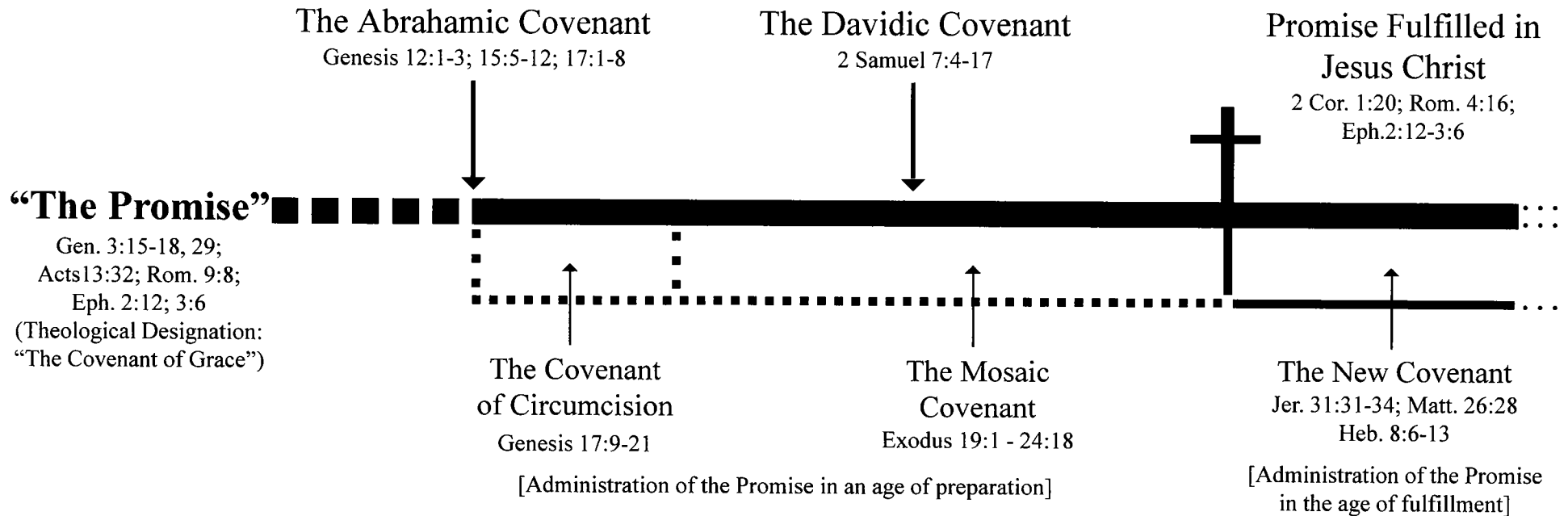


# The Promise Covenants

1. The promise covenants set forth the gracious plan of God to redeem men from sin.
2. Condition for inclusion in the “promise”: faith.
3. The promise covenants are fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham and the Son of David.
4. Therefore, men inherit the promises of these covenants only by being “in Christ”—joined to Him in faith.
5. There is one “promise,” which is secured by the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, giving full continuity to the flow of redemptive history and the way of salvation.
6. Note: At their initiation the Promise Covenants also contained specific promises for Abraham and David, and also for their physical descendents (due to the preparatory and typological aspects of these covenants).



# The Administrative Covenants

1. The administrative covenants teach the redeemed man his duties (both moral and cultic) as a member of God’s covenant people.
2. Condition for prospering in the administrative covenant: obedience—blessing for obedience, cursing for disobedience.
3. These covenants show man how to “be thou perfect” (Gen. 17:1). The terms for being “perfect” are both moral and cultic.
  - a. Moral: standards of ethics; moral law; remains unchanged, though may be clarified and expanded in the progress of revelation.
  - b. Cultic: prescribed rites and ceremonies; primary focus of OT rites was to typify the coming redemptive work of Christ; the primary focus of the NT rites are to portray the completed redemptive work of Jesus Christ.
4. There exists both continuity and discontinuity between the administrative covenants that must be discerned by the biblical text.

