

▸ **Pierre Ch. Marcel, *The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism***

Translation from French by Philip Edgcumbe Hughes

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Outline by Albert Mongi (Concordia Theo. Sem., Ft. Wayne, Ind., Summer 1986)

I. ▸ **Introduction, Method, Plan of Book [pp. 11-24]**

A. ▸ **Introduction [pp. 11-13]**

B. ▸ **Difficulty and Complexity of the Subject [pp. 13-18]**

C. ▸ **Method [pp. 18-24]**

D. ▸ **Plan of the Book [p. 24]**

1. ▸ NT affirmations relative to the sacraments
2. ▸ Sacraments have reference to Jesus Christ, their central content
3. ▸ Christ the Executor, Mediator of the promise of redemption by His sacrifice; reason for His coming: the covenant of grace
4. ▸ Covenant of grace as unique in both Testaments; sacraments are all sacraments of the covenant
5. ▸ The Consequences of the covenant of grace
6. ▸ What is the doctrine of baptism as founded on the covenant of grace? Theological justification for baptizing infants of the covenant
7. ▸ Reply to some objections

II. ▸ **First Part: General Study of the Sacraments [pp. 27-60]**

A. ▸ **The Meaning of the Term [pp. 27-33]**

1. ▸ Etymologically considered:
  - a. ▸ something sacred or consecrated
  - b. ▸ with sacred or mystery significance
  - c. ▸ designates a hidden meaning
2. ▸ Definitions prior to the Reformation:
  - a. ▸ St. Augustine: “The Word is added to the elements and it becomes a sacrament.”
  - b. ▸ P. Lombard: “. . . a sacrament is the sign of a sacred thing.”
3. ▸ Exegetically considered:
  - a. ▸ Baptism & the Lord’s Supper are ceremonies instituted by Christ.
  - b. ▸ Their use is perpetual (that is, it ought to be maintained until the Return of Christ.)
  - c. ▸ Both are signs.
    - i. ▸ represents, figures, signifies
  - d. ▸ Both are seals.
    - i. ▸ to conform & strengthen faith
    - ii. ▸ extended discussion of “seal(s)” in Scriptures
    - iii. ▸ position of F.-J. Leenhardt
      - (1). ▸ calls “visible sign of an invisible grace” the “traditional formula of the Reformed tradition

- (2). ▶ Marcel disagrees; that definition is not that of any of our confessions of faith, nor of any Reformed dogmatics or exegesis. It is of modernist tradition.
- (3). ▶ Marcel: “[Instead,]. . . this is exactly Peter Lombard’s definition of a sacrament.
- iv. ▶ position of K. Barth

**B. ▶ The Relation Between the Word and The Sacraments [pp. 34-60]  
[The Constitutive Elements of the Sacraments]**

- 1. ▶ Priority of the Word [pp. 34-35]
- 2. ▶ Points of Resemblance between the Word and the Sacraments [pp. 35-44]
  - a. ▶ Their Author is same.
  - b. ▶ Word and sacraments have same content
    - i. ▶ Christ is the central content of the Word
    - ii. ▶ Christ is the central content of the sacraments.
  - c. ▶ Connection between the material elements and the internal grace
    - i. ▶ The connection is relative.
      - (1). ▶ relative to that which exists between Christ & the Word
      - (2). ▶ “. . . minister holds in his hand nothing more than a sign, the minister distributes to believers nothing more than a sign.”
      - (3). ▶ “But the promise bound to command, and where the sacrament is administered or accordance with this command and received with faith in virtue of this promise, there God Himself has undertaken to give, by His Holy Spirit, the invisible grace which is signified by it.”
    - ii. ▶ The connection is moral & spiritual.
      - (1). ▶ spiritual manner of communication of grace (“ . . . is, however, no less objective and real”)
      - (2). ▶ “Reformed theologians deny that the thing signified is physically or locally united to the sign; but they affirm that, for him who believes, it is spiritually united to it.
      - (3). ▶ “A physical communication of the grace of Christ and of His gifts is contradictory of the nature of the Christian religion, the nature of grace, the nature of regeneration (Jn. 6:63).”
      - (4). ▶ again, sacraments are not different from the Word (are really presented & offered; one audible, other visible)
    - iii. ▶ Both Word & sacraments must be received by faith [alone].
    - iv. ▶ Definitions of the sacraments from the Symbolical documents
      - (1). ▶ *Confession of the Reformed Churches of France*, § 34
      - (2). ▶ *Confession of the Netherlands*, § 33
      - (3). ▶ *The Heidelberg Catechism*, § 66
      - (4). ▶ *Calvin’s Catechism*, §45
      - (5). ▶ *The Catechism of the Church of England*
      - (6). ▶ *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Q. 92

3. ▶ The Efficacy of the Sacraments [pp. 44-54]
  - a. ▶ The sacraments, like the Word, are true means of grace.
    - i. ▶ “The promise made to those who rightly receive the sacraments is the same as that made to those who rightly receive the Word: . . .”
  - b. ▶ The source of the efficacy of the sacraments
    - i. ▶ “Like the Word, . . . due only to the grace of Christ and to the action of the Holy Spirit.”
  - c. ▶ The condition of the efficacy of the sacraments
    - i. ▶ “A sacrament received without faith confirms nothing more than the Word heard without faith. Thus the two are inseparable.” p.51
    - ii. ▶ “. . . are not efficacious means of grace . . . except as far as adults are concerned, for those who receive them with faith.”
  - d. ▶ The interval between the reception and the effect of the sacraments
  - e. ▶ The “collective” efficacy of the sacraments
4. ▶ Points of Dissimilarity between the Word and Sacraments [pp. 55-60]
  - a. ▶ Word and Sacrament differ in their necessity.
    - i. ▶ “The Word is indispensable to Salvation, but the sacraments are not. The Sacraments are . . . subordinated to the Word . . .”
    - ii. ▶ signs of the content of the Word
    - iii. ▶ seals which God adds to His testimony
    - iv. ▶ Calvin: “columns or pillars of our faith, helps which accompany the Word and are joined to it”
    - v. ▶ Word is something apart from the sacraments, but the sacraments apart from the Word are nothing.
    - vi. ▶ sacraments nothing less than, but nothing more than, a visible Word
  - b. ▶ Word and Sacraments differ in their extent.
    - i. ▶ “The Word is spread throughout the world, while the sacraments are only administered to those who are in the visible church.”
  - c. ▶ “Word and Sacrament differ in their object.
    - i. ▶ “The object of Word is to engender and strengthen faith, while the sacraments contribute only to its strengthening.”
  - d. ▶ Word and Sacraments differ in the external form, in the manner in which they present the same Christ to us. p. 58
    - i. ▶ “Word and sacraments present Christ and His blessings to us by means of the senses which God has given man, but by means of different senses.”
    - ii. ▶ Calvin: sacraments as “pillars of our faith”
    - iii. ▶ Word preached to groups, crowds; sacraments a person appropriates to himself (he might imagine the promises in sermon might not apply to him individually, but in sacrament he is not part of the mass of people.)
  - e. ▶ The Sacraments renew in a concrete manner the covenant between believers and God as though being the seal (of their eternal election)

