:7, ESV). In terms of its spiritual meaning it signified and sealed Abraham’s justification by faith alone (Romans 4:11). So circumcision has primarily a *spiritual* meaning, including regeneration (circumcision of the heart), God’s covenant promise to be the God of the circumcised, and justification by faith alone. *And yet God also commanded Abraham to apply this sign and seal of justification by faith alone to all the males of his household, including his infant males* (Genesis 17:9-14)! Why would God command Abraham to apply the sign and seal of justification by faith alone to the eight-day old infant males of his household, when obviously such infant boys cannot consciously believe? Baptist theology based upon a dispensational hermeneutic cannot explain this, but a Reformed Paedobaptist view rooted in a biblically-covenantal hermeneutic has no problems with this, for it recognizes that the Bible teaches the corporate, covenantal solidarity of the believing household — something that Baptist and revivalist approaches to Scripture are blinded to due to their hyper-individualistic approach to the faith.

2. The Meaning of Baptism

A. Different understandings of the Baptist and Reformed Paedobaptist views

In Baptist theology water baptism is viewed fundamentally as a *public testimony to one’s personal faith in Christ*. Thus baptism is viewed as a *work of man*, a believer’s act of obedience. But in the Reformed Paedobaptist view water baptism is viewed as being

primarily an *outward sign and seal of God's grace in Christ*. Thus baptism is viewed as being a *gift of God*, not a work of man. It is a *Divine pledge* of grace, the word (message) of the gospel in symbol form, that comes in the direction from *God to man*, not primarily a human pledge of faith coming in the direction from *man to God*. Thus the Reformed view of baptism underscores the good news of grace — God's unmerited mercy to sinners — whereas the Baptist view tends to underscore a works-righteousness understanding of salvation (where God's grace is made dependent upon the decision and/or work of man). (Of course, many Baptists believe in the good news of salvation by grace alone through faith in Christ alone, but my point is that their theology of baptism is in tension with the gospel of grace.)

To put it another way, in Baptist theology baptism means "I have decided to follow Jesus." In Reformed theology baptism means "Just as water washes my body from dirt, so Jesus washes my soul clean from sin by His blood and Spirit."

B. Scriptural considerations

While Baptists believe the Scriptures support their view that water baptism is a believer's testimony of personal faith, *the Bible nowhere teaches this*. Instead, when we examine baptismal texts we find that the meaning of baptism is connected to *what God does for us in Christ*, not with *our personal testimony of faith in Him*.

Before we consider specific Scripture texts, let's consider a few questions that seem to be brought up often by Baptist believers.

"But what about John's baptism, which was clearly a 'baptism of repentance' where the baptized confessed their sins? This was obviously not something infants could do!"

Answer: John the Baptist was the last of the *old covenant prophets*, the one whom God called to prepare the way for the Messiah (Isa. 40:3-5; Matt. 3:1-6). Therefore his baptism was an *old covenant baptism* designed to prepare God's covenant people to receive their Messiah. It was a *preparatory* baptism, not a covenant sign like circumcision; thus it was *distinct and different from Christian baptism*. This can be seen in Acts 19:1-7, where Paul re-baptizes with Christian baptism converts in Ephesus who had previously received John's baptism. If John's baptism of repentance is the same as Christian baptism, then why did Paul require the Ephesian converts to be re-baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ (i.e., with Christian baptism). Thus, *the baptism of John the Baptist and new covenant Christian baptism are two separate and distinct kinds of baptisms with distinct purposes and distinct meanings*. It is hermeneutically illegitimate to take the principles of one type of baptism (namely, John's) and apply it to a different type of baptism (namely, Christian baptism).

"But in the Book of Acts we always see the pattern of people first hearing the gospel and believing *before* they receive baptism. Baptism always *follows* conversion. So clearly baptism is meant to be a public testimony of one's faith in Christ, and thus it is not right to baptize infants, who are incapable of consciously believing and confessing their faith."

Answer: First of all, the Book of Acts is a book of *historical narrative* that describes the

mighty acts of the risen Lord Jesus Christ in the early church. As with all of the historical narratives of Scripture we need to be very cautious when drawing doctrinal teaching from scriptural narratives, since not everything *described* in the narratives of Scripture is *prescribed* as normative for the ongoing life of Christ's church.

