

**“DOLPHINS IN THE WOODS”:  
A Critique of Mark Jones and Ted Van Raalte’s Presentation  
of Particular Baptist Covenant Theology**

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No one ever loses a debate. Both sides walk away in victory because they stated their cases correctly. The opponent, of course, completely misunderstood and simply didn’t get it. Even the audience agrees. “Our side won.” Sadly, most debates are like this, and debates between paedobaptists and Baptists throughout the years have been no exception to the trend. For many centuries the baptismal debate has divided, disappointingly but necessarily, brothers who otherwise share a great deal in common.

In Joel Beeke and Mark Jones’ massive and delightful *A Puritan Theology* they have dedicated a chapter to describing this debate as it took place in the late seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> Their chapter sets out to do two main things: *first*, to vindicate John Owen’s covenant theology from Baptist appropriation, and *second*, to demonstrate how John Flavel bested Philip Cary in their printed debate on the subject of covenant theology. This present article will evaluate the portrayal of the Particular Baptists as it is found in that chapter, clarifying how and why the Particular Baptists appropriated John Owen’s covenant theology and demonstrating that while the Cary/Flavel debate is useful for illustration, Cary’s views must be placed within the context of Particular Baptist federalism as a whole – particularly regarding the conditionality of the covenant of grace and the purpose and design of the Mosaic covenant. This evaluation is not intended to revive the debate itself, but rather to present a fairer and more complete portrait of Particular Baptist federalism and their arguments against paedobaptism.

**Abraham, not Moses?**

In what ways did the Particular Baptists appeal to John Owen’s covenant theology as a support for their own principles? Jones and Van Raalte offer a sparse answer to this question. All that is set forward is that the Particular Baptists agreed with Owen’s view that the new covenant differed in substance from the old, as he had argued in his commentary on Hebrews 8.<sup>2</sup> Nehemiah Coxe is given as an example of this agreement, which is of course true.<sup>3</sup> However, other than saying that the Baptists agreed with Owen on this point, and their subsequent emphasis on the newness of the new covenant, nothing else is said. This is an insufficient and incomplete representation of the Baptists’ appropriation of Owen, and, being a straw man, is quickly knocked over in his defense.

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<sup>1</sup> The acknowledgments in the introduction state that Ted Van Raalte co-wrote this chapter with Mark Jones. Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), xiv. The chapter referenced is chapter 45 on pages 725-41.

<sup>2</sup> Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 725-26.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Nehemiah Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants that God made with Man before the Law* (London: Printed by J.D., 1681), iv.

To vindicate Owen, the argument is asserted that Owen's justification for paedobaptism came from the Abrahamic covenant, not the Mosaic covenant. Thus any appeal to his minority view on the Mosaic covenant does not help one's defense of credobaptism.<sup>4</sup> The heading within the chapter is "Abraham, not Moses," indicating that the Baptists misunderstood the placement of Owen's (and the vast majority of paedobaptists') justification for infant baptism and thus misdirected their polemical efforts.

Operating under this false assumption of the Particular Baptists' understanding of paedobaptist federalism in general and Owen's in particular, a brief sampling of authors (Stephen Marshall, Thomas Goodwin, and Samuel Petto) are used to show that the practice of paedobaptism was universally argued from Abraham's covenant, not Moses' covenant. They state, "These points serve to clarify the major hermeneutical issue in the debate. Reformed theologians have always made it clear that the warrant for paedobaptism does not come from Moses."<sup>5</sup> This vindicates Owen because "One may argue that the new covenant is different in kind than the Sinaitic or old covenant...but Owen...could affirm paedobaptism...because all agreed that the command to baptize infants was based on the perpetual promise made to Abraham."<sup>6</sup>

A concluding acknowledgement states that "the more learned antipaedobaptists" were aware of the fact that the justification of infant baptism came from Abraham, not Moses. Whether this statement is directed at modern or ancient Baptists is unclear.<sup>7</sup> Wherever the statement is directed, it is misleading. Particular Baptists, in 1644 or 2014, have not failed to locate the exegetical argument of paedobaptism.<sup>8</sup>

To reshape and properly portray the Particular Baptists' side of these assertions, we need to start at the beginning. It is important to remember that the first generation of Particular Baptists were originally paedobaptists themselves.<sup>9</sup> They were not continental Anabaptists; they were English separatists who moved from a standard paedobaptist position to a Baptist position, and they did not do so lightly.<sup>10</sup> On that basis alone it should not be surprising that the Particular Baptists were well versed in the justification of paedobaptism. Additionally, they read the writings of the Reformers, the early orthodox, their contemporaries, and they were engaged in printed and formal debates

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<sup>4</sup> A helpful presentation of Owen's covenant theology as a deviation from the "majority view" is found in chapter 18 of *A Puritan Theology*, 293-303.

<sup>5</sup> Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 728.

<sup>6</sup> Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 728.

<sup>7</sup> A footnote references Mike Renihan's dissertation on the Anglican antipaedobaptist John Tombes. If the antipaedobaptists who understood the argument for infant baptism from the Abrahamic covenant were "more learned", then we can say they were all "more learned" because they all understood it quite well.

<sup>8</sup> This point should be obvious from the second half of Jones and Van Raalte's chapter which deals with Cary and Flavel's debate concerning the interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant.

<sup>9</sup> On the genesis and development of the Particular Baptists see James M. Renihan *Edification and Beauty: The Practical Ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists, 1675-1705* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2008), 1-36. Cf. also Michael A. G. Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys, and Keach* (Leeds: Reformation Today, 1996), 15-32.

<sup>10</sup> On the one hand, they suffered a great deal of persecution at the hands of the various authorities, whether Anglican or Presbyterian (or Congregational in America). It would be more difficult to name a Particular Baptist minister who *wasn't* put in jail at some point, than to name one that was. On the other hand, they consulted eminent paedobaptist theologians in their journey from paedobaptism. For example, Henry Jessey consulted theologians as eminent as "Mr Nye, Mr Tho Goodwin, Mr Burroughs, Mr Greenhill, Mr Cradock, Mr Carter, & with Mr Jackson, Mr Bolton, &c." Benjamin Stinton, *A Repository of Divers Historical Matters relating to the English Antipedobaptists Collected from Original Papers of Faithful Extracts* (Unpublished manuscript, 1712), 28.

from the very inception of their further reformation of the church. They did not live in isolation.

