

Prologue

The genesis of this booklet is not without interest, at least to me. I am bound to say I can see God's hand in the way it all began. It was like this.

Out of the blue, I came across Heather A.Kendall's review of T.A.Warner's *The Two Covenants: An Essay...*,¹ Warner being a man of whom I had never heard. In her review, Kendall set out the background to her subject's work:

T.A.Warner published *The Two Covenants* in 1845 at the request of The Black River Baptist Association in New York and The Mad River Baptist Association in Ohio. Warner had moved from New York to become the fifth pastor of the Lost Creek Baptist Church in Ohio. He must have presented this essay at both association meetings. Afterwards, both groups asked him to publish his work so that others could read it. Therefore, he asked the City Book Store Printing Office in Dayton, Ohio, to print some copies.²

Warner had written distinctly against the consequences of covenant theology. One might almost say that in certain respects he had anticipated the recovery of new-covenant theology in the 1970s. Notice my use of the word 'recovery'; I did not say 'invention'. There are two points that I wish to make.

First, new-covenant theology was not invented. That dubious honour belongs to covenant theology. Now although these two sound as though they might be close cousins, nothing could be further from the truth; they are, in reality, poles apart! Covenant theology was first presented to the

¹ It was some 'Essay', running, as it did, to 126 pages!

² Heather A.Kendall: 'A Review of *The Two Covenants* by T.A.Warner'.

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world in central Europe in the last half of the 16th century.³ Oh yes, covenant theology – as distinct from the theology of the new covenant – *was* invented by men. New-covenant theology, on the other hand, was not. When we talk of new-covenant theology we are, in fact, talking about the theology of the new covenant. And that is plainly revealed in Scripture. The name ‘new-covenant theology’, I freely admit, was coined in the last quarter of the 20th century, but the theology it refers to certainly did not begin with its name; it is in Scripture. So much for the first point. But it is a point worthy of notice. When I speak of new-covenant theology, I am not talking about an invented theology.

Secondly, down the centuries since the time of the apostles, various writers and teachers have been producing works advocating the leading tenets of the new covenant. Indeed, I myself have contributed to this ever-growing corpus. In particular, I have published several works demonstrating the first point; namely, that new-covenant theology, contrary to popular mythology, was not invented in the last quarter of the 20th century. Rather, since the time of the apostles, some of the Fathers, and then, in later centuries, men such as Robert Purnell, Tobias Crisp, William Dell, John Eaton, John Saltmarsh, John Bunyan, Thomas Collier, William Gadsby, J.L.Harris, Robert Govett, C.H.Spurgeon, William Wales Horne, Edward Miall, and the like, have all published works which, to a greater or lesser degree, have

³ Although Johann Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575) was probably the first to publish a work containing the concept of federal salvation, Kaspar Olevianus (1536-1587) was its inventor, in Germany, when he and Zacharias Ursinus (1534-1583) drafted the final version of the Heidelberg Catechism (1562). William Ames (1576-1633) was the leading British exponent of covenant theology, which dominated the Westminster Confession of the Presbyterians (1643-1646) and the Savoy Declaration of the Independents (1661). See my ‘Covenant Theology Tested’.

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departed from covenant theology.⁴ They have all set out some of the leading tenets of new-covenant theology.

The material point in all this is that new-covenant theology stems from Scripture. The new covenant was promised in the Old Testament, being foreshadowed in the law and prophesied in the prophets; it was brought into being through Christ, its principles then being fully set out by the apostles in the post-Pentecost Scriptures, as Christ promised, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And, as I have said, many writers and teachers down the centuries since that time have produced invaluable works setting out the truth of it all.

Consequently, Kendall's review at once aroused my interest. Since I have been privileged to bring back into wider circulation some of the relatively unknown writings of the men I have mentioned, I wondered if there was anything I could do with Warner's piece to add another title to that gallery.

With this in mind, I immediately obtained a digital copy of Warner's book. But, sad to say, it was not in the easiest of formats for my use. So I asked my friend Chris Hanna if he could help. Alas, he could provide nothing better than what I already had. Nevertheless – and this, to me, is the encouraging fact – in his reply, he attached a copy of a small work by another Ohio man (again, a man of whom I had never heard) written a few years later than Warner's work; namely, Samuel W. Lynd's Circular Letter on the Abrahamic Covenant, written for the Miami Baptist Association, Ohio, in 1863.⁵

I saw at once that Lynd's work, dealing as it does with a vital aspect of the theology of the new covenant – the

⁴ See, for instance, my 'New-Covenant Theology: New Kid on the Block?'; 'Gadsby's Questions for Law Men'. See also my *Bunyan*; *Collier*; *Exalting*; *Four*; *Gadfly*; *Govett*; *Horne*; *Purnell*; *Spurgeon*. See the abundant extracts in my *Christ Is All*.

⁵ For more on Lynd, see James. R. Duvall: 'Samuel W. Lynd: Baptist Pastor and Educator, 1796-1876', the Baptist History Homepage, a service of John Leland Baptist College, Georgetown, Kentucky. See also Heather Kendall's contribution below.

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Abrahamic covenant – merited wider distribution. This booklet is the result.