## Circumcision and Baptism

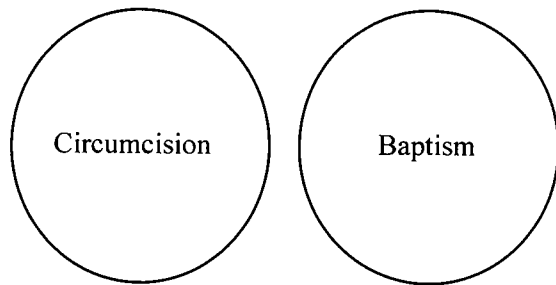


Fig. 1. Dispensational Baptist - Anabaptist View

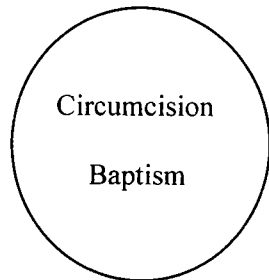


Fig. 2. Paedobaptist View

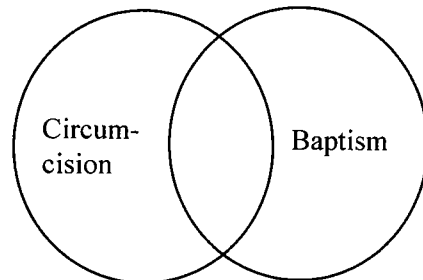


Fig. 3. Reformed Baptist View

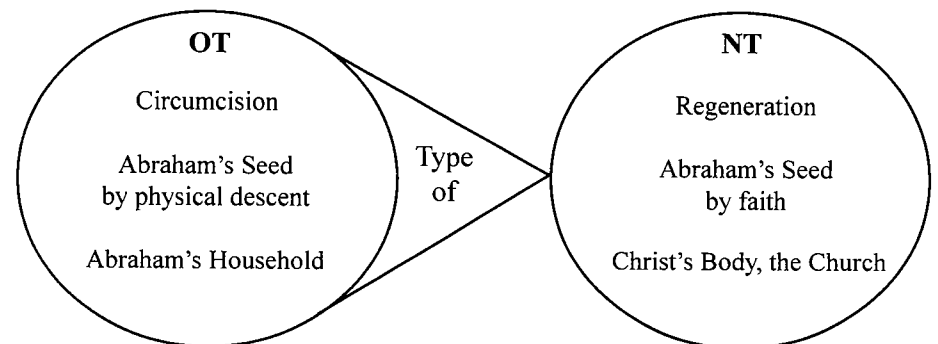
The Anabaptist - Dispensational Baptist position (Fig. 1.) sees circumcision and baptism as entirely distinct from one another. Stresses full discontinuity between them.

The Paedobaptist position (Fig. 2) sees baptism as replacing circumcision and that they are virtually the same—what is said of OT circumcision can be said of NT baptism. Stresses a near complete continuity between them.

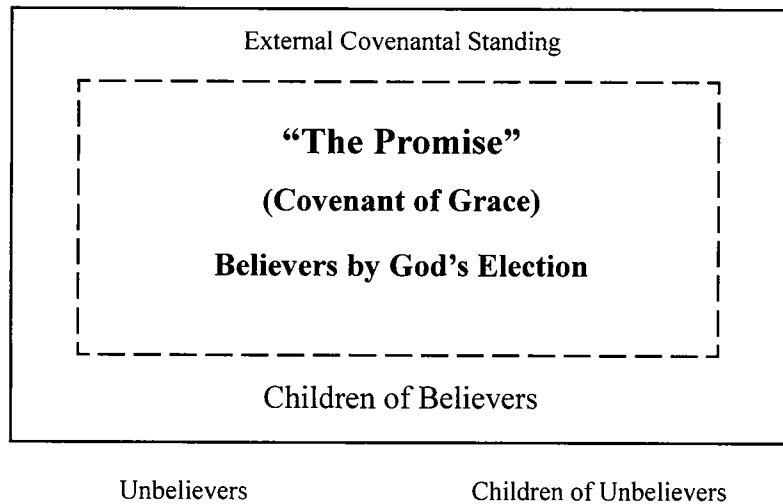
The Reformed Baptist position (Fig. 3) sees baptism and circumcision as analogous, with baptism superseding circumcision. Stresses that there is both continuity and discontinuity between them.