In addition, as a historical narrative the Book of Acts is a *missionary* book. It describes the missionary labors of the earliest apostolic church. That being the case, we would of course expect that baptism would *follow* conversion *in a missionary context!* Those who come to faith in Christ from outside of the visible covenant community of the new covenant church (such as Jews and pagans) must of course profess their faith in Christ *prior* to receiving the covenant sign of baptism. But what is interesting to notice in the Book of Acts is that often when we read of new converts coming to faith in Christ and receiving baptism, we also read of their *households* receiving the covenant sign of baptism. Regardless of whether or not infants were present in such households, the point to observe is that *under the new covenant God continues to deal covenantally with households, not merely with isolated individuals.* (Although I would suggest that it is a Baptist prejudice which refuses to see the relevance of these household baptisms, or to entertain the possibility — perhaps even the likelihood? — that infants were present in such households.) Like Baptist missionaries, Reformed Paedobaptist missionaries who preach the gospel in foreign lands will baptize converts from paganism upon their profession of faith, in line with the missionary pattern we find in the Book of Acts. But unlike Baptist missionaries, Reformed Paedobaptists will also baptize the entire household of converts from paganism, including their covenant children, also in line with the missionary pattern found in Acts.

And now let us consider some actual baptismal texts of Scripture and see what they say about the meaning of baptism.

Acts 2:38-39 - "And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." (ESV)

Comments: In his evangelistic Pentecost sermon the Apostle Peter calls his listeners to repentance and baptism. But note that he does *not* say to them, "Be baptized as a public testimony to your faith." Instead he calls them to repent and be baptized "*for the forgiveness of your sins*" and to "*receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (v. 38, emphasis added). However we might understand this, the point is that Peter connects baptism with the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, not with the convert's public testimony of faith. Thus, when it comes to the meaning of baptism, Acts 2:38 connects baptism with the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (which are *God's gracious gifts to us*), not with the converts' public testimony of faith (which would turn baptism into a *work of man*).

Notice also that verse 39 clearly states that this promise of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit — the promise signified in baptism — is said to be "for you and for your children". The clear implication of this verse is that, since the promise itself is for their children, the *sign* of the promise is also meant for their children. (Remember that Peter is addressing

a Jewish audience, who very likely would have heard Peter's declaration that the promise was "for you and for your children" as echoing the language of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 17:7, where He promised that the everlasting covenant signified by circumcision was to be established "between me and you *and your offspring after you* throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant" - ESV.) Baptists often focus on Acts 2:38 (which, as seen above, doesn't even teach what they think it does), but they usually ignore the very next verse — verse 39 — which clearly implies infant baptism.

Acts 22:16 - "And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name." (ESV)

Comments: Notice that Ananias summons the newly-converted Paul to rise and be baptized, not "as a public testimony to your faith", but for the washing away of his sins. Again, however we might understand these words, they clearly connect the meaning of baptism with God's gift of the forgiveness of sins, not with man's work of publicly testifying to his faith.

Romans 6:3-4 - "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (ESV)

Comments: Baptist believers often appeal to this passage to try to prove that the only appropriate mode of performing baptism is by immersion, the idea being that being dunked under the water signifies being buried with Christ, and being raised up from the water signifies being raised with Christ. Of course, such a view is actually *eisegesis* (i.e., reading into this passage a meaning foreign to it), for in the context Paul is not giving instructions on the proper *mode* of baptism (i.e., whether it should be by sprinkling, pouring or immersion). Instead, in context he is refuting the heresy of antinomianism (the idea that God's grace gives us license to sin) by pointing out that our baptism signifies our union with Christ in His death and resurrection; therefore it summons us to walk in newness of life by avoiding sin and walking in righteousness.

But the issue of the proper mode of baptism aside, notice that in this passage Paul does not say that the meaning of our baptism is a public testimony of our faith in Christ. Rather, he says that the meaning of our baptism is that we are in union with Christ in His death and resurrection. Our baptism signifies and seals the fact that God has united us to Christ in His death and resurrection. It is not said to signify and seal our personal commitment to Christ. Colossians 2:11-12 makes a similar point, and identifies baptism as a spiritual circumcision in Christ.

Galatians 3:27 - "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (ESV)

Comments: Once again the meaning of baptism is not said to be our public testimony of faith, but rather a putting on of Christ (into Whom we are baptized).

First Peter 3:21 - "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (ESV).

