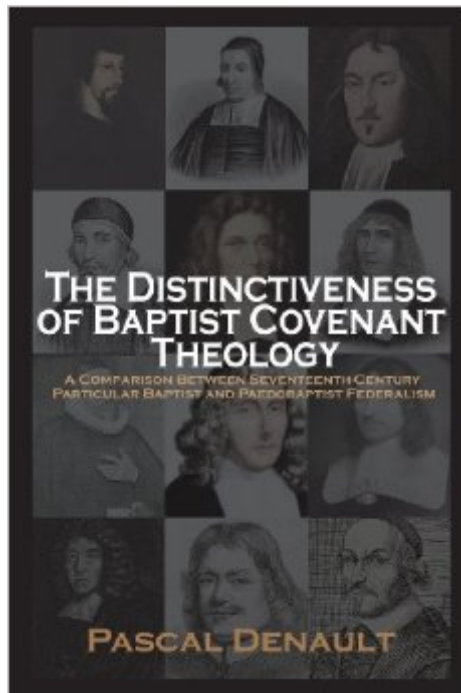


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The Distinctiveness Of Baptist Covenant Theology



Synopsis

Pascal Denault's careful labors over the theological texts of both Baptist and Pedobaptists of the seventeenth century have yielded an excellent study of the relation of baptism to a commonly shared covenantalism. At the same time he has shown that a distinct baptistic interpretation of the substance of the New Covenant, that is, all its conditions having been met in the work of Christ its Mediator resulting in an unconditional application of it to its recipients, formed the most basic difference between the two groups. His careful work on the seventeenth-century documents has yielded a strong, Bible-centered, covenantal defense of believers' baptism and is worthy of a dominant place in the contemporary discussions of both covenantalism and baptism. -Thomas J. Nettles, Ph.D.

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Customer Reviews

I am now able to sleep at night: Pascal Denault has written the book I've been looking for. Someone has finally put in print an analysis of what 17th century particular baptists believed about covenant theology. As amazing as it sounds, no other book has done this. Of the now numerous books published on baptist covenant theology, none of them have done what Denault has done. None of them endeavored to explain what the editors and signers of the 1689 London Baptist Confession meant when they modified Chapter 7 of the LBCF. Some have written how they personally interpret Chapter 7, but not necessarily how the London baptists did. Many reformed baptists have labored hard to reconcile their credobaptism with covenant theology, but for the most

part they went back to the drawing board to do so, rather than standing on the shoulders of those who came before. But, I don't blame them. It's not like you can find these primary sources online, or even in your library. For the most part, they're just not in print. Reformed Baptist Academic Press did a great service in publishing Nehemiah Coxe's treatise on covenant theology, but before that it wasn't available in print. And still most of the other writings are not available. Denault notes: "I spent weeks communing with seventeenth-century theologians through their writings; sometimes reading them with a magnifying glass when only the original edition existed." The result is a unique combination of historical survey and modern polemic against Presbyterian covenant theology. The value of returning to the source of 1689 confessional covenantalism is that it is decidedly different from the covenant theology of modern reformed baptists.

This book by Pascal Denault is a welcome addition to the literature on an issue that has vexed many for too long. It is clear that the seventeenth-century Particular Baptists' formulation of covenant theology in the Second London Confession of Faith - 1677/89 (cf. 2nd LCF 7.3, for example) was a modified version of the one contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith. But why the different formulation? Denault's work goes *ad fontes* (to the sources) to find the answer. And that's exactly why I am so thankful for his work. The primary, Particular Baptist sources are where we should start in seeking to understand the theology of our forebears. Denault shows from those sources not only that the Baptist formulation of covenant theology differed but why. It is too easy to note that it differed and then to impose our thought categories upon the Confession to answer the question of why. That is poor scholarship and bad historical-theological method. Denault's method is sound and a much-needed tonic in our day of rediscovering our roots. His findings are illuminating and will challenge many. He argues that the main difference had nothing to do with the covenant of works. The Particular Baptists were of one voice with their paedobaptist brethren on this issue. Neither did the main difference focus on the subjects of baptism, though it was a related issue. The main difference, according to Denault (and I think he is right), had to do with their view of covenant theology, concentrating on the definition of the covenant of grace and the differences between the old and new covenants in light of that definition. Denault calls Nehemiah Coxe "the most significant Baptist theologian [of the seventeenth century] when it comes to Covenant Theology." He is surely right.

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