- i. ▶ strengthen believers in communion with Christ, draw them to fellowship with each other, separate them from the world, testify to angels & men that they are the people of God, etc. “They signify to us that which God requires of us.”
- ii. ▶ “Consequently, the sacraments place those who receive them under the obligation of serving God; they commit them, pledge them.” p. 59

### III. ▶ **Second Part: The Covenant of Grace [pp. 61-136]** **[Preliminary Remarks, 63-64]**

#### A. ▶ **The Objective Aspects of the Covenant of Grace [pp. 65-98]**

1. ▶ The Covenant in History [pp. 65-72]
  - a. ▶ The will of God to save fallen mankind
  - b. ▶ The Formation of the covenant
    - i. ▶ “Having made Abraham a participant in His promises (Gen 12:1-3, 9)
    - ii. ▶ “God made a Covenant with him” . . .
    - iii. ▶ “This Covenant was confirmed to Isaac, to Jacob, to Joseph and to their posterity . . . p. 66
  - c. ▶ Unity and immutability of the covenant throughout the Old Testament
    - i. ▶ “God Himself reminds His people of the promise made to Abraham and his posterity.” (Exodus 6:3-8)
  - d. ▶ The covenant of grace in the New Testament
    - i. ▶ “The Virgin Mary sees in the birth of her Son a mark of the faithfulness of God in connection with His promises.”
  - e. ▶ The pastoral ministry is the ministry of the covenant.
    - i. ▶ “In proclaiming the Gospel, the Apostles were nothing more than the Ministers of the Covenant.” (2 Cor. 3:6)
2. ▶ The Promises and Characteristics of The Covenant [pp. 72-80]
  - a. ▶ The promises of the covenant
    - i. ▶ various temporal blessings (usually symbolic of spiritual blessings)
    - ii. ▶ promise of justification, adoption and eternal life
    - iii. ▶ promise of the Spirit of God
    - iv. ▶ promise of final glorification
    - v. ▶ promise that God will be equally the God of the posterity of believers
  - b. ▶ The characteristics of the covenant
    - i. ▶ It is a covenant of grace (that is to say, freely given).
    - ii. ▶ It is a trinitarian covenant.
      - (1). ▶ The full trinitarian God operates in the covenant of grace, will bring it to fulfillment.
    - iii. ▶ The covenant of grace is eternal and irrevocable.
    - iv. ▶ “God remains eternally faithful.”
    - v. ▶ The Covenant is particular and not universalistic.

- vi. ▶ “It will not be realized in all men, although in the New Testament it is extended to all men.” [p. 74]
- vii. ▶ “The covenant of grace is essentially the same in all its dispensations, although its form of administration changes.”
- 3. ▶ The Sacraments of the Covenant: Comparison of the Sacraments of the Old and the New Testaments [pp. 80-95]
  - a. ▶ The Essential Unity of the Sacraments
    - i. ▶ Circumcision
      - (1). ▶
    - ii. ▶ Circumcision is a spiritual sacrament
      - (1). ▶ Historically speaking, is no justification for placing circumcision on the same plane with the “carnal” ordinances of the Mosaic law
        - (a). ▶ is independent of and antedates by 4 centuries the law of Moses
      - (2). ▶ Circumcision was given to Abraham – not to Moses! [p. 86]
        - (a). ▶ a sign & seal of justification which Abraham obtained through faith by believing in the promises of the covenant of grace
        - (b). ▶ significance of the covenant of grace was spiritual
        - (c). ▶ represents the obligation to circumcise his heart and live according to the covenant (uncircumcised of heart called the “false circumcision”)
        - (d). ▶ O. Cullmann: a “being born again”; circumcised are called “holy”
      - (3). ▶ NT interprets the promises made to Abraham in a spiritual manner
        - (a). ▶ material blessings only a consequence of the spiritual blessings
      - (4). ▶ NT declares that “Christ was the minister of the circumcision for the sake of the truth of God, in order to confirm the promises made to our fathers.” (Rom. 15:8)
    - iii. ▶ Circumcision was not exclusively the sign of the national covenant with Hebrews.
      - (1). ▶ was concluded with Abraham
      - (2). ▶ its usage prevailed for hundreds of years before the law was given on Mt. Sinai
        - (a). ▶ Proselytes from foreign nations will receive circumcision, will be incorporated into the people of Israel.
        - (b). ▶ Such passages receive NT notice not only in connection with temporal or national blessings, but in connection with the blessings of redemption.
        - (c). ▶ Abraham is the father of members of the Church of Christ.
          - (1). ▶ O. Cullmann: meaning of circumcision in “salvation-history”
        - (d). ▶ Christ was the “minister of circumcision”
          - (1). ▶ covenant made with Abraham fulfilled in Jesus Christ
          - (2). ▶ circumcision a spiritual sacrament, to be spoken of only in connection with the covenant of grace
          - (3). ▶ no essential difference between the sacraments of the O.T. & the N.T. (1 Cor. 10:1-4; 1 Cor. 5:7; Col. 2:11)