Comments: In this difficult passage Peter speaks of baptism as an antitype of which Noah's flood was a type. Notice once again that Peter does not say that the meaning of baptism is a public testimony of the believer's faith. Rather, he links baptism with God's gift of salvation ("Baptism...now saves you"). Of course, lest he be misunderstood he quickly clarifies the sense in which baptism is said to "save" us — "not as a removal of dirt from the body" — i.e., not by the mere external administration of the baptismal rite, as if a water ritual of itself could cleanse us from sin; but rather "as an appeal to God for a clear conscience". Whatever this "appeal" might mean, notice that the focus of the appeal is God-ward ("an appeal *to God*"), not man-ward (a testimony of faith before men).

3. The proper Mode of Baptism

How should the sacrament of baptism be administered to the baptized? By sprinkling, pouring, or immersion? Most Baptists believe that immersion is the only proper, biblical mode of baptism. As was mentioned above, Baptists often appeal to Romans 6:3-4, but this is a misuse of the text since that passage is not speaking to the issue of the proper mode of baptism. They will also point out how Philip the evangelist and the Ethiopian eunuch both "went down into the water" so that Philip could baptize him (see Acts 8:38; ESV). However, this does not prove that Philip immersed the Ethiopian eunuch, for they might have stood waist deep in the water so that Philip could pour or sprinkle water upon the eunuch. (Early Christian artwork depicting the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist will sometimes depict Jesus and John standing waist deep in the water as John pours water over the Lord's head.) In any case, from a biblical standpoint the amount of water used or the manner by which the baptismal rite is administered (whether by sprinkling, pouring or immersion) is not essential to the sacrament; rather, the spiritual *meaning* of the sacrament is what really matters.

For a thorough refutation of the Baptist contention that full immersion in water is the only proper mode of biblical baptism, I recommend Dr. Jay E. Adams' little book *The Meaning and Mode of Baptism* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 1975).

4. Answering Specific Objections

"...since circumcision was discontinued according to the Bible, then why was it necessary for something to replace it, especially by infant baptism of which there is not one...word in the Bible or even a hint at?"

Response: Circumcision served under the old covenant as a covenant sign of initiation into the covenant community of God's people. When the old covenant (the covenant of shadows and types) gave way to the new covenant (the covenant of Christ the fulfillment and Substance), the covenant sign of circumcision needed to be replaced by a new covenant sign appropriate to the new covenant era. That sign is now baptism.

Regarding the contention that there is not a hint of infant baptism in the Bible, I would make several points: (1) As I've sought to show above, infant baptism is clearly *implied* by good and necessary inferences from numerous biblical considerations. (2) I would ask, "Where does the New Testament command believers to stop applying the covenant sign to the children of believers?" When we read the Bible *as a whole* and as a unified Divine revelation, there is not even a hint in the New Testament that Christians should stop applying the covenant sign to their children. Show me an explicit "Thou shalt *not* baptize thy children" and I will be won over to the Baptist side. But in view of the fact that the New Testament records the practice of *household baptisms*, along with the fact that First Corinthians 7:14 teaches that the children of even one believing parent are covenantally "holy" (and thus, by implication, ought to receive the covenant sign), it will take more than an appeal to missionary baptisms in the Book of Acts to convince me to reject the biblical arguments in favor of infant baptism.

"As stated, the only thing I see is that the child becomes a member of the local church and I don't see any advantages of that because it doesn't guarantee the salvation on the child! Then I don't understand this covenant with the family, because that does not guarantee salvation!"

Response: The baptism of covenant children (i.e., the children of professing believers) does not merely make the covenant child a member of a "local" church; it unites that child to the "catholic" (i.e., "universal") visible church, of which faithful local churches are but local expressions.

Regarding your admission that you cannot see the advantage of baptizing the children of believers, because such baptism does not guarantee their salvation, I would suggest that the reason you cannot see this is because you are more influenced than you realize by the hyper-individualism of American revivalism (which is basically the contemporary evangelical "zeitgeist", the ocean in which we evangelical "fish" swim). It is this American hyper-individualism (which tends to reduce Christian faith to only a "personal relationship with Jesus" and nothing more) that helps to account for the widespread popularity of Baptist versions of the faith within American Christianity, and a lack of biblical covenant-consciousness among American evangelicals.

You are correct that baptism does not automatically "save" the covenant child. But neither does gospel preaching in the church automatically "save" those who hear the preaching. But does the fact that gospel preaching doesn't automatically or necessarily save its hearers mean that we should stop coming to church to hear the gospel until we attain a personal assurance of salvation? Of course not, for faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of Christ (Romans 10:17)! Just because we do not immediately or automatically see or experience the benefits offered in God's ordained means of grace (the Word and the sacraments) does not mean we should neglect those means until we can better understand. Such an approach smacks of rationalism (putting our human reason and its expectations above God's revelation and His revealed way of working just because those ways seem foolish or confusing to our reason). Instead, we just need to trust in God's wisdom and use His ordinary means of grace in the way He appointed, one of those ways being the application of the covenant sign of baptism to the infant seed of believers.