## Circumcision and Typology

1. Typology refers to a divinely intended relationship (correspondence) between certain persons, events, institutions, and ceremonies of the OT and certain persons, events, institutions, and ceremonies of the NT. OT typology foreshadowed things that were to come to be or to come to pass in the NT.
2. Circumcision pointed forward to Christ and regeneration through the Holy Spirit through the redemptive work of Christ.
3. As a *type* of regeneration it signified that only those who were regenerated were to be counted as the seed of Abraham and members of his household—the covenant community of God.
4. Thus, Abraham's circumcised household—Israel—was a type of the true people of God, the elect, the Body of Christ, the NT church.
5. Those circumcised in heart (regenerated) by faith in Christ are the true and only seed of Abraham by virtue of their union with Christ.
6. Baptism, which supersedes circumcision, is applied to all who believe in Jesus Christ and who, thus, become Abraham's seed.
7. The analogy between circumcision and baptism is this: all who were identified as Abraham's seed in the OT administration received circumcision, and all those who are identified as Abraham's seed in the NT receive baptism.

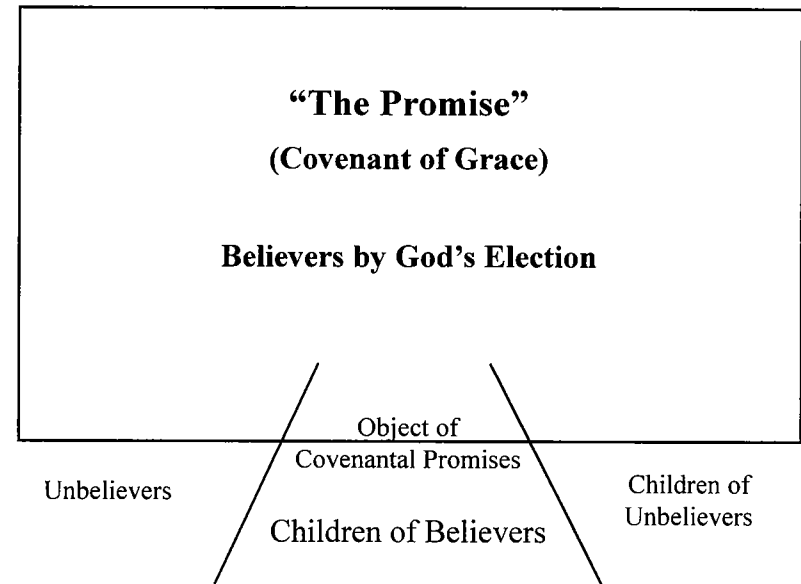


## Reformed Paedobaptist View



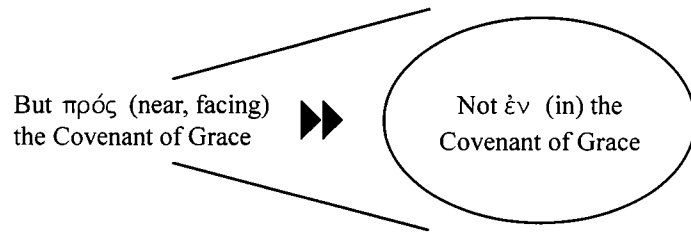
1. Believers are in the Covenant of Grace (the Promise) by God's sovereign election and the gift of regeneration and faith and partake of all its benefits.
2. The children of believers are *in* the Covenant of Grace by virtue of the faith of at least one of their parents and partake of its "external" benefits.
3. The children of believers are still unregenerate and must believe in Christ (be converted by the power of the Holy Spirit) to become partakers of the spiritual benefits of the Covenant of Grace.
4. The children of believers are baptized because they are in the covenant by virtue of their birth into a Christian home. Their baptism is the sign and seal of their external covenantal standing, but it does not confer upon them the full covenantal standing of true believers.
5. The children of believers are baptized in *anticipation* of their faith and because they are presumed to be of the elect on the basis of the promises to Christian parents.
6. Parents are responsible to teach their children the Word of God with a view to their conversion and acceptance of the covenantal standing conferred on them through the parents' faith in bringing them for baptism.
7. When these children come of age, the church is responsible to either admit them into full communion on the basis of their testimony or (if those who hold this position are consistent) to formally excommunicate them from the church for the lack of a testimony.