- (4). ▶ sacraments of the Jews tended to the same end as those of the Christians: they led to Jesus Christ & His spiritual riches.
    - (a). ▶ O. Cullmann: “Faith holds the same place in circumcision as in Christian Baptism.”
    - (5). ▶ is, therefore, altogether improper to set a supposedly “carnal” circumcision over against a “spiritual” baptism
  - b. ▶ Differences between the sacraments of the Old and New Testaments
    - i. ▶ In the setting of Israel sacraments had a national aspect in addition to their spiritual significance as signs & seals of the covenant of grace.
    - ii. ▶ Sacraments of the New Testament stand quite alone, whereas those of the Old Testament were in harmony with other symbolical rites (e.g., sacrifices, purifications, etc.)
    - iii. ▶ Sacraments of the O.T. pointed forward to incarnate Christ, while those of the NT point back to Christ and His perfect redemptive sacrifice, which has now been accomplished.
    - iv. ▶ Our sacraments are “more eminent in significance and more excellent in effect” (Calvin) than the O.T. sacraments (Marcel: “a smaller measure of divine grace accompanied [the O.T. sacraments]”)
    - v. ▶ The sacraments of the Old Testament were provisional, while the NT are permanent.
    - vi. ▶ The sacraments of the O.T. were bloody. Those of the NT are not, because “the blood of the covenant has been shed once for all.”
    - vii. ▶ The sacraments of the NT are addressed to a people greater than Israel (comprising churches of the world).
  - c. ▶ [Closing discussion: Rebuttal of Baptist position on circumcision]
  - 4. ▶ The Church in the Covenant [pp. 95-98]
    - a. ▶ The Church has been and remains one; the nation of Israel was the Church; the Christian Church, since it also comes under the covenant of grace, is the same church.
      - i. ▶ The Nation of Israel was the Church (Acts 7:38)
      - ii. ▶ The Christian Church is the continuation of the Church of Israel
        - (1). ▶ – based on the same Gospel: The Promises of Redemption by Christ (Rom. 11:16ff)
- B. ▶ The Subjective, Individual, and Ecclesiastical Aspects of the Covenant of Grace [pp. 99-136]**
- [The Beneficiaries of the Covenant]**
- 1. ▶ To Whom is the Covenant of Grace Offered? [pp. 99-100]
    - a. ▶ “Wherever the Gospel is preached, the Covenant is offered to every sinful and fallen man (upon professing of faith).” p. 99.
  - 2. ▶ The Covenant of Grace, Place of Vocation and Election [pp. 101-107]
    - a. ▶ The covenant imposed by God
      - i. ▶ “The Covenant is a relationship which God imposes in His Sovereignty.”

- b. ▶ Man must respond to it
  - i. ▶ “I shall be your God, and you shall be My people.”
- c. ▶ Through the grace promised, man can respond to it
- d. ▶ The glory of God is exalted for the benefit of man in regeneration and liberation
- e. ▶ As the seed-bed of election, the covenant edifies the body of Christ
- f. ▶ The organic character of the covenant
  - i. ▶ “It perpetuates itself in the midst of successive generations.”
- g. ▶ The historic character of the covenant: “From generation to generation”
- 3. ▶ The Children of the Covenant [pp. 107-120]
  - a. ▶ The heirs of the Promise
    - i. ▶ “I will be your God and the God of your posterity after you . . .” Posterity inherits the promises.
  - b. ▶ The promises made to parents
    - i. ▶ “He produces the conditions necessary for the promise to become effective.”
  - c. ▶ The promise made to children
  - d. ▶ The responsibility of children, parents and the Church
    - i. ▶ “. . . Because of liberty granted to man . . . of giving or withholding his heart . . .”
  - e. ▶ The Spiritual solidarity of the family
    - i. ▶ e.g., that of Zaccheus (Lk. 16:9), Lydia (Acts 16:1ff.), etc.
    - ii. ▶ “Enter into the Ark, thou and thy whole family . . .”
- 4. ▶ Children in the Church [pp. 121-124]
  - a. ▶ based on the fact that in the Old Testament children received the sacrament of circumcision
  - b. ▶ Children were members of the Church of Israel
    - i. ▶ “Circumcision was the sign and seal of membership.”
    - ii. ▶ “It was the seal of the Covenant of Grace.”
  - c. ▶ Children are members of the Christian Church.
    - i. ▶ “. . . because of the mercies of which they are the beneficiaries”
- 5. ▶ The Unconverted in the Covenant and in the Church [pp. 124-136]
  - a. ▶ There are unregenerate in the Church.
  - b. ▶ The position of the unregenerate in the covenant and in the visible Church
    - i. ▶ Their spiritual responsibility is involved.
      - (1). ▶ “They are under obligation to repent and believe.”
    - ii. ▶ They can appeal to God’s promises.
    - iii. ▶ They are subject to the ministry of the covenant.
      - (1). ▶ The Church’s strategy flows from the Covenant of Grace.
      - (2). ▶ The range of duties of the Pastoral Ministry includes “proclaiming to the unregenerate their responsibility . . .”
      - (3). ▶ The care of the Soul: Preach and teach the covenant!
    - iv. ▶ They share in the communal blessings of the covenant.

- (1). ▶ The Church's strategy.
- (2). ▶ The range of duties of the pastoral ministry.
- (3). ▶ The care of the soul.

#### IV. ▶ **Third Part: Baptism – Sacrament of the Covenant of Grace [pp. 137-245]**

Preliminary Remarks: Premise – The Sacraments of the Old Testament have essentially the same significance as those of the New, i.e., signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace; Content is Jesus Christ, same efficacy and same moral and religious demands.

Need to look at Baptism of Adults too, and the paedobaptism. Note is taken that the study of the Sacrament is in the first place more from the promises and Spiritual Mysteries the Lord presents and not from signs and outward ceremony. Consider only the blessings and attributes based on the Word and these do not come by installment.