“WHAT IS THE REAL PURPOSE FOR INFANT BAPTISM?”

Response: The same question could be asked of infant circumcision. “What was the real purpose for infant circumcision?” After all, why did God require believers in Old Testament times to circumcise their infant boys, since (as Romans 4:11 teaches) circumcision is a sign and seal of justification by faith, and since infants cannot consciously believe? One answer, of course, is that infants who were circumcised under the old covenant were circumcised *unto* the faith and holiness that their circumcision symbolized. I would argue that the same is true of baptism.

Baptism is a great blessing. It is a sign and seal that the covenant child is set apart and belongs to the covenant community. Baptists essentially view their children as “little pagans” who need to be converted. Reformed Paedobaptists view their children as Christian children who need to be raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). Their baptism marks them as belonging to Christ in a special way — in a way that the children of pagans do not belong to Christ. Does this mean that their baptism automatically “saves” them? No, but it does hold out the gospel to them in a very personal way. In the general gospel call God promises salvation to “whosoever will believe”. In baptism that “whosoever will” is brought home in a personal way to the baptized person — “I (Christ) baptize *you* in the Name of (the Triune God)”. In other words, baptism is God’s pledge to the baptized that all the promises of grace offered in the gospel (forgiveness, cleansing, justification, etc.) are held forth to them personally. The generic “whosoever will” that is proclaimed in the general gospel call is, for the baptized, held forth to them as being “*for you*”. Faith accepts this promise of grace held forth in the gospel; unbelief rejects it. But covenant youth who have been baptized in their infancy are brought up in the light of this promise. They are taught from their earliest years that their baptism summons them to repent of sin and trust in Christ as their Savior — as the One who washes them from their sins, as pictured in their baptism. If they ultimately reject the promises of grace held forth to them in their baptisms through impenitence and unbelief, then they will be regarded as unregenerate and covenant-breakers. But if they accept those promises through a daily renewed repentance and faith, then they are regarded as “covenant keepers.”

Consistent Reformed Paedobaptists do not try to pressure or manipulate their baptized covenant children into experiencing a revivalistic, crisis-type of conversion experience through emotional manipulation (such as revival services with unbiblical practices like the mere human traditions of the altar call and the sinner’s prayer or calls to “ask Jesus into your heart”). It is expected that in ordinary circumstances the baptized child will grow up not knowing a time when he or she did not trust in and love the Lord Jesus as Savior. When they are old enough to profess their faith in Christ they will publicly profess their faith before the church and become communicants, but prior to that stage in their lives they are not to be treated as “outsiders” to the faith, but rather as “covenant children” (being, as they are, the children of God’s children).

Of course, sometimes the grace signified in baptism doesn’t “kick in” until later in life, and they don’t end up believing until later on. And, sadly, some baptized covenant youth never end up believing. But if Christian parents faithfully instruct their children from the Scriptures and catechize them in sound doctrine, raising them in the nurture and

admonition of the Lord, God's covenant promises in their baptism will ordinarily, under God's gracious blessing, bear spiritual fruit in their lives and they will grow up to be faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Concerns about the danger of false assurance: "I feel that it (i.e., infant baptism) would give the child a false hope. A lot of people feel if he or she is a church member that is all that is needed! Since they are a member of the church, and church membership and salvation go together, then I think it would make it even harder to really come into this personal relationship with Christ! You have head knowledge what you should believe in Christ as to a heart knowledge."

Response: These concerns regarding false hope and false assurance are certainly valid concerns! But this is not just an issue in Paedobaptist churches; it can also be an issue in Baptist and revivalist churches! For example, it is just as possible for someone who was baptized as an adult to trust in their baptism as a "good work" that saves them as it is for someone who was baptized as an infant to trust in their infant baptism and church membership for salvation. *Paedobaptists don't have a corner on the market of false hope!* But the way to guard against false assurance is not to stop doing the things that God has commanded us to do (like applying the covenant sign to the children of believers), but instead to heed the biblical call to carefully instruct our covenant children in the faith into which they were baptized (Deut. 6:4-9; Eph. 6:4).