From those earliest days, they aimed their sights at the Abrahamic covenant. In 1645, Benjamin Coxe, William Kiffin, and Hanserd Knollys had made plans with Edmund Calamy to debate this issue. The debate never took place, due to a variety of circumstances, however the three men mentioned above published a list of the arguments which they would have used against Calamy and infant baptism. One of those arguments was:

We conceive, that this Scripture [Gal. 3:29; Rom. 9:6-9] doth expound, Gen. 17. God made an everlasting covenant of Grace with ABRAHAM and his seed. Now the Scriptures declare, that ABRAHAM had two kindes of seed; one born after the flesh, the other born after the Spirit, Gal. 4. 29. The question is, who are counted for *Abrahams* seed according to the covenant of grace?<sup>11</sup>

They go on to connect this twofold seed to *two different covenants*. Using Galatians 4 to interpret Genesis 17, they argue as follows:

The Apostle witnesseth, that these are two Covenants, which GOD made with ABRAHAM and his seed; to wit, a covenant of Workes with *Abrahams* fleshly seed, and a covenant of Grace with *Abrahams* spirituall seed...And here hath Mr. *Cal.* and his brethren been mistaken, in bringing an Argument to prove Infant baptisme, drawn from *Abrahams* fleshly seed; affirming, that there is but one Covenant in that Scripture, and that is a covenant of Grace.<sup>12</sup>

This example serves to illustrate two things. First, it illustrates that from their beginning, the Particular Baptists specifically disagreed with the justification of paedobaptism as it was argued from Genesis 17 and the Abrahamic covenant. Second, it illustrates a common hermeneutical move in which the Particular Baptists saw *two* covenants in Genesis 17, the covenant of circumcision (a covenant of works to the fleshly seed of Abraham), and the covenant of grace delivered in promise form to the elect. They would then draw a line from circumcision to the Mosaic covenant, connecting

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<sup>11</sup> Benjamin Coxe, William Kiffin, and Hanserd Knollys, *A Declaration Concerning the Publike Dispute Which Should have been in the Publike Meeting-House of Alderman-Bury, the 3<sup>d</sup> of this instant Moneth of December; Concerning Infants-Baptisme. Together, with some of the Arguments which should have been propounded and urged by some of those that are falsely called Anabaptists, which should then have disputed* (London: n.p., 1645), 16. Italics original. One of the reasons why the debate never took place was that a report was made to the authorities that the Particular Baptists planned to bring weapons and kill Calamy.

<sup>12</sup> Coxe, Kiffin, and Knollys, *A Declaration*, 16-17. Italics original. Jones and van Raalte draw attention to Marshall's (and others') accusation that the doctrine that children do not belong to the covenant of grace by birth "puts all the Infants of all Believers into the self-same condition with the Infants of Turkes, and Indians." Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 728. Coxe, Kiffin, and Knollys responded by saying, "But some may think, that this will put the children of Believers into as bad a condition, as the children of Turkes, Heathens, and any other wicked men; and this they are perswaded is a horrible thing, and a dangerous opinion. We put not the children of Believers into as bad a condition as the children of Turkes, &c. It was *Adams* disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit, that put all his posterity equally into a sinfull and miserable condition, Rom. 5. 12. 19. And the doctrine which Mr. CAL. and his brethren teach, doth the like. They say (and it is truth) that all the Infants of Believers...are born in sin, and are by nature children of wrath as well as others. And now let the Reader judge, Whether this their own doctrine, do not put the children of Believers into as bad a condition." Coxe, Kiffin, and Knollys, *A Declaration*, 17.

Abraham and Moses on the level of the Israelite nation. Space does not permit examples to be given to trace this argumentation through the Particular Baptists,<sup>13</sup> but the present point is that Particular Baptist federalism was not so simplistic as to think that the Mosaic covenant being a covenant of works would end the entire debate. They did not miss the point, nor did they fail to locate and wrestle with the exegetical ground of infant baptism.

### Abraham, and Moses

Having given a more appropriate view of the background and nature of Particular Baptist covenant theology, and having set down a very basic form of their federalism and covenantal polemic against infant baptism, it should come as no surprise that even in their use of Owen the Particular Baptists did not look only to his views on the Mosaic covenant. Before Owen's volume on Hebrews 6-10 was published, the Particular Baptists argued that his views on the Abrahamic covenant itself lined up with their own. Edward Hutchinson and Thomas Delaune are examples of this.

In 1676, Edward Hutchinson wrote *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant and Baptism* in which he continued the standard Particular Baptist method of making twofold distinctions in God's federal dealings with Abraham. Abraham had two seeds, one natural and the other spiritual. And these two seeds represent the membership of two different covenants. The covenant of grace was comprised of the elect and ran through Christ himself. The covenant of circumcision, or the covenant of peculiarity, was comprised of Abraham's physical children and ran through Abraham as a human father.<sup>14</sup> To whom does Hutchinson appeal on this point? He appeals to the first volume of Owen's commentary on the book of Hebrews, and quotes a lengthy portion of it to his own advantage.<sup>15</sup>

The initial points made by Owen are summarized as follows:

1. God gave a twofold privilege to Abraham:
  - a. The messiah would be born from his line, making his descendants a special people. This privilege was to end when Christ was born.
  - b. Abraham's faith would be the pattern for the church in all ages, and only those who believe as he did are his spiritual children.
2. This resulted in a twofold seed:
  - a. A seed according to the flesh, separated for the bringing forth of the Messiah.

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<sup>13</sup> See Thomas Patient's seven arguments to prove circumcision to be a covenant of works. Thomas Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism and the Distinction of the Covenants* (London: Printed by Henry Hills, 1654), 44-71. Cf. also Christopher Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist, In his two last and strongest Garrisons; of Compulsion of Conscience, and Infants Babptisme* (London: n.p., 1644), 31, 35; Blackwood, *Apostolicall Baptisme, Or A Sober Rejoynder to a Book written by Mr. Thomas Blake* (n.p., 1646), 57-60; Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 67-195.

<sup>14</sup> Edward Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant and Baptism Dialogue-wise, between a Baptist & a Poedo-Baptist* (London: Printed for Francis Smith, 1676), 27. See also pg. 93, 95 where he calls the Abrahamic covenant a covenant of works and a political covenant.

<sup>15</sup> He quotes John Owen, *Exercitations on the Epistle to the Hebrews...With an Exposition and Discourses on the Two First Chapters of the said Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Printed by Robert White, 1668), 55-56, 57.