The grace of baptism exists only as a declaration and a confirmation. [pp. 139-141]

##### A. ▶ **The Baptism of Adults and Proselytes [pp. 143-186]**

##### **[What is the Meaning & Significance for Adults of the Baptism they have received?]**

1. ▶ Baptism as a Sign and Seal. [pp. 143-162]
  - a. ▶ Baptism is in the first place the sign and seal of the remission of sins and, consequently, of our justification. (Mk. 1:4; Acts 2:38; 22:16, etc.)
  - b. ▶ Baptism is the sign and seal of resurrection, of the death of the old man and of the resurrection of the new man, through communion in the death and resurrection of Christ. (Rom. 6:3-6; 1 Cor. 6:11; Gal. 3:26ff.; Col. 2:12; Tit. 3:5) p. 144
    - i. ▶ One is not concerned here with a question of imitation (as though the death of Jesus Christ ought merely to serve us as an example). The question is of participation. We are made partakers of His death & of His resurrection. The efficacy of Christ's death & resurrection is communicated to us.
    - ii. ▶ More precisely, the question is one of incorporation, implanting, or grafting. We become one plant with Christ. We are buried with Christ (Rom. 6:4). We have been crucified with Him (Rom. 6:6). We have died with Him (Rom. 6:8). We shall live with Him (Rom. 4:8).
    - iii. ▶ The believer puts on Christ and becomes one with Him (Gal. 3:27).
      - (1). ▶ is "delivered from the bondage of sin"
      - (2). ▶ "become children of God by faith in Jesus Christ"
      - (3). ▶ "We are truly incorporated into Christ's body when His death displays its fruits within us. This communion, this conformity to His death is the principal element of baptism, whereby not only our cleansing, but also the death and destruction of our old man is figured."
    - iv. ▶ Being made one with Christ, believer is, through the Holy Spirit, made partaker of all His blessings.
      - (1). ▶ "The Spirit is the bond of this communion by which we are united to Christ."
      - (2). ▶ "Christ is thus the content of baptism."

- (3). ▶ “Original sin, however is not completely nullified or eradicated by baptism.”
  - c. ▶ Baptism is the sign and seal of the believer’s communion not only with Christ Himself, but also with the Church which is His Body.
    - i. ▶ The baptized person is removed from a corrupted race and separated from the world (Acts 2:40).
      - (1). ▶ There is no middle position. Either for Satan or for God. There are no good pagans.
      - ii. ▶ The baptized person is made a disciple of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19; Jn. 4:1, etc.).
      - iii. ▶ The baptized person is incorporated into the visible Church of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:41, etc.).
  - d. ▶ Conclusions:
    - i. ▶ The covenant of grace is the foundation of baptism.
      - (1). ▶ “Christ is the Content of Baptism; He is the Source, because He is the Mediator, Guarantor and Fulfiller of the Covenant. The Covenant and Baptism are entirely to the Glory of God and intended for His glorification in us.”
      - (2). ▶ Baptism is the Sacrament of the believer’s entry into the Covenant of Grace; adoption to the sons of God by the Holy Ghost.
    - ii. ▶ Baptism has taken the place of circumcision as the sacrament of admission into the covenant.
      - (1). ▶ The act of Jerusalem (Acts 15ff.) decided against circumcision for converted pagans. p. 156
    - iii. ▶ Baptism an act of God
      - (1). ▶ “an act of the grace of God, an offering and a gift
      - (2). ▶ Adults are baptized because of the covenant which is offered to them and which they accept, not because of their faith or repentance – which are fruits . . .
      - (3). ▶ “In the New Testament, texts referring to baptism the verbs are constantly passive in form . . .”
2. ▶ Baptism as a Means of Grace [pp. 162-178]
- a. ▶ Its Efficacy
    - i. ▶ “The Holy Spirit works together with the Word. Without His power and action being contained in the Word; He acts likewise together with the water of baptism.”
    - ii. ▶ “The blessings which are bestowed on believers in baptism are all comprised in communion with God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”
  - b. ▶ The time of the efficacy of baptism
    - i. ▶ When, at what moment, is the baptism received “efficacious?”
      - (1). ▶ “. . . is extremely distressing . . . that is Reformed Church the great majority of Christians never refer back to their baptism.”
        - (a). ▶ “. . . [believer’s] baptism bears fruit on each occasion on which he refers back to it with faith. The memory of the sacrament received is equivalent to a new reception by faith of this baptism.”

- (2). ▶ Calvin (*Catechism*, § 47):
  - (a). ▶ “When do the sacraments produce their effect?”
  - (b). ▶ Answer: “When one receives them with faith, seeking in them only Jesus Christ and His grace, . . .”
- (3). ▶ promise to Noah; promise to Abraham
- (4). ▶ Baptism prevails throughout the length of life (and its value increases).
- (5). ▶ “All of the principal texts referring to baptism in the Epistles were not written with a view to informing us of the conditions necessary for admission to it, but with the purpose of describing the fruits which ought to follow for those who have already received it, . . .”
- (6). ▶ Texts: Rom. 6:3-11; Gal.3:27; Col. 2:11f.; Matt. 3:2a; Lk. 3:3; Acts 2:38; Lk. 7:29f. [justification]
- (7). ▶ According to Acts, the religious instruction of proselytes is carried out with disconcerting speed! (Acts 2:41; Acts 9:17-19; Acts 10:30-48; Acts 16:33, etc.)
  - (a). ▶ is impossible to assume that these proselytes had had time to live really and concretely in Christ or to display evidently all the fruits of faith before their baptisms. The Apostles did not even think of judging concerning their sincerity and the depth of their convictions. Many were baptized who . . . turned back from Christ.”
  - (b). ▶ “The idea of setting up a community of ‘proved’ Christians, who would then be admitted to baptism, is not found in the Apostolic Church. This breadth of the Church, this liberality of reception, despite its accompanying dangers, is most remarkable.”
- c. ▶ The sphere of the efficacy of Baptism
  - i. ▶ significant not only for each member of the Church taken separately, but for the entire Church. (Eph. 5:25-27)
    - (1). ▶ sets apart, sanctifies, cleanses, glorifies not only the individual but the Church as a whole
    - (2). ▶ “. . . is impossible to restrict its efficacy to the single individual who receives it.”
    - (3). ▶ ought to be celebrated not as a private ceremony, but before the entire Church, in the Church
- 3. ▶ The Necessity of Baptism. Baptism is a Duty. [pp. 178-180]
  - a. ▶ It is a condition of salvation (a consequence of the Lord Jesus’ command to the Apostles, Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:16)
    - i. ▶ has the necessity of precept, not the necessity of means (“Our Lord has not said that he has not been baptized will be condemned; that is the lot of those who will not believe.”)
  - b. ▶ discussion of baptism as swearing an oath of fidelity