At the same time, the baptized children of believers are not entertaining a "false hope" if they cling to the gospel promises that are attached to their baptism, just as in a similar manner we are not entertaining a "false hope" when we cling to the promises that are held forth to us in the preached word! Indeed, *clinging to the promises of God in Christ which are offered to us in the word and sacraments is precisely what saving faith does!*

Actually, I have more concerns about false hope and false assurance among baptistic and revivalistic churches which have replaced the biblical sacraments with man-made substitute "sacraments". For example, I once met a professing Christian who thought he was "saved" and had a "personal relationship with Jesus" because he "prayed the salvation prayer" (i.e., a "sinner's prayer" asking Jesus into his heart). In some cases it has seemed to me that such individuals were trusting in their little "good work" of praying a formulaic prayer, instead of trusting in Jesus Christ Himself as He is offered to all in the gospel! The same is true with the so-called "altar call". Both of those practices (the sinner's prayer and the altar call) are only about 100 years old in the history of the church, and came into existence through the influence of the American revivalist, Charles Finney. (Finney was actually a heretic who denied original sin, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, and justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, and who thought that man could bring about revival through the emotionally manipulative techniques of his "new measures".) Yet many professing evangelicals today will question the salvation of anyone who has never prayed a sinner's prayer or walked an aisle during an "altar call"! But the Bible doesn't teach that we are saved by faith in Christ *plus* "asking Jesus into your heart" or praying a sinner's prayer or responding to an "altar call". No, it teaches that we are saved by faith/trust in Christ *alone*, plus or minus nothing! Those in revivalist churches who think that faith in Christ must be supplemented by revivalist "new measures" are the ones in

greater danger of false assurance and a false hope!

Regarding your concern that children be brought into a “personal relationship with Christ”, I understand your concern, but I admit I’m somewhat uncomfortable with this terminology. Of course, I and all Reformed Paedobaptists acknowledge that one must trust in Jesus Christ, and in Christ *alone*, for salvation if one is to be saved! Thus I agree that one must have a *personal trust* in the Lord Jesus Christ as one’s very own Savior if one would be saved. But at the same time, *everyone* — even the atheist! — has a “personal relationship with Christ”. It’s just that unbelievers have a *bad* relationship with Christ, since Christ relates to them as an offended Judge whose holy wrath abides upon them; whereas the believer has a *good* relationship with Christ, since Christ relates to them as a loving, forgiving Lord.

5. Some questions for our Baptist friends to consider:

(1) Where in the New Testament does God *explicitly* command His church to stop applying the sign of covenant initiation (which today is baptism) to the children of believers?

(2) All throughout redemptive history, up until the coming of Christ, God included the children of believers as members of His visible covenant community. If the Baptist position is correct, then God no longer includes the children of believers as members of His visible covenant community, the church. Why would this be the case? Why would God be *less gracious* under the new covenant than He was under the old covenant? Why would God be *less gracious* after the coming of Christ than He was before Christ’s advent?

(3) Doesn’t infant baptism picture God’s grace in a more powerful way than believers-only baptism? After all, an infant is utterly helpless and dependent upon others for everything. What a perfect picture of us sinners in our sins! Before God saves us we are utterly powerless and helpless, utterly unable to lift a finger to save ourselves! But then Christ comes to us in mercy through His word, takes us into His arms, and washes us clean from our sins through His blood. He comes to us in grace even before we “decide” for Him! Infant baptism is a wonderful picture of the sovereign grace and Divine initiative of God!

(4) If the Baptist position is the correct biblical view, why does the evidence from the early church fathers show that the practice of infant baptism goes all the way back to the very beginning of church history as an almost universally undisputed practice in the church? How is it that the early church fell into such gross error in its teaching on baptism so soon after the death of the apostles? Why do we not read of a vocal and vigorous Baptist movement rising in the early church to counter such a seriously erroneous and un-apostolic practice? Why do we not read of church fathers and great theologians in the early church vigorously seeking to demonstrate from Scripture that the sacrament of baptism must only be applied to professing believers, and not to infants? Did the Holy Spirit so cease from guiding the post-apostolic church into the truth that it was allowed to wander into such gross and dangerous error?

Further suggested resources on this subject:

Christian Baptism by John Murray (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing Company, copyright 1980)

The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism Edited by Gregg Strawbridge (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing Company)

Word, Water and Spirit: A Reformed Perspective on Baptism by J.V. Fesko (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, copyright 2010)

Children of Promise: The Case for Baptizing Infants by Geoffrey W. Bromily (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, copyright 1979)