And, taking the Prologue full circle, I record my thanks to Heather Kendall who eagerly responded to my correspondence about what I had in mind. Let me quote from an email she sent me:

Lynd had a lot more influence than Warner, although I think that Warner's book is a lot more detailed. [It certainly is – DG]. Nevertheless they both desired the same result – for those who baptised infants to repent and admit that only those who profess faith in the finished work of Christ should be baptised.

After she had concluded her research, Kendall was able to fill in more of the historical background:

Samuel W. Lynd (1796-1876) moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, and became the pastor of the Ninth Street Baptist church in January, 1831. This church belonged to the Miami Baptist association in south-western Ohio. 'In the mid 1830s, the anti-mission movement divided the churches of the Miami Baptist association, and... Lynd's church was one of the four churches excluded by the anti-missions majority'.⁶ In 1836, Lynd wrote a letter acknowledging the split in the Miami association, and informed the anti-mission group that those four churches had formed a second Miami Baptist association.

In 1835, Dr Lynd, along with eight others, purchased land in Covington, Kentucky, on the other side of the Ohio River, to found the Western Baptist Institute. However, their school did not succeed because the southern churches who approved of slavery refused to send their young men to an institution taught by anti-slavery professors from the north.

Because of our correspondence, Kendall's curiosity was especially aroused concerning Lynd's Circular Letter. She confessed:

I wondered if Lynd wrote to reinforce the teaching in T.A. Warner's book, *The Two Covenants*, written eighteen

⁶ Duvall.

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years earlier. I discovered, however, a quote from an article that Lynd had written in 1836, nine years before Warner's book.

Lynd's words in that article are worth repeating:

I assume the position that Baptists and Pedobaptists [*sic*] [infant baptisers] differ on ESSENTIAL points, ESSENTIAL to the honour of Jesus Christ and the future prosperity of the churches. And I would have the community understand it. Have Baptists forgotten the ground which they occupy? Have they forgot [*sic*] that the difference involves the constitution and government of gospel churches?⁷... I have feared for some time that the union of Baptists with other denominations would prove to be an alliance of much ultimate evil.¹

Lynd's talk of 'gospel churches' needs correction. He was, alas, using the language of covenant theology. Covenant theologians think that Israel was the church under the law; hence their talk of 'gospel churches', churches of the new covenant. This is worse than nonsense. It plays directly into the very point that Lynd and Warner were concerned with, and what my booklet is all about. And that is vital scriptural truth, leading to vital scriptural practice. Christ formed the church, the *ekklēsia*, as he was bringing in the new covenant. See, as the merest sample of passages which make the point, Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:19-20; 1 Peter 2:4-10. I am not playing with words, striving over a gnat. Everything which follows in this booklet – the irrefutable, scriptural position which I seek to enforce – is threatened if the unscriptural jargon of 'gospel churches' is allowed to stand.⁸ No one who is persuaded of the theology of the new covenant should allow himself to drop into the use of 'gospel churches'.

Kendall continued:

Since both men [Lynd and Warner] lived in Miami County, and Baptist associations read circular letters from other like-minded associations, they may have read each other's

⁷ Please see my remarks immediately following this extract.

⁸ See my *Infant* pp114-121.

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work. Nevertheless, Warner explains that his own association, the Mad River Baptist association, and his former friends in New York State, in the Black River Baptist association, encouraged him to write his book.

Why did the Baptists of Ohio and New York want these men to write? And why were Lynd and Warner willing to comply? Kendall:

Both Lynd and Warner were Calvinistic Baptists who had a passion for reaching the lost with the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They objected to the teaching of covenant theology that undergirds the practice of baptising infants. The Scriptures are clear that the church consists only of baptised believers. As Lynd points out: ‘Children of believing parents are not united with their parents in the new covenant by virtue of natural descent... Spiritual blessings, according to the new covenant, were secured by faith then, as now, and this covenant stands forever’.

Neither man stopped at setting out the facts. Kendall:

Lynd and Warner appealed to the Baptists of their day to stand firm in the biblical truth of a believers-only church consisting of those who have been baptised upon their profession of faith in the finished work of Christ on their behalf.

In conclusion, Kendall made her own earnest appeal:

Let us follow their example and pray that the Holy Spirit will speak into the hearts of present-day paedobaptists to reject covenant theology and infant baptism. How many children have a false sense of security because they have been baptised as infants?

Precisely!

And now to my book. Let me tell you what to expect. After this Prologue, in an Introduction I set out the main principles of the Abrahamic covenant. This leads into an examination of Lynd’s Circular Letter, which I present in copious extracts, punctuated by my remarks.

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As I have indicated, I send this little work out in the hope that it may make a further contribution to the explosion of the myth (not to use a stronger word) that new-covenant theology is a novelty. More, I hope that by adding this volume to what I have already published in a similar vein, I will encourage many others to start looking into these things for themselves. Let me stress – and stress with all the force at my disposal – that this is not a cosy academic debate about a theological nicety. Far from it! A proper understanding of the Bible depends on getting the Abrahamic covenant right. Moreover, failing to get that covenant right, leads, in a pastoral sense, a personal sense, to massive consequences, consequences of a devastating nature. It is no exaggeration to say that eternal consequences hang upon this question. What men wrongly believe about the Abrahamic covenant can lead them to take a route which, it is not too much to say, imperils their eternal salvation. That is just how serious it is.