- i. ▶ “No more does baptism make a Christian of the man who receives it. Many are baptized who nullify the grace of God. Baptism is the established means whereby a man declares publicly that he is a Christian. It is the mark of his Christian profession before men; it assures him the privileges of membership in the visible Church and, if he is sincere and faithful, it is the pledge given by God that he will participate in all the blessings of redemption.”
  - 4. ▶ The Subjective Aspects of Baptism [pp. 180-183]
    - a. ▶ is primarily an act of God’s grace; but also signifies that man accepts the covenant and its obligations (sign & seal of the believer’s obligations towards God & His Church)
    - b. ▶ The baptized person is obliged to walk in newness of life and to keep the commandments of Christ.
      - i. ▶ not a motive to for casting off restraint & living after the flesh. Quite the contrary!
      - ii. ▶ assurance of pardon is the gateway to sanctification & good works
      - iii. ▶ “We are baptized on the condition that we consecrate ourselves wholly to God.” (! (ed.)]
    - c. ▶ The baptized person is obliged at all times to confess the thrice holy name of God and to witness concerning his faith and his salvation.
      - i. ▶ quotation from Calvin (Institutes, IV. xv. 3)
    - d. ▶ The baptized person ought to maintain fellowship with his church and to be constantly at its service. (1 Cor. 12:13)
      - i. ▶ extended conversation (complete with quotes from Reformed confessions and from Calvin) concerning obligations of the baptized, life to the glory of God, baptism as a confession before men, etc.)
      - ii. ▶ Baptism is a confession before men.
  - 5. ▶ On What Condition is Baptism Administered to Adults? [pp. 183-186]
    - a. ▶ Its administration is identical with that of the covenant; evidence of repentance; sincere confession of faith; desire to obey Jesus; instruction in the fundamentals of the Gospel; conduct free from scandal.
    - b. ▶ is interpreted according to one of two conceptions of the Church
      - i. ▶ church as composed of regenerate individuals only
        - (1). ▶ Reformed churches disagree vehemently with this.
      - ii. ▶ Reformed view
        - (1). ▶ “The Church baptizes adults and administers the Lord’s supper without ever having ultimate proof that the recipients are true believers. A coefficient of uncertainty will always be present.”
- B. ▶ The Baptism of Children [pp. 187-245]**
- Author’s footnote: “We would point out that if this section of our study is to be adequately assessed it is necessary first of all to have read the chapters which precede.”**
- 1. ▶ The Silence of the New Testament [pp. 187-191]

- a. ▶ one of the most serious objections urged by adversaries of infant baptism: in Scripture there is not explicit commandment requiring the baptism of little children of believers
- b. ▶ rejoinder: adversaries have no right to draw the conclusion that the baptism of children is therefore forbidden
- c. ▶ is also not forbidden
- d. ▶ a related question concerning administration of the sacraments: The NT nowhere makes mention of women having received Holy Communion at the time of the Apostles.
  - i. ▶ text neither enjoins nor forbids practice
  - ii. ▶ But opponents of infant baptism have no difficulty receiving woman at Holy Communion.
    - (1). ▶ utilize the principle of the analogy of faith
    - (2). ▶ believe that the proof of communion of women is not direct, but indirect
  - iii. ▶ We employ the same procedure with regard to baptism of infants.
- e. ▶ O. Cullmann: There are in the NT no traces of baptism of adults born of parents already Christian and brought up by them.
  - i. ▶ Adult baptism for sons & daughters born of Christian parents (which they recommend) is even worse attested in the NT than infant baptism (for which certain possible traces are discoverable).
  - ii. ▶ opponents ought to consent only to the baptism of proselytes (since in their eyes this alone is attested in the NT)
  - iii. ▶ But the whole of Scripture teaches that the children of believers are not the same as proselytes.
  - iv. ▶ *a priori* premisses upon which the Baptist system is reared do not survive being confronted with Scripture on this point
- f. ▶ The legitimacy of infant baptism depends entirely on the question of the manner in which Scripture regards the children of believers and wishes us, consequently, to regard them.
  - i. ▶ “If Scripture speaks of these children in the same way as of adult believers, and if the promises which are made to them and the benefits of the grace received by them are the same then the legitimacy and, still more, the duty of infant baptism are securely established; we cannot withhold from children that which is granted to adults.”
  - ii. ▶ Circumcision was given to Abraham and then later administered to his son Isaac!
    - (1). ▶ “We admit that the original baptism was the baptism of adults and that the baptism of the children of believers succeeded it.”
    - (2). ▶ interval between Abraham being circumcised, then son Isaac
    - (3). ▶ interval between baptism of proselytes into Christianity & baptism of their children
    - (4). ▶ baptism of children ought to conform to baptism of adults – not vice-versa
    - (5). ▶ example of legitimate deduction from Scriptures