- b. A seed according to the promise, i.e. those that have faith in the promise, or all the elect of God.<sup>16</sup>

Owen applies these truths by saying, "Now it is evident, that it is the *second Priviledge* and spiritual seed, wherein the Church to whom the Promises are made is founded, and whereof it doth consist, namely in them, who by faith are interested in the Covenant of *Abraham*, whether they be of the carnal seed or no."<sup>17</sup> The argument is continued by Owen to show how the Jews were greatly mistaken in thinking that their lineage could entitle them to the promises of the covenant of grace. And he concludes, "The church unto whom all the *Promises* belong, are only those who are Heirs of *Abrahams* Faith; believing as he did, and thereby interested in his Covenant."<sup>18</sup>

Hutchinson considered this to be ample evidence to justify the credobaptist principle that "*Believers only are the children of Abraham, and none but such have an Interest in the Covenant made with him*, which unavoidably excludes infants from Gospel-Ordinances, until they believe in their own persons."<sup>19</sup> Knowing, of course, that Owen was not a credobaptist, Hutchinson added:

And if our opponents think Dr. O. injured (as they are apt to clamour to that purpose) for our improvement of his words to our advantage...we say, that they are at liberty to reconcile his words to his practice if they can, to do which they have need of a considerable stock (but they are seldome unfurnisht) of artifice, and distinction, to help at this dead lift.<sup>20</sup>

Hutchinson was well aware of what he was doing. And he knew that the paedobaptists would not appreciate it.

One such paedobaptist was Joseph Whiston, who wrote against Hutchinson that same year. Whiston said, "I should be justly censured as a very unworthy Man, should I wrest Authors words...to countenance my own sentiments in a contradiction to their known practice."<sup>21</sup> He adds, "He [Owen] meddles not with the case of Infants, but supposeth them visibly in Covenant as the Seed of Parents visibly so; when will you leave thus to abuse Authors whose names are so precious in all the Churches of Christ?"<sup>22</sup>

Whiston's appeal to visible membership in the covenant serves to highlight the two main fronts on which the Particular Baptists launched their critique of paedobaptism: covenant theology and positive law. Concerning covenant theology, the Particular Baptists argued that only the members of the covenant should receive the covenant sign, and since children were not members by birth they should not receive the sign. Complementary to this initial argument was the case from positive law. The Particular Baptists argued that even if the premise were granted that children are included in the

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<sup>16</sup> Owen, *Exercitations on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 55. Owen points out that these two seeds intermingled. Ishmael was a child according to the flesh, not the promise. Isaac was both.

<sup>17</sup> Owen, *Exercitations on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 55. Italics original.

<sup>18</sup> Owen, *Exercitations on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 56 Italics original.

<sup>19</sup> Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 34. Italics original.

<sup>20</sup> Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 34-35.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Whiston, *An Essay to Revive the Primitive Doctrine and Practice of Infant-Baptism* (London: Printed for Jonathan Robinson, 1676), 253.

<sup>22</sup> Whiston, *An Essay to Revive the Primitive Doctrine*, 253.

covenant, baptism could only be administered according to its positive institution, which required a profession of faith. It was the same, they argued, in circumcision and all ordinances. Circumcision was for males only, and only on the 8<sup>th</sup> day. It was not simply administered to all members of the covenant. So even if infants were included in the covenant, there was still no command to administer baptism to them.<sup>23</sup>

Hutchinson's citation of Owen played into the Particular Baptists' hands on the first front, excluding infants from the covenant, in their opinion, because infants are not the children of Abraham by faith. Whiston defended Owen based on the fact that visibly speaking, the administration was to be given to children.<sup>24</sup>

Thomas Delaune responded to Whiston the following year, saying:

What the *Doctor* supposes to *Infants being in the Covenant, in his Judgement or practice* concerns not the matter in hand...And, I am as certain, that the *Doctors* discourse of the Covenant, wholly excludes them from any such title. And if Mr. *Whiston* can no better reconcile the *Doctors* words to his *Practice*, he had better have held his peace.<sup>25</sup>

This back-and-forth is not surprising. Whiston did not feel the need to resolve Owen's assertions, knowing that Owen still maintained infant baptism. And the Particular Baptists saw this as a contradiction but were content to leave the resolution to their paedobaptist brothers.

What must be recognized is that the Particular Baptists used Owen's views on the Abrahamic covenant *and* the Mosaic covenant to support their credobaptist principles and practices. Yet even so, they did not leave the argument to a simple appeal to Owen.

Nehemiah Coxe, put forward in *A Puritan Theology* as the example of Particular Baptists misguidedly assuming that Owen's views championed their own, is a perfect illustration of this fact. In his preface, Coxe directed the reader to Owen's views on the Mosaic covenant yet then proceeded to dedicate no less than four chapters spanning 128 pages to God's covenantal dealings with Abraham, including a chapter entitled "Of the Mutual Respect of the Promises made to Abraham."

In that chapter he said:

The *typical Respect and Analogy of the Covenant of Peculiarity unto the Covenant of Grace*, as after to be more fully revealed, and accomplished in Christ, affords another Occasion of,

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<sup>23</sup> For an example of this, see Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 58. Cf. also Henry Danvers, *A Treatise of Baptism: Wherein That of Believers and that of Infants is examined by the Scriptures* (London: Printed for Francis Smith, 1673), 205-06. Cf. Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 131.

<sup>24</sup> Whiston is using the classic paedobaptist distinction between external/internal membership of the covenant. This is an important tangent that we cannot follow at the present. But the question was often asked by Particular Baptists as to what it means to be in the covenant "visibly" or "externally." If the paedobaptists admitted that their infants were not automatically of the substance of the covenant (to make such a claim is to say they are elect), but rather participated only in the administration (the external ordinances) then do they not remain in the covenant of works, under Adam's federal headship? And if that is the case, in what sense are they in the covenant of grace? This was hinted at in footnote 12 above. Samuel Richardson said, "No interest in Christ, no interest in the Covenant and promises thereof." Samuel Richardson, *Some Brief Considerations on Doctor Featley his Book, intituled, The Dipper Dipt* (London: n.p., 1645), 12.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Delaune, *Truth Defended: Or, A Triple Answer to the late Triumvirates Opposition in their Three Pamphlets, Viz. Mr. Baxter's Review, Mr. Wills his Censure, Mr. Whiston's Postscript to his Essay, &c.* (London: Printed for the author, 1677), 20. Italics original.

and Reason for, the *interweaving* of those Promises which require a distinct Application: some of them belonging immediately to the carnal, and others to the spiritual Seed, as arising from the springs, and ordered towards the Ministration of two distinct Covenants.<sup>26</sup>

Coxe was aware that on the one hand they had a strong ally in Owen on the Mosaic covenant, and on the other hand they needed to address the Abrahamic covenant specifically.