## Reformed Credobaptist View



1. Believers are in the Covenant of Grace (the Promise) by God's sovereign election and the gift of regeneration and faith and partake of all its benefits.
2. The children of believers are *not in* the Covenant of Grace by virtue of their parents faith, though they are the object of God's specific promises to His covenant people.
3. The children of believers are unregenerate and must believe in Christ (be converted by the power of the Holy Spirit) to become partakers of the spiritual benefits of the Covenant of Grace.
4. The children of believers are not to be baptized because they are not in the Covenant of Grace and because their baptism would not answer to the biblical meaning of baptism nor the Bible's instructions regarding it.
5. The children of believers are baptized when they believe in Christ and in *fulfillment* of the covenant promises to parents because they give evidence that they are of the elect.
6. Parents are responsible to teach their children the Word of God with a view to their children's conversion and acceptance of the Gospel which then will be sealed through their child's obedience to the commands regarding baptism.
7. The church is responsible to baptize on the basis of a credible profession of faith. The recommendation of the parents concerning their child's faith and suitability for baptism is vital.

Figure 1.

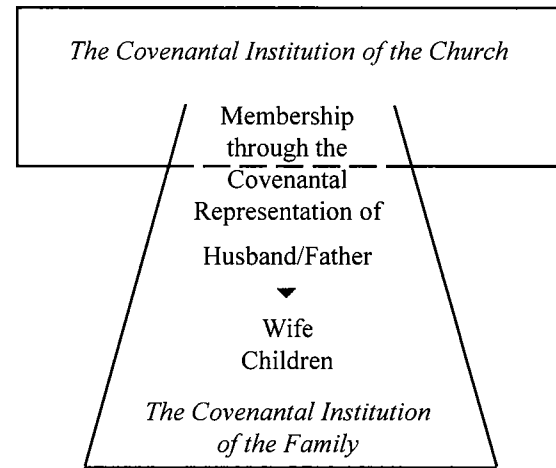


1. Figure 1 seeks to illustrate the status of the children of believers in regard to the Covenant of Grace (the Promise).
2. By the use of these Greek prepositions we are attempting to illustrate the point that though the children of believers are not *in* the Covenant of Grace, they stand in a position that is defined by and oriented to the Covenant of Grace.
3. The preposition *πρός* [*pros*] refers to that which is near or facing. It is used: 1) to indicate motion, a moving towards something; 2) to indicate position in terms of closeness and proximity—near, at, or by the side of; 3) to indicate orientation towards something—with a view to, concerning, in view of. All three of these senses accurately define the position of the children of believers in regard to the Covenant of Grace.
4. The paedobaptist would have us reduce the relationship to a simple *in* or *out*. But this is simplistic, and does not recognize the distinctions that need to be made. The Greeks had more than these 2 prepositions (*ἐν* or *ἐκ*) to express the relationship between words and so we too need more than “in” or “out” to define the relationship of children of believers to God’s Covenant.