- g. ▶ Absence of any prohibition of Christ, import in Scripture of covenant of grace, harmony of parts with each other, confirmation of the entire theology of the covenant by the NT → analogy of faith forbids us to suppress arbitrarily one of its elements because there is no reference to it in the texts.
- h. ▶ From Abraham onwards, for twenty centuries, children were expressly received into the Church from the time of their birth if they were born to Jewish parents, or as minors if they belonged to families of which the father had been converted to Judaism.
  - i. ▶ 2,000 yrs. not just of tradition, but of theological thought (the covenant of grace being the foundation doctrine in both testaments)
  - ii. ▶ “In reality, the silence of the NT regarding the baptism of children militates in favour of rather than against this practice.”
  - iii. ▶ “To overthrow centuries of thought & practice, Apostolic Church would have had to have received from the Lord an explicit prohibition, so revolutionary in itself that a record of it would have been preserved in the NT.”
- 2. ▶ The Children of Believers are Born Within the Covenant of Grace. [pp. 191-198]
  - a. ▶ Review of previous conclusions
    - i. ▶ God sovereignly decides that the children of believers be included in the covenant of grace, imposes this relationship upon them.
      - (1). ▶ blessings of the Covenant precede the faith of the child
      - (2). ▶ character of this covenant is sovereignly objective
    - ii. ▶ Children of believers are heirs of all the promises of the covenant. God regards them as members of His kingdom.
      - (1). ▶ God wishes to be their Father, wishes for them to enjoy the benefits of His grace, and to lead them to salvation. [! (ed.)]
    - iii. ▶ children of believers are considered by God as being involved in the faith of their parents; the family, as such, forms a concrete whole. They are members of the Church.
      - (1). ▶ Since children of believers participate fully in the promises of the covenant and are members of the Church (in short, they participate in all the promises signified and sealed in baptism), we say they are fit to receive it.
      - (2). ▶ There is no other reason for administering baptism to them.
      - (3). ▶ grace of their adoption precedes baptism (which is the sign & seal of it)
      - (4). ▶ basis of baptism of children is fundamentally objective & rigorously established upon the New Testament
  - b. ▶ Christ regards children as members of the covenant, members of His Kingdom and of the Church (Matt. 19:13ff.)
    - i. ▶ is proved by all that He says about them and by the manner in which He treats them
    - ii. ▶ Calvin on Matt. 19:13f.
  - c. ▶ Peter and Paul confirm that the benefits of the covenant are extended to children of believers. (Acts 2:39; 16:31)

- i. ▶ Acts 2 – primarily for Jews, but also Gentiles (“those who are afar off”).
  - (1). ▶ did not hinder Jews (and also their children) from receiving the promise of the covenant
  - (2). ▶ pagans who believed participated in same privileges (NT: pagans fell behind in no respect
- ii. ▶ Acts 16 – “. . . thou shalt be saved, thou and thy household” emphatically confirms the principle of the covenant of grace
- d. ▶ Scripture texts about the baptism of entire “houses” have more to say about the baptism of children than those who oppose it are willing to admit.
  - i. ▶ Is it not surprising that all the members of a family hearing the Good News believe forthwith?
  - ii. ▶ “But this willingness of the Spirit to bestow salvation on all the members of the family without exception – parents and children, whatever their age – is precisely the clearest demonstration that the Spirit is acting in the organic line of the covenant of grace.”
  - iii. ▶ “These household baptisms confirm in a decisive manner all that we have said concerning the covenant.”
  - iv. ▶ NT gives us to understand that these “family baptisms” were not the exception, but rather were something entirely natural.
  - v. ▶ O. Cullmann: solidarity of the family in Baptism is the decisive consideration
    - (1). ▶ baptismal grace valid for a whole community as such
    - (2). ▶ 1 Cor. 10:1ff. (“And all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea”) concerns the covenant which God made with the whole people.
    - (3). ▶ is a passage which ought to be much more carefully observed in the discussion of child Baptism
  - vi. ▶ Why are opponents not impressed by these facts?
    - (1). ▶ Their individualism forces them to account for facts by invoking the complete liberty of the Spirit!
    - (2). ▶ compelled by their logic to account for the baptisms of whole families as individual baptisms of adults, each separately confessing their faith, each separately requesting the sacrament
    - (3). ▶ But it is only the covenant of grace that can account for the fact that the family is baptized as such.
- e. ▶ Paul says that the children of believers are holy. (1 Cor. 7:14)
  - i. ▶ text not a direct proof of the baptism of children, but is a confirmation of the covenant of grace (which is the basis of infant baptism)
  - ii. ▶ “It shows, in fact, that all the advantages of the covenant formerly accorded to the believing Jewish family are now made available to the Christian family.”
  - iii. ▶ main point of the argument: the children of a family in which the father or the mother is a believer are reckoned to the believing partner, even if it is the wife.
    - (1). ▶ is the confession of Christ, is faith, which here dominates everything
    - (2). ▶ children not holy by nature, but by privilege of the covenant

- (3). ▶ are neither pagans nor children of Satan; nor have they need of being exorcised by baptism; they are children of the covenant.
  - (4). ▶ “In the covenant the whole family is reckoned to the believing parent.”
  - (5). ▶ Calvin’s comments on 1 Cor. 7:14
  - (6). ▶ “If the children of believers are exempted from the common lot of mankind so as to be set apart for the Lord, why should we deny them the sign?” (Calvin)
3. ▶ The Covenant is the Sole Basis for Infant Baptism [pp. 198-203]
- a. ▶ children of believers baptized by reason of the fact that they are children of the covenant and, as such, heirs of all the promises made by God at the institution of the covenant (e.g., remission of sins, the Holy Spirit for their regeneration & sanctification, etc.)
    - i. ▶ God endows children with certain gifts in a definite & objective manner.
    - ii. ▶ God requires that in due course they should accept these gifts by faith.
    - iii. ▶ God promises that through the operation of the Holy Spirit these gifts will become a living reality in their life.
  - b. ▶ H. Bavinck: “The covenant was the solid, biblical, and objective foundation upon which all the Reformers unanimously and without exception rested the legitimacy of infant baptism. They had no other deeper and more solid foundation.”
    - i. ▶ vs. K. Barth
    - ii. ▶ Reformation Reformed theologians abandoned the position of Augustine (faith of parents and/or faith of the Church as the basis of infant baptism)
    - iii. ▶ agree with our opponents: The consequences of infant baptism can never become its foundation.
    - iv. ▶ “With the rejection of the covenant of grace every possible foundation of infant baptism disappears.”
  - c. ▶ “presumptive regeneration”
    - i. ▶ While recognizing the covenant, some Reformed theologians have tried to add one of the effects of the covenant of grace to the foundation of infant baptism, namely, presumptive regeneration.”
    - ii. ▶ suggest that presumptive regeneration could be the ultimate ground of baptism, more so even than the covenant
    - iii. ▶ “It must be acknowledged that this attempt has failed. Presumptive regeneration cannot be regarded naturally as the legal ground of infant baptism, for this cannot be anything other than the promises of God contained in the covenant. The ground of infant baptism must be something objective. One cannot baptize on the basis of a presumption.”
    - iv. ▶ “To the question: ‘Why can you presume the regeneration of the children of believers?’ one can only reply: ‘Because they are born of believing parents’; or, in other words, because they are born into the covenant.”
    - v. ▶ “Besides, Scripture and experience afford proof that not all the children born into the covenant are regenerated to salvation.” [fn. 1: Berkhof, *Reformed Dogmatics*, pp. 639 f.]

