

What is New Covenant Theology?

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(1924-2018)

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Part 1. Introduction

The following is the introduction to a message I gave at Salado, Texas, on the subject “What Is New Covenant Theology?” These are personal musings and are not to be considered as an authoritative position paper.

Someone sent an email requesting the “Five Points” or “Eight Doctrines” of New Covenant Theology (hereinafter NCT). I have neither. It (NCT) is just now beginning to be spelled out. We are like the Anabaptists in a sense. A Presbyterian asked why there are no historic Baptist works of theology from the Reformation. I reminded him that our Baptist forefathers did not write books because they were in hiding for fear of their lives.

I am sure about a few basic things, but NCT does not have a completely developed theology like either Covenant Theology or Dispensationalism. Actually, we are not sure we even want such a thing! In some cases we know more about what we *don't* believe than about what we *do* believe. I was immersed in both Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology for many years, but have now left both of those camps. Many people who basically agree with us have said, “I thought I was the only one who could no longer accept either Dispensationalism or Covenant Theology.” Some of these people still hold to some points of Covenant Theology, *i.e.* three codes of law, etc. Some, probably many more, still hold to some aspects of Dispensationalism.

There is no question that both classic Covenant Theology (Westminster Confession of Faith and Westminster Seminary) and