More than anything, it was Owen's hermeneutical sensitivity to the dual nature of God's dealings with Abraham and the nation of Israel that drew such vocal Particular Baptist support. This was significant because the argument that the old and new covenants were *one* in substance was used over and over again in order to assert that it was only the administration, or outward ordinances, that had changed.<sup>27</sup> Circumcision replaced baptism, etc. The champions of this majority view were not unaware of the duality of God's dealings with Abraham or the nation of Israel, they simply treated them as external quantitative or accidental differences. But in the case of the Mosaic covenant, Owen was willing to see far more than a change of outward ordinances. He was willing to see *two different covenants*. This was a strong and welcome push from an unexpected and much-appreciated ally.<sup>28</sup>

The Particular Baptists essentially applied the same hermeneutic to the Abrahamic covenant as Owen had (and they before him) to the Mosaic covenant. The dual referents in the Abrahamic covenant related to *distinct covenants*. Within a Particular Baptist framework, the line from Abrahamic circumcision to being bound to the full extent of the laws of the Mosaic covenant was an exegetical and direct path to follow. Thus, if Owen ceded that the Mosaic covenant was *not* the covenant of grace but was a covenant of works for the natural descendants of Abraham, and if he ceded that Abraham's twofold seed can be reduced to believers and Abraham's natural children, while also

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<sup>26</sup> Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 169. Italics original.

<sup>27</sup> David Dickson likened the difference between the administrations to a man dressing one way in his youth, and another in his adult years. It was purely an outward difference, one thing in two different forms. David Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra* (Edinburgh, Printed by Evan Tyler, 1664), 98; also *Truths Victory over Error* (Edinburgh: Printed by John Reed, 1684), 50-55.

<sup>28</sup> The significance of Owen's departure from the majority should not be missed. His departure was significant because his view *contradicts* and is *incompatible* with the majority view as laid down in the Westminster Confession. In a way, this is obvious. Owen himself lays out the majority view, and *rejects* it. Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews* (London: Printed for Nathaniel Ponder, 1680), 224-42. This is also evident from the writings of John Ball, one of the well-known sources for the Westminster Confession's covenant theology. See Andrew Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 45-79. As Ball dealt with three different ways to handle the Mosaic covenant he described John Cameron's view, though not naming him. John Ball, *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace* (London: Printed by G. Miller, 1645), 93-95. Ball follows Cameron's arguments exactly. Cf. John Cameron, *Certain Theses, or, Positions of the Learned John Cameron, Concerning the three-fold Covenant of God with Man* in Samuel Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom* (London: Printed by J.L., 1645), 382-95. Having described this view, Ball concludes, "By this explication it appears, the Divines of this opinion, make the old Covenant differ from the new in substance, and kind, and not in degree of manifestation." Owen's position on the Mosaic covenant is the same as Cameron's in the sense that both see it as neither the covenant of works, nor the covenant of grace, but a distinct legal covenant for the nation of Israel to live life in the land. Both Ball and Owen agree that his view is out of bounds for a "one covenant, two administrations" view as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

ceding that the rights of the natural offspring ended at the institution of the new covenant, the Particular Baptists had gained some valuable steps forward in Owen.<sup>29</sup>

There is no doubt that Owen continued to justify infant baptism from the Abrahamic covenant, in spite of these things. In the same commentary, while considering the meaning of Hebrews 6:2, Owen wrote:

There were two sorts of persons that were baptized, namely, those that were *adult* at their first hearing of the Gospel, and the *infant Children of Believers* who were admitted to be members of the Church...being received as a *part and branches* of a Family whereupon the blessing of *Abraham* was come, and to whom the *Promises of the Covenant* was extended.<sup>30</sup>

In conclusion of this section, wherever Owen's views logically lead, the Particular Baptists used his insights not simply on the Mosaic covenant, but also the Abrahamic covenant. In light of this, *A Puritan Theology's* representation of Owen's justification of infant baptism may be accurate, but its presentation of the Particular Baptists' appropriation of Owen and understanding of paedobaptist polemics is not. The Particular Baptists did not miss the location of the justification of infant baptism, nor did they appeal to Owen only on the Mosaic covenant. Thus, pointing out the common use of the Abrahamic covenant as the justification for infant baptism as a reply to the Particular Baptist appropriation of Owen does nothing but make a false implication that the Particular Baptists would not have understood this. As Edward Hutchinson said, quoted above, "And if our opponents think Dr. O. injured (as they are apt to clamour to that purpose) for our improvement of his words to our advantage...we say, that they are at liberty to reconcile his words to his practice if they can."

### Carrying on the Debate

The second and larger section of Jones and Van Raalte's chapter is dedicated to following the written debate between Philip Cary and John Flavel. My present concern is not to dispute the presentation of that debate, which contains enough quotations from

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<sup>29</sup> There is a great deal more that could be said about how Owen's views in his commentary on Hebrews 6-10 played into Particular Baptist hands. For example, Owen's treatment of the Abrahamic covenant in Hebrews 6 closely follows his views already mentioned in the first volume of his Hebrews commentary. See Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 135-47. Later in his commentary, Owen described the Abrahamic covenant, in contrast to the new covenant, as being made "with respect unto other things, especially the proceeding of the promised Seed from his loins." Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 227. Considering Owen's distinctions above, he is referring to the fact that the Abrahamic covenant was primarily about his natural descendants being set apart as a special people in order to bring about the birth of the Messiah. It was not the actual establishment of the new covenant in Christ's blood, nor the actual source of the salvation of the elect. This also played into Particular Baptist hands because Owen argued that in the Old Testament the new covenant existed in promise form only, not having its own worship and ordinances yet. The covenant of grace considered absolutely in promise form was the source of salvation for the elect in the Old Testament, but it was not a formal covenant until Christ shed his blood. The Particular Baptists took this one step further (well before Owen) and called the Abrahamic covenant a distinct covenant, the covenant of circumcision or the covenant of peculiarity. Owen did everything but that, and through his views on the Mosaic covenant the pieces were in place for such a move, according to the Particular Baptists. Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 227.

<sup>30</sup> Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 32. Italics original. On the following page, Owen uses Mark 10:16 to show that Jesus "Owned little Children to belong to his Covenant." Italics original.

each side to offer a sufficient idea of their respective affirmations and denials in dialogue. My concern, as in the first half of this article, is to broaden the horizon and offer a more balanced presentation of the Particular Baptists as a whole.

In a footnote, Jones and Van Raalte state that Philip Cary serves as an illustrative character of the Particular Baptists because his covenant theology will be seen to be in line with, they say, Nehemiah Coxe, Richard Allen, John Tombes, and Benjamin Keach.<sup>31</sup> The implication is that Cary's views are representative of the whole of the Particular Baptists.