**As Covenantal Reformed Baptists we believe:**

1. That the family is a covenantal institution in distinction from the church.
2. That God works in and through families to accomplish His purpose and expand His kingdom.
3. That God has given Christian parents special promises concerning His grace and mercy to their children. He uses believing parents to mediate His grace to their children.
4. That Christian parents are charged by God with the solemn duty of raising their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
5. That the children of Christian parents have a covenantal standing in the church through the faith, baptism, and headship of their father (or parents).
6. That baptism is given to the children of Christian parents in fulfillment of God’s promises to be merciful to their seed; i.e., at such a time when the child gives credible evidence of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
7. That there is continuity of the highest degree between the OT and NT in regard to the family covenant, the duties of parents, and the promises of God concerning the children of those who are in covenant with Him by faith in *the Promise* of redemption through Jesus Christ.

Figure 2.



1. Figure 2 seeks to depict how the Christian husband/father secures membership for his family in the visible church through his covenantal headship over his family and his membership in the church. This represents the principle of membership by household secured by the covenantal bond between the church and the head of the household.
2. There is, therefore, a covenantal connection between the child and the church through the authority and representation of the father.
3. But the child’s association with the church is not as an *individual*, but as a member of a Christian home; that home being Christian and eligible for membership in the visible church through the faith and baptism of the father (or of the mother, and in many cases of both parents).
4. There is the church as a covenantal institution (visible church), and there is the church as the spiritual body of the elect in all ages (the invisible church). In the New Covenant, the status of children in the visible church is through their Christian parents; while their status in the invisible church is through their own faith (which is God’s gift). However, by faith and baptism children of Christian parents also become communing members of the visible church—they are recognized as believers who are *in* the covenant of grace.
5. The Lord’s Supper is only for the members of the family who have received baptism, and who through faith can discern the Lord’s body. Fathers have a central role in determining the fitness of their children for baptism and the table.
6. Whether or not this is the best way to express the relationship of a child to the visible church, it recognizes the importance of the Christian family as a covenantal institution separate from the church, and reflects a perspective on membership in a local church by family (rather than individuals) by the federal headship of the father. It also shows that the unbaptized child of believing parents is not cut off from God or the church, and enjoys the privilege of godly parents who mediate to him or her the external blessings of the covenant of grace: prayer, the Gospel and the Word of God, Christian education, godly discipline, and loving nurture.

# Lecture 1: The Covenant of Grace, the Biblical Covenants, and Baptism

## Introduction

### I. The Definition of "Covenant."

### II. Covenant Theology.

#### 1. The Covenant of Grace.

#### 2. The Biblical Covenants.

### III. The Promise and the Biblical Covenants.

#### 1. The Promise.

#### 2. The Promise Covenants.

##### (1). The Abrahamic Covenant.

##### (2). The Davidic Covenant.

#### 3. The Administrative Covenants.

##### (1). The Covenant of Circumcision.

##### (2). The Mosaic Covenant.

##### (3). The New Covenant.

## Conclusion

## Lecture 2: Baptism and Circumcision

### Introduction

#### I. Old Testament Teaching on Circumcision.

1. Circumcision was first instituted in Genesis 17.
2. Circumcision was an administrative covenant.
3. Circumcision was administered to all the males in Abraham's household.
4. Circumcision was incorporated into the Mosaic Covenant.
5. Circumcision pointed to the spiritual reality of a circumcised heart.
6. Circumcision was not emphasized in the OT.

#### II. New Testament Teaching on Circumcision.

1. Circumcision is abrogated as a sign of membership in the covenant people.
2. Circumcision was a covenantal administration, not the Promise itself.
3. The spiritual significance of circumcision is fulfilled in believers in Christ.
4. Circumcision is a type of specific NT realities.

### Conclusion

## **Lecture 3: The Covenantal Status of Children of believers.**

### Introduction

#### I. The Nature of the Church.

1. The invisible church.
2. The visible church.

#### II. Paedobaptist Views on the Covenantal Status of Children of Believers.

1. Infant baptism regenerates and confers the blessings of salvation and membership in the church.
2. Infant baptism confers the blessings of membership in the visible church and other external benefits and privileges.