- vi. ▶ Refusing presumptive regeneration as the foundation of infant baptism is not the same as saying that it is impossible or unjustifiable to assume that the little children of believers are regenerate.
  - (1). ▶ do not wish to restrict the divine liberty which acts in sovereign independence & which is never confined to means
  - (2). ▶ “The promise of the regeneration of the children of the covenant is sufficient for us. It is not for us to define whether this regeneration in view of salvation is found in the elect children before or at the moment of baptism, or sometimes even years afterwards.” [fn. 2: “This was the opinion of Calvin, Beza, Zanchius, Bucanus, Salaues, Amesius, Heidegger, Turretin, etc. It is the opinion of practically all present Calvinist theologians.”]
- vii. ▶ Calvin on the ground of infant baptism: “the Lord receives among His people the children of those whom He has shown Himself as Saviour, and that for the sake of the fathers He accepts their offspring. . . .” (Inst. IV. xvi. 15, 21)
- d. ▶ “The ground of baptism is thus identical both for adults and for children.”
  - i. ▶ “Calvin and his successors, together with practically all the modern Reformed dogmaticians, affirm very clearly that it is the covenant that is the ground of the baptism of both adults and children.”
    - (1). ▶ Calvin: *Inst.* IV. xvi. 24
    - (2). ▶ *Confession of the French Reformed Churches*, § 35:
    - (3). ▶ *Confession of the Netherlands*, § 34:
    - (4). ▶ *The Second Helvetic Confession*, 20, 6:
    - (5). ▶ Confession of Geneva, § 15:
- 4. ▶ The Objectivity of Infant Baptism [pp. 203-208]
  - a. ▶ basis: the covenant of grace & its promised blessings
  - b. ▶ God sovereign in His choice
    - i. ▶ Sequence “God’s action – man’s response” determinative in case of both adults & children
    - ii. ▶ Faith is the response of man to the initiative of God.
  - c. ▶ “The child cannot protest against this treatment of himself by God any more than against the fact that his parents gave him their name, or that he receives their nationality. As far as these facts are concerned, the child is at first entirely passive. . . . To receive the sign of the covenant, the child has no more need of understanding the position in which he is set than he has of giving his family personal permission for his inclusion in his own family.”
  - d. ▶ “It is because he is taken hold of by God that the child is able to believe.”
    - i. ▶ is not a question of who wants to receive baptism, who wants to be a Christian
    - ii. ▶ covenant is the seed-bed of election
  - e. ▶ replies to objection that child’s liberty means he ought to have a right to determine his choice for himself
    - i. ▶ concern masks philosophical idealism, individualism, subjectivism
    - ii. ▶ does not take into account our corruption from birth

- (1). ▶ “Is the child required to make a decision concerning his membership in the race of Adam, or the sin which he inherits from birth? Can he make a choice?”
- (2). ▶ solidarity of parents & children in sin & wretchedness is real, an objective fact regarding which nobody is consulted and which is imposed on all as an inexorable law
- (3). ▶ but another law revealed: the solidarity within the covenant of children & parents in grace & blessing
  - (a). ▶ a new and also objective fact, resting on divine decree
- iii. ▶ God acts justly and no one can dispute when, by the covenant, He reckons children in solidarity with their believing parents.
  - (1). ▶ Scripture knows no neutral education, then waiting for the child later to choose whom he will serve.
  - (2). ▶ “On the contrary, their definite participation in the covenant is the sole means by which they can ultimately make a free, voluntary, and conscious choice.”
- iv. ▶ possible objection: “Why not accept all this without, however, administering the sign of baptism?”
  - (1). ▶ response: Scripture bids us take note of the blessings God offers us – not only Word, but also sacraments
  - (2). ▶ response: Word & sacraments cannot ever be dissociated in the Church
- 5. ▶ Children Are Legitimately Baptized, Without Faith or Repentance, Because They Belong to the Covenant [pp. 209-218]
  - a. ▶ Baptist objection
    - i. ▶ According to baptism accounts in Scripture, . . . all those who receive baptism manifest an active faith & repentance, profess their faith. Faith & repentance are thus a condition of baptism. Children are incapable of faith & repentance, thus cannot be baptized.
  - b. ▶ Baptist objectors know that faith and repentance are not in every instance manifested before baptism by those who are baptized. (Note Acts 8:37; also ref. Jer. 31:18)
    - i. ▶ O. Cullmann: is completely illegitimate to draw Baptist conclusion from these texts
  - c. ▶ 2. Of course, the texts repeat the habitual demands for the baptism of adults.
    - i. ▶ “. . . but we do not consider that the ecclesiastical methods of its administration determine the fundamental doctrine and essence of baptism. Our ideas are derived quite simply from the very nature of baptism as a sacrament of the covenant of grace . . .”
    - ii. ▶ It is the doctrine which determines the methods of baptism and not vice-versa.
      - (1). ▶ This is the plan opponents of infant baptism follow when they study the Lord’s Supper.
    - iii. ▶ Opponents want to establish an absolute rule of the administration of baptism
    - iv. ▶ Opponents refuse to recognize the least distinction between adults & children
      - (1). ▶ But God Himself (in Scripture) so distinguishes in the administration of circumcision.