In ways, this implication is true. For example, as laid out above, it was a majority and standard argument among Particular Baptists that the Mosaic covenant *and* the Abrahamic covenant were covenants of works. On this foundational level there is a great deal of continuity between Cary, his Baptist brothers in general, and the men who signed the preface to his book, *A Solemn Call*. More specifically, as Jones and Van Raalte note, Cary's argument that the Adamic, Abrahamic, and Mosaic covenants were "editions" of the covenant of works is very similar to Benjamin Keach's argument that these three covenants were three "administrations" of the covenant of works.<sup>32</sup>

But in other ways, this implication is untrue. The Particular Baptists' views on the conditionality of the covenant of grace and the purpose and design of the Mosaic covenant need to be examined carefully. By extrapolating Cary's views on these two positions to the Particular Baptists, Jones and Van Raalte draw a very unnecessary and unsound conclusion, that "Their position is one step closer to what would later be affirmed in dispensationalist circles—that the Old Testament saints were saved in a different way from the New Testament saints."<sup>33</sup> I will address the ways in which Cary's positions are or are not representative of the whole, and why the conclusion regarding dispensationalism is seriously misguided.

### The Conditionality of the Covenant of Grace

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<sup>31</sup> Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 729, n. 29. Richard Allen was a General Baptist. John Tombes was an Anglican antipaedobaptist.

<sup>32</sup> See Philip Cary, *A Solemn Call Unto all that would be owned as Christ's Faithful Witnesses, speedily, and seriously, to attend unto the Primitive Purity of the Gospel Doctrine and Worship: Or, a Discourse concerning Baptism* (London: Printed for John Harris, 1690), 119-87. See also, Benjamin Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant, A Sweet Cordial for a Drooping Soul: Or, The Excellent Nature of the Covenant of Grace Opened* (London: Printed for H. Barnard, 1692), 7-8. It is interesting to note that John Bunyan, whose preaching receives an entire chapter in *A Puritan Theology*, held that the Mosaic covenant was *the* covenant of works. For his view see John Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded: Or, A Discourse touching the Law and Grace* (London: Printed for M. Wright, 1659), 4-19. If you've ever wondered why Adam and Moses act towards Christ in the way that they do in *Pilgrim's Progress*, this is why. They stand for the covenant of works, not just the law.

<sup>33</sup> Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 740. This is quite the anachronism. If such views indicate movement "one step closer to dispensationalism," it is one step closer on a pathway of 1,000 steps. Lest we forget, the major figures and founders of Dispensationalism in America sprang from Congregationalist (Scofield, who later became a Southern Presbyterian) and Presbyterian (Chafer) backgrounds, not Baptists. Vern Poythress, "Presbyterianism and Dispensationalism" in *The Practical Calvinist: An Introduction to the Presbyterian and Reformed Heritage* (ed. Peter A. Lillback, Ross-Shire, Scotland, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 415-24. The same argument could be raised in reverse, that by perpetuation of the model of Abraham's family as the paradigm for covenant membership the paedobaptists legitimize the Dispensationalists' expectations of the continuation of Israelite national promises. If Abraham's covenant is our covenant, that is a "step closer" to Dispensationalist Jewish nationalism. This is an unhelpful, fruitless, and groundless avenue of argumentation. See more below.

While reading Cary and Flavel's debate as presented in *A Puritan Theology*, it becomes clear that conditionality was at the heart of the debate. Cary's insistence on the freedom of the benefits of the covenant of grace led him to the point of denying any conditionality, at least initially. And Flavel, focusing in on this extreme by Cary, used it as the recurring point of argumentation on nearly every issue. As Jones and Van Raalte point out, Cary clarified—or modified—his position to say that faith was a “necessary means in order to receiving” forgiveness of sins.<sup>34</sup> This concession should be enough to demonstrate that the debate became quite semantic in some unnecessary ways.<sup>35</sup> Notwithstanding, Cary's dislike for the term “condition” relative to the covenant of grace should not be universally attributed to the Particular Baptists.

There is diversity but general agreement in the way that the Baptists approached the idea of conditionality in the covenant of grace in the seventeenth century. But before entering into their statements it is important to remember that how you approach this issue often determines how you answer it. Herman Witsius has a very helpful discussion of the covenant of grace strictly (or narrowly) considered in which he asserts that from the narrow angle of pure promises there can be no conditions whatsoever in the covenant. Witsius then continues to give a careful and excellent explanation of the sense in which faith is a condition of the covenant of grace.<sup>36</sup> It is the narrow and strict sense of the covenant of grace that most of the Particular Baptists have in mind when they approach this issue, thus they tend toward emphasizing the unconditionality of the covenant of grace. They are usually dealing with Paul's contrast of faith and works in Romans and Galatians, affirming their mutual exclusivity in terms of salvation. However, most also acknowledge the necessity and place of faith as a “condition” for appropriating salvation. A few examples, arranged chronologically, will prove the point.

Thomas Kilcop said, “A condition required thereto is one thing, and a cause thereof is another...Though faith be not a conditional cause of, yet it is so requisite to salvation.”<sup>37</sup>

Thomas Patient said:

It is true, the promise of salvation and remission of Sins, is held out with a condition to the world...But we are not to think, that this grace of Faith and Repentance, are any Qualifications that persons are to attain by their own abilities unto which the Gospel is tendred.<sup>38</sup>

Later he adds, “But in the new covenant, the Lord undertakes to work the condition, and to give the salvation tendred upon that condition.”<sup>39</sup>

Daniel King said:

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<sup>34</sup> Philip Cary, *A Just Reply to Mr. John Flavell's Arguments* (London: Printed for J. Harris, 1690), 34.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Obadiah Sedgwick, *The Bowels of Tender Mercy Sealed in the Everlasting Covenant* (London: Edward Mottershed, 1661), 182. “I know there is a great dispute *How any condition can be allowed in a Covenant of Grace*...But I humbly conceive that there is no need of such heat...if parties would but patiently hear one another, and calmly consider the matter.” Italics original.

<sup>36</sup> Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God & Man*, vol. 1 (Kingsburg, CA: den Dulk Foundation, 1990), 286-91.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Kilcop, *Ancient and Durable Gospel* (London: Printed by H.H., 1648), 100.

<sup>38</sup> Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 35.

<sup>39</sup> Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 35.