#### III. A Credobaptist View on the Covenantal Status of Children.

1. Children of believing parents and the importance of the Covenantal Institution of the Family.
2. Children of believing parents and the local church.
3. Children of believing parents and the Covenant of Grace.

### Conclusion

## **Lecture 4: Baptism as a New Testament Sacrament.**

### Introduction

I. Baptism is an Ordinance of the NT.

II. NT Revelation concerning the Institution and Practice of Baptism.

1. John' baptism was a precursor of Christian baptism.
2. Jesus' baptism by John supplies a pattern for Christian baptism.
3. Jesus instituted Christian baptism after His resurrection.
4. The Apostles of Christ practiced Christian baptism in strict accordance to Christ's commission.
5. The NT epistles define baptism in accord with Christ's institution.
  - (1). Baptism in water is an outward sign of baptism by the Spirit.
  - (2). Baptism signifies our union with Christ in His death and resurrection.
  - (3). Baptism signifies that we are in Christ, Abraham's spiritual seed, and heirs of the Promise.
  - (4). Baptism is the answer of a good conscience towards God.
  - (5). There is only one baptism.

III. The Reformed View on the Proper Reception of the Sacraments.

1. The Rejection of Roman Sacramentalism by the Reformers.
2. How the Reformers Applied Their Theology of the Sacraments.
3. How the Reformers Justified Infant Baptism.
  - (1). The faith of the parent and/or the church suffices for the child.
  - (2). Faith exercised at a later time in life validates a child's baptism.
  - (3). Infant baptism is only a half-sacrament.

### Conclusion

## Lecture 5: A Consideration of Various Paedobaptist Arguments

### Introduction

#### I. Arguments from Specific NT Texts.

1. Jesus and the Children - Matt. 18:3-6; 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17.

2. The Promise at Pentecost - Acts 2:39.

3. Household baptism - Acts 10; 16:14-15; 16:32-34; 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:16.

4. Your Children Are Holy - 1 Cor. 7:14.

5. Acts 21:21.

6. Romans 11:16-24.

7. 1 Corinthians 10:1.

8. Ephesians 6:1, 4; Colossians 3:20-21.

#### II. General Arguments.

1. The Argument from Expanded Blessing.

2. The Argument from History.

### Conclusion

## Recommended Reading on Baptism

1. Jewett, Paul K. *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978.

This is one of the best treatment of the issue that I have read. Jewett critiques paedobaptism and defends believer baptism from the perspective of covenant theology. It is scholarly and highly readable. Jewett was professor of Systematic Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary. This book is available from Wipf and Stock Publishers at: <http://www.wipfandstock.com/bookStore.cfm?bookID=828&do=detail>

2. Beasley-Murray, G. R. *Baptism in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962.

This is an exhaustive, scholarly treatment of the New Testament teaching on baptism. The work approaches the subject of baptism from the perspective of exegesis and biblical theology, rather than systematic theology, and demonstrates that baptism is for believers. Beasley-Murray interacts extensively with critical scholarship. His careful exegesis of the New Testament texts on Baptism is stimulating and rewarding. His exegetical and theological critique of infant baptism in the latter part of the book is devastating to the paedobaptist attempt to defend infant baptism from the New Testament Scriptures. Beasley-Murray is a British scholar and former principal of Spurgeon's College.

3. Aland, Kurt. *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* Translated by G. R. Beasley-Murray. London: SCM Press LTD, 1963.

Aland's answer to this question is no. This book is a response to Joachim Jeremias's *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*, which sought to prove that the church has baptized infants from the beginning. Aland surveys Jeremias arguments from the New Testament and church history, demonstrates the flaws in Jeremias position, and concludes that infant baptism is only provable from the beginning of the third century. This is an important work, given the claim by paedobaptists that infant baptism was the practice of the church from the beginning, and is attested to in the first two centuries. Aland is a German scholar and a paedobaptist. The book is out of print.

4. Malone, Fred. *The Baptism of Disciples Alone*. Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2003.

Malone gives an extensive critique of paedobaptism, and a defense of believer baptism from the perspective of covenant theology. In the book, Malone systematically works through the eight "pearls" in the paedobaptist argument for infant baptism. Malone's handling of the relationship between the covenants and the purported heretical error of theonomy are the weakest parts of the book. Overall, however, it is a noteworthy addition to the Reformed baptist literature in defense of believer baptism. Malone is a former Presbyterian minister.

5. Shirreff, William. *Lectures on Baptism*. Paris, Arkansas: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 1987. Reprint of 1878 edition.

A thorough and logical defense of the position that only believer baptism meets the standards of New Testament revelation. The book also contains a searching critique of paedobaptism, portraying it as unbiblical, and an example of will-worship. He calls upon all believers baptized in infancy to recognize that they have never been truly baptized and to submit to the New Testament ordinance of believer baptism. Shirreff stands in the Reformed tradition, and before becoming a baptist, he was a Presbyterian minister in the Church of Scotland.

6. Renihan, Mike. *Antipaedobaptism in the Thought of John Toombs: An Untold Story from Puritan England*. Auburn, MA: B&R Press, 2001.

This is the text of Renihan's doctoral dissertation. This significant book summarizes the exegetical, theological, and historical arguments used by John Toombs (1603-1676) against the practice of infant baptism in the seventeenth century. Toombs was a Church of England minister who came to reject infant baptism. The book is an interesting and important look at the life, times, and arguments of a Reformed divine who engaged in polemic debate with the leading paedobaptist of his day. The book also contains "A Short Catechism about Baptism" by Toombs.

7. Kingdon, David. *Children of Abraham: A Reformed Baptist View of Baptism, the Covenant, and Children*. Worthing, [England]: Carey Publications, 1973.

This book is out of print, and I have not been able to secure a copy or read the book. I list it here on the recommendations of others. It is said to be one of the best treatments from a Reformed Baptist perspective.

8. Russell, Brian. *Baptism: Sign and Seal of the Covenant of Grace*. Darlington [England]: Grace Publications, 2001.

A good introductory study to the issue of believer baptism from a Reformed perspective. The book was written to help those who have been baptized as believers and those preparing for baptism to better understand the biblical doctrine of baptism.

9. Barth, Karl. *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*. Translated by Ernest Payne. London: SCM Press, 1948.

This small book contains the text of an address given by Swiss theologian Karl Barth to a gathering of Swiss theological students. The book gives a survey of the New Testament doctrine of baptism, and includes a searching critique of infant baptism. Although I do *not* endorse the "Neo-Orthodoxy" of Barth, I believe this is a helpful treatment, for the discerning reader, of the meaning, power, significance, order, and efficacy of baptism. The Paedobaptist scholar Oscar Cullman said of this book: "His study is in fact the most serious challenge to infant baptism which has ever been offered." I wouldn't go that far, but it surely is a serious challenge to infant baptism. This book is out of print.

10. Welty, Greg. *A Critical Evaluation of Infant Baptism*. Fullerton, CA: Reformed Baptist Publications, ND.

This booklet gives an able critique of infant baptism by examining some of the leading arguments used by paedobaptists.

11. McComiskey, Thomas Edward. *The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985.

An excellent study of the Old Testament covenants and their relationship to the New Covenant. This book does not deal with the baptism issue, but provides a biblical theology of the covenants of Scripture and, thus, a proper framework for understanding the continuity and discontinuity between the covenants. Unfortunately, this book is currently out of print and very hard to find.

- A number of these books are available through:

\* Cumberland Valley Bible Book Service. Website: [www.cvbbs.com/](http://www.cvbbs.com/)

\* Trinity Book Service. Website: <http://trinitybookservice.org/>