- (2). ▶ “The NT establishes no essential difference between circumcision & baptism . . . Baptism has taken the place of circumcision.”
- (3). ▶ “It is a fact of great importance that, despite all that circumcision implied for adults, God ordained that it should be administered to infants of the covenant.”
  - (a). ▶ And “. . . they received this sign although for them it was linked to no preceding faith.”
  - (b). ▶ Adult must know (Abraham believed . . .); infants, no (Isaac).
  - (c). ▶ child whom believer begets is an heir of the covenant according to the promise made by God to his father
  - (d). ▶ child participates in the covenant without the slightest understanding or subjective consciousness of it
  - (e). ▶ 2 rules of circumcision: (1) adults could not enter without faith & repentance; (2) for children to receive it, it was sufficient that they should be born in the covenant.
- (4). ▶ “If the command to circumcise infants is reasonable and just, and if the two sacraments of baptism and circumcision are identical as regards content, reason, motive, usage, and efficacy, then we demand to know what decisive arguments can be invoked in order to assert that that which was good and reasonable in the administration of circumcision to infants is bad and unreasonable where baptism is concerned.”
- v. ▶ “Neither for adults nor for children are faith and repentance the grounds of baptism, but the promise of the covenant of which, in both cases, baptism is the sign and seal.”
  - (1). ▶ objective (covenant of grace) must take precedence over the subjective (faith)
  - (2). ▶ Calvin (Against the Anabaptists): “. . . Yet this does not incapacitate him for receiving the sacrament. Here, then, we see how the sign precedes its truth. . . To wish the truth always to go before the sign is to argue against God.”
  - (3). ▶ circumcision of infant for later repentance & faith; same for baptism
  - (4). ▶ “That in Scripture there are two distinct rules for the administration of the sacrament, one for adults and one for children, is something beyond dispute . . .”
  - (5). ▶ person receives sign & seal not for himself alone; promise of God relates to him and to his posterity.
  - (6). ▶ Let opponents read commands of God regarding circumcision.
  - (7). ▶ If opponents deny us this argument, they are obliged to transform circumcision into a carnal sign and, in fact, remove it from the list of sacraments. Exegetically this is a device of despair!
- d. ▶ Do opponents of infant baptism regard the blessings of the New Testament dispensation as being less than those of the Old?!
  - i. ▶ “Under the New Testament the grace of God cannot be less generous and less certain than it was under the ‘shadows’ of the law.”

- e. ▶ Opponents' absolute rule: He who is incapable of faith & repentance cannot be saved.
  - i. ▶ opponents agree that Scripture says "only he who believes has eternal life"; apart from faith there is no salvation
  - ii. ▶ Syllogism to which they are forced:
    - (1). ▶ Faith is a necessary condition of salvation.  
Children are incapable of faith.  
Therefore, all children dying in early years are condemned.
    - (2). ▶ But who accepts this conclusion?
    - (3). ▶ But if one rejects this conclusion, why does he? On what basis?
    - (4). ▶ Only resort to other passages that speak of two distinct rules (one for adults, another for infants) can solve this.
  - iii. ▶ The consequences of your principles are unacceptable even to you. Why do you want to impose them on us?
- f. ▶ Both advocates and adversaries of infant baptism agree in deeming that, according to the Scripture, the little children of believers who die in early years are saved and inherit eternal life.
  - i. ▶ They are beneficiaries of a promise which they are incapable of voluntarily & consciously rejecting.
  - ii. ▶ parents & Church ought not doubt concerning their election & salvation
    - (1). ▶ declaration of Synod of Dordrecht
  - iii. ▶ opponents say that little children who have died early are in the Kingdom. But how did they come to be there?
    - (1). ▶ are children of Adam, under the condemnation of sin
    - (2). ▶ is necessary that they be member of Christ
  - iv. ▶ opponents say that little children of believers are, while yet living, in the Kingdom.
    - (1). ▶ Once more, how did they come to be there?
    - (2). ▶ And why should they not receive the sign of this membership & of this salvation?
    - (3). ▶ God declares that He adopts our children for His own before they are born when He says that "He will be the God of our posterity after us." (Gen. 17:7).  
It is on this word that their salvation rests.
- 6. ▶ How Do Doctrine and Faith Precede Baptism? [pp. 218-220]
  - a. ▶ The Word ought to precede the Sacrament, for a proselyte must first hear the Word prior to the Sacrament. Faith therefore precedes baptism – because the Community and parents already have it.
  - b. ▶ It is the Covenant that is the sole basis of baptism.
- 7. ▶ Baptism and Regeneration [pp. 220-223]
  - a. ▶ Regeneration is a work of the Holy Spirit and no one can say it is limited or is not limited to the preached Word or Sacrament.
  - b. ▶ God does not forbear to act in the little children of believers.

8. ▶ Baptism a Means of Grace for the Child [pp. 223-229]
    - a. ▶ In this baptism God tells us of His favours to the child.
    - b. ▶ Baptism judicially signifies the spiritual rights of the child.
    - c. ▶ Baptism benefits infants in exactly the same manner as adults and the same conditions.
    - d. ▶ The baptized child is directly under blessings.
    - e. ▶ The baptism of children has collective efficacy.
  9. ▶ Responsibility of Parents, Church & Children [pp. 229-245]
    - a. ▶ The Church is not judge of the fruits of the liberty of the Spirit.
    - b. ▶ The Church may be called upon to baptize children of “unregenerate” parents.
    - c. ▶ Adult confession is not certitude of firm faith.
    - d. ▶ The Church Can Only Administer
      - i. ▶ if at least one of the parents is in the covenant
      - ii. ▶ Note that there is need for baptismal discipline and not its suppression.
      - iii. ▶ The Church ought to preach the Covenant to the Body, to parents, & to children.
- V. ▶ **Conclusion [pp. 246-256]**
- A. ▶ **This is a theological book – devoid of ecclesiastical politics. Infant Baptism is Scriptural. The Covenant of Grace is the foundation. pp. 246-256**