The Covenant is absolute, free without condition: Nay, the conditions of the promise are absolutely promised in the Covenant: so that they all, promises and conditions both, have their rise from the Covenant. And therefore by virtue of the Covenant we have faith given, which is the condition to salvation.<sup>40</sup>

Robert Purnell, after asserting that the covenant of grace is unconditional in the sense that it does not demand righteousness in us but grants righteousness to us in Christ, answers the following objection, "Some say that this Covenant is conditionall, no otherwise, then in respect of Gods order and method, in bestowing the blessings of it upon us." Purnell replied, "In this sense it may be granted (it is so) still keeping close to this, that not in a proper, but in an improper sense, the Covenant may be said to be conditionall."<sup>41</sup>

Edward Hutchinson referred to the covenant of grace as "the Covenant of Eternal life and salvation, which was made with all the elect in Christ upon the condition of faith."<sup>42</sup>

Benjamin Keach, drawing from Isaac Chauncy, distinguished between "foederal" conditions (or procuring conditions) and conditions of "connexion." He assigned faith to the latter set of conditions, acknowledging its necessity in terms of sequence and instrumentality but denying any merit or obtaining of blessings thereby.<sup>43</sup>

Lastly, and breaking the chronological order, Nehemiah Coxe provides an instance of careful and knowledgeable distinctions on this point. In his work on the covenants, he acknowledged that covenants are "to be considered, either simply as proposed by God, or as Man enters thereinto by Restipulation."<sup>44</sup> Later, while describing man's restipulation in a covenant, Coxe adds:

If the Covenant be of *Works*, the Restipulation must be, by *doing* the things required in it, even by fulfilling its condition in a *perfect obedience to the Law of it*...But if it be a Covenant of free and soveraign Grace, the Restipulation required, is *an humble receiving*, or *hearty believing* of those gratuitous Promises on which the Covenant is established.<sup>45</sup>

Coxe understands that covenants involve restipulation, and that different kinds of covenants correlate to different kinds of responses on man's part. Thus, if Coxe were to approach the question from God's monopleuristic proposal of the covenant, it could be called absolute. And if he were to approach the question from the dipleuristic restipulation of the covenant partner, it could be called conditional.

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<sup>40</sup> Daniel King, *A Way to Sion Sought out and Found* (London: Printed by Christopher Higgins, 1656), 16.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Purnell, *A Little Cabinet Richly Stored with all sorts of Heavenly Varieties, and Soul-reviving Influences* (London: Printed by R. W., 1657), 33-34.

<sup>42</sup> Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 93.

<sup>43</sup> Benjamin Keach, *The Display of Glorious Grace: Or, The Covenant of Peace, Opened*. (London: Printed by S. Bridge, 1698), 185-87. Jonathan Arnold provides a helpful discussion of Keach's covenant theology in general, and his views on conditionality in particular in Jonathan W. Arnold, *The Reformed Theology of Benjamin Keach (1640-1704)* (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2013), 153-56.

<sup>44</sup> Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 9. Italics original.

At least one example can be found of a Particular Baptist who explicitly denied faith to be the condition of the covenant of grace.<sup>46</sup> Samuel Richardson said, "If man had been to performe any of the conditions of this Covenant, it had not been a covenant of grace, but a covenant of works...Nor were the covenant of grace free and absolute, if it were conditionall, for that covenant is not absolute, which depends, upon any condition to be by us performed."<sup>47</sup> Later he adds, "This shews they mistake who conceive the covenant is made with man, or that teach faith to be a condition of the covenant."<sup>48</sup> But he was opposed by his own brothers. Robert Purnell said, "And surely mistaken is Mr. *Samuel Richardson*, that saith...that there is no means to be used by man to get an interest in this Covenant."<sup>49</sup> Richardson's statements took place in the context of a sinner pleading for help in obtaining salvation. So Purnell addressed that same sinner, saying, "1. Break your Covenant with your old sins...2. Come with an humble submission to...the will of God...3. Come before God in the name of a Mediator...4. By faith look at the gracious invitations of God."<sup>50</sup> Despite their differences, both men understood that only God could enable the sinner to perform these actions.

These examples serve to prove that Cary's strongest statements about the unconditionality of the covenant of grace should be read in the larger context of Particular Baptist covenant theology. Within that context, Cary's statements cannot and should not be used to present the Particular Baptists as denying that faith is a necessary prerequisite and "condition" of the covenant of grace. They did confess this in their confession of faith, after all.<sup>51</sup> Nor should his statements be taken to indicate that the Particular Baptists did not understand the single and double aspect of a covenant. Rather, these statements should be taken generally in the context of contrasting the demands of the covenant of works with the promises of the covenant of grace, taken in its narrow sense.

As Jones and Van Raalte conclude their chronicle of Flavel and Cary's debate, they state that Flavel's nuance and precision on this point, and others, place him "well within the broad Reformed tradition."<sup>52</sup> The inference is that Cary's struggle to handle the tension of the conditionality of the covenant of grace, and his apparent tip of the scales towards an extreme, place him *without* the broad Reformed tradition, or at least on its fringes. The examples provided should remedy this inference and offer a more complete perspective of the Particular Baptists.

### The Purpose and Design of the Mosaic Covenant

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Anon, *Truth Vindicated in Several Branches thereof* (London, Printed for the Author, 1695), 25-27. This anonymous author, presumed to be a Particular Baptist based on his arguments, is another instance of asserting the unconditionality of the covenant of grace. He does so because he collapses the covenant of redemption into the new covenant, saying that all has been accomplished for us. He does qualify that God requires duties of his people, but they are not conditions. This seems to represent a more extreme position like that of Samuel Richardson. It should be noted, however, that the author is once again talking in the context of contrasting the promises of the covenant of grace with the demands of the covenant of works.

<sup>47</sup> Samuel Richardson, *Divine Consolations* (London: Printed by M. Simmons, 1649), 224.

<sup>48</sup> Richardson, *Divine Consolations*, 227.

<sup>49</sup> Purnell, *A Little Cabinet*, 43.

<sup>50</sup> Purnell, *A Little Cabinet*, 44. Cf. Samuel Richardson, *The Saints Desire; Or A Cordiall for a fainting soule* (London. Printed by M. Simmons, 1647), 45-48.

<sup>51</sup> Anon., *A Confession of Faith Put Forth by the Elders and Brethren of Many Congregations of Christians (Baptized Upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country* (London: n.p., 1677), 27. (2LCF 7.3).

<sup>52</sup> Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 739.

The second point where the Particular Baptists' voices offer more than what has been presented is in the design and purpose of the Mosaic Covenant. This will counteract two claims, first that Cary's views are representative of the Particular Baptists as a whole, and second, that the Particular Baptists opened the door for a theology that posits that Old Testament believers were saved in a different way from that of New Testament believers.

One of the points of debate that gets lost between Cary and Flavel, and in the presentation of *A Puritan Theology*, is that the Particular Baptists' concern was not so much the presence of conditions in the Mosaic covenant in general, but the *kind* of conditions present in the Mosaic covenant. Behind this are at least two controlling factors in covenant theology, Baptist or paedobaptist. One is the use of Galatians 4 and the contrast of the "two" covenants. The other, closely related, is the use of the idea of the "substance" of a given covenant.

In Galatians 4, Paul describes "the two covenants," which Reformed theology has often identified either as the two dispensations/administrations/testaments of the covenant of grace or as the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.<sup>53</sup> Depending on how a given theologian understood and used this controlling contrast, they interpreted the covenants in Scripture accordingly.

For some, a post-fall covenant of works could easily be found in Moses because Paul contrasted two covenants between Moses and Christ. For others, a post-fall covenant of works was literally impossible because the two-covenant contrast, taken dogmatically, referred to Adam and Christ. The covenant of works could not be remade after the fall. The majority of Reformed theology took the latter option, as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith, but by no means was it a uniform view in the seventeenth (or sixteenth) centuries. Nevertheless, common affirmations united all, such as the fall in Adam and salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. But the identification and description of the macrostructure of the covenants varied greatly.

Along with this idea was the identification of the "substance" of a given covenant. Simply put, two different substances are two different things – like wood and stone. The Reformed contrasted the covenant of works and the covenant of grace as differing in *substance* because they were built on or founded on two completely different things – law and gospel taken strictly. The substance of the covenant of works was normally identified as "do this and live." The substance of the covenant of grace was normally identified by the formula "I will be your God and you will be my people."<sup>54</sup> Once locked

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<sup>53</sup> Reformed theology has approached this passage from both angles simultaneously. Historically, the mothers represent the church under two administrations. Dogmatically, they represent seeking justification through the law or the gospel (the covenant of grace vs. the covenant of works).

<sup>54</sup> The Particular Baptists considered this to be imprecise. They said that that was the formula for any covenant with God. For the Particular Baptists, the substance of the covenant of grace was salvation in Jesus Christ, or "I will remember your sins no more." This could be described in the formula "I will be your God...etc.", but not necessarily so. This led to quibbles over the use of the word "grace." The paedobaptists would call the post-fall covenant the covenant of grace. The Particular Baptists, agreeing that any post-fall covenant contained grace, would call the covenant of grace the covenant that promises forgiveness of sins to all its members, or the covenant of *saving* grace. John Tombes said in response to Stephen Marshall, "Is it equivocation in me to take the word *covenant of grace onely of the covenant of saving grace*? This is like as if a man should be charged with speaking nonsense, because he speakes good reason in right language." John

in to a definition of the substance of either covenant, theologians used them to sort and categorize the covenants of Scripture.

Cary fits within this methodology precisely.<sup>55</sup> Quoting John Owen, he said, “So long as this Rule is retained, *Do this and live*, It is still the same Covenant for the Substance and Essence of it.’ I can add no more after so worthy a Sentence from so worthy a Person.”<sup>56</sup> For Cary, any covenant that operated on the principle of “do this and live,” or any covenant that required working for blessing was the covenant of works. It was the same in substance. Thus for Cary, his concern was not simply that there were conditions in the Mosaic covenant, but that its reward was suspended upon obedience. For Flavel, a post-fall covenant of works was impossible.<sup>57</sup>

What remains to be clarified, however, is the relationship of Cary’s position to his Particular Baptist brothers. Cary is quite strong in his identification of the Mosaic covenant with the covenant of works throughout the debate. Yet, while Cary affirmed that the Mosaic covenant was *the* covenant of works, often describing it in terms of being an edition of “Adam’s covenant,” and saying that it offered “life and salvation” he also acknowledged that *no one* could be saved by that covenant, and that this impossibility made the Mosaic covenant *subservient* to the covenant of grace.<sup>58</sup> Flavel would not allow Cary to soften his position by ascribing subservience to the Mosaic covenant. For Flavel, this meant that there was a rival covenant to the covenant of grace after the fall.<sup>59</sup> Benjamin Keach defended Cary by saying, “*Adam’s Covenant*, I grant, had one end and design, and the *Sinai Covenant of Works* had another; yet, may be, both, as to the Essence and Substance of them but one and the same Covenant: Which, doubtless, is all Mr. Cary intends.”<sup>60</sup>

Cary’s qualifications on subservience dull the sharpness of his views and bring him into line with the majority of his brothers on the purpose and design of the Mosaic covenant—it was not intended to justify, but to push hopeless and helpless sinners to Christ. Even so, many of his brothers did not express themselves to the extent that Cary had. It has been noted several times that it was a common Particular Baptist view that the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants were connected covenants of works, but it was equally common to confine the covenants to an earthly, temporal, and typical context. In other words eschatological glory was not in view. With Galatians 4 in mind, it is not difficult to see where these emphases would come from. One of the contrasts mentioned by Paul is between that which is carnal, earthly, and temporary and that which is spiritual, celestial, and eternal. A few examples represent this position among the Particular Baptists.

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Tombes, *An Apology or Plea for the Two Treatises, and Appendix to them Concerning Infant Baptisme* (London: Printed for Giles Calvert, 1646), 80. Italics original.

<sup>55</sup> For Cary’s use of Gal. 4:21 see Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 145.

<sup>56</sup> Cary, *A Just Reply*, 51.

<sup>57</sup> Each one was sticking to their definitions. Flavel considered Cary to be stubbornly seeing “Do this and live” as the reason why the Mosaic covenant was the covenant of works, while the Particular Baptists considered the paedobaptists to be stubbornly seeing “I will be your God and you will be my people” or “I will be a God to you and your seed after you” as the reason why the Abrahamic covenant was the covenant of grace.

<sup>58</sup> Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 166-68.

<sup>59</sup> Flavel, *Vindiciae Legis & Fœderis: Or, A Reply to Mr. Philip Cary’s Solemn Call* (London: Printed for M. Wotton, 1690), 23.

<sup>60</sup> Benjamin Keach, *The Ax laid to the Root Part II* (London: John Harris, 1693), 15.

Referring to the Abrahamic covenant of works, Thomas Patient said, "There is no promise of eternal life in it, but of temporal blessings in the Land of *Canaan*."<sup>61</sup>

Christopher Blackwood seems to combine the two views when he describes the Mosaic covenant as that in which "in the perfect observation whereof, (it's thought) they were to have *Canaan* here, and Heaven hereafter." Later he says, "The old Covenant was much upon temporall promises."<sup>62</sup>

Edward Hutchinson, quoting an unnamed author, describes Abraham's covenant as "*The old Covenant (saith he) was a political Covenant made with the Jews...God promises them his protection and that he would lead them to a fruitful land, overcome all their enemies, &c. with the like blessings.*"<sup>63</sup>

Thomas Minge said:

Here was *Abraham's* Call from his own Country, &c. and a promise of another Earthly Country, and the multiplication of his Seed that were to possess that Countrey (there was no other exprest than Earthly and Corporal, though thereby *Abraham* the Father of the Faithful, understood the Promise of the spiritual Seed and heavenly *Canaan* also).<sup>64</sup>

In light of these assertions, it should make sense that Owen was so appreciated by the Baptists. He also recognized the national and earthly character of Israel in the Mosaic covenant, and in the Baptists' opinion was very close in his analysis of Abraham's covenant as well.

Nehemiah Coxe, who so openly embraced Owen's views on the Mosaic covenant, said the following:

In the Mosaical œconomy, there was such a remembrance of the Covenant of works revived, with the terms and sanction thereof; as that hereupon it is called the ministration of condemnation, and did ingender unto Bondage, *2 Cor. 3.7. Gal. 4.25*. But yet the promise of Salvation by the *Messiah*, being made long before, was not enervated thereby; but even this was laid in subserviency to Gospel ends; and also the Gospel was preached to them, *Heb. 4.2*. (and so the covenant of grace revealed) though more darkly in types and shadows, through which they were instructed, to seek Justification unto Life by Christ promised, and so deliverance from the curse of the Law by him. Now amongst these some did believe, others did not; and so some were related to God in the New Covenant, others remained under the Old.<sup>65</sup>

Elsewhere, Coxe discusses man's state after the fall and says:

In this Condition Man was altogether *helpless and without Strength*, being utterly disabled to stand before God upon Terms of a Covenant of Works...And therefore it was impossible, not only that *this Covenant* now broken should be renewed with him, or any

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<sup>61</sup> Thomas Patient, *A Treatise of Baptism*, 58.

<sup>62</sup> Christopher Blackwood, *A Soul-Searching Catechism* (1658), 37, 40.

<sup>63</sup> Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 95-96.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Minge, *Gospel-Baptism Or, Plain Proof, That the Mode of Dipping, Plunging or Immersion, now commonly used by the People called Anabaptists; is according to the Primitive Institution* (London: Printed by K. Astwood, 1700), 28. Italics original. In context, Minge is describing the Abrahamic covenant which he elsewhere specifically calls distinct from the covenant of grace. See Minge, *Gospel-Baptism*, 38.

<sup>65</sup> Nehemiah Coxe, *Vindiciae Veritatis Or A Confutation of The Heresies and Gross Errours Asserted by Thomas Collier In His Additional Word To His Body of Divinity* (London: Printed for Nath. Ponder, 1677), 78-79.

of his Posterity, for the same Ends, and in the same manner as it was at first made with upright Man.<sup>66</sup>

Coxe also stated concerning the Abrahamic covenant, of which the Mosaic covenant was an “enlargement,” that it “Can give no more then *external and typical Blessings unto a Typical Seed.*”<sup>67</sup>

Coxe’s position that a “remembrance” of the covenant of works was “revived” in the Mosaic covenant is a much softer version of Cary’s view of the Mosaic covenant, and perhaps the best articulation of the more common Particular Baptist stance on this question. While the vast majority of Particular Baptists affirmed the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants to be covenants of works, most of them restricted the scope of the covenants themselves to national, earthly, typical spheres while also acknowledging that the promises and threats of the covenants of works were brought back to memory in certain ways. They all agreed, however, that the purpose of the Mosaic covenant was not to rival the covenant of grace but to push fallen mankind to Christ for salvation.<sup>68</sup>

So then, did they open the door for an alternative way of salvation for Old Testament believers? No they did not. Even the men who held the strongest of views on the Mosaic covenant, like Cary and Keach, made it clear that no one could be justified by the Mosaic covenant, and that this hopelessness made the covenant of works subservient to the covenant of grace.

In other words, to use the Particular Baptists’ views on the Mosaic covenant to justify an alternate way of salvation in the Old Testament, you would first have to overcome their Calvinism and posit an upright human who can keep the law perfectly, and second you would have to prove that they considered the covenant of works, whether repeated or remade in the Mosaic covenant, to be coordinate, not subordinate, to the covenant of grace.<sup>69</sup> Connecting the Particular Baptists’ views on these points to later dispensational thought would require a mutilation and distortion of their theology so complete that any and all resemblance would be destroyed in the process. Closer examination, as provided in the arguments above, demonstrates that the connections drawn in *A Puritan Theology* from the Particular Baptists to later “dispensationalist circles” are, in the words of Thomas Delaune, “no more to be found in the premises then a *Dolphin in the Woods.*”<sup>70</sup>

## Conclusion

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<sup>66</sup> Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 35-36. Italics original.

<sup>67</sup> Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 109. Italics original.

<sup>68</sup> No Particular Baptist argued that there was a postlapsarian time when God was teaching men to seek justification by the works of the law as an end in itself. They all agreed on the postlapsarian subservience of the covenant of works, however they understood its relation to the Mosaic covenant.

<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, it is misleading to attribute to the Particular Baptists the idea that after the fall the covenant of works, and thus a promise of eternal life, remained active and valid, albeit impossible. It was a standard argument within Reformed thought, even putting aside the web of views on the nature of the Mosaic covenant, that the law, remained a path of justification after the fall. This path, rather than justifying, condemned and sent sinners to the covenant of grace. Cf. Robert Rollock, *A Treatise of Effectual Calling* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1603), 21. “The couenant of works had this vse [to justify or condemn] in *Adam* before his fall.... After the fall, it hath the same vse in the the vnregenerate, elect, and reprobate, to wit, to iustifie and saue them, or to condemne them. And for as much as it can not iustifie them because of their corruption...it followeth that it must necessarilie condemne them.”

<sup>70</sup> Delaune, *Truth Defended*, 17. Italics original. This is found in a postscript at the end of Delaune’s work. The pagination reset at the beginning of the postscript.

In conclusion, debates tend to be unfruitful. Everyone wins. No one loses. Jones and Van Raalte have given us a glimpse into the thick and complicated debates between the Particular Baptists and their paedobaptists brothers, but their presentation of the Particular Baptists' side of the debate was lacking. It offered an incomplete picture of the Baptists' appropriation of John Owen, failing to see their use of his views on the Abrahamic covenant, not just the Mosaic covenant. They also arrived at false conclusions about the Particular Baptists by extrapolating Philip Cary's views too far, and thereby drawing false connections. The vast majority of Particular Baptists did not hold to an unconditional covenant of grace (nor did Cary really), many of them did not consider the Mosaic covenant to be *the* covenant of works, and they most certainly did not open the door for an alternate way of salvation in the Old Testament.

Particular Baptist covenant theology was not monolithic or uniform, nor was paedobaptist covenant theology. Each deserves careful thought and evaluation so as not to perpetuate the errors of the past. There is much that we can learn from those men, and from one another. And I can sincerely say with Nehemiah Coxe that there is, "nothing that my soul more longs for on Earth, than to see an intire and hearty Union of all that fear God, and hold the Head, however differing in their Sentiments about some things of lesser moment."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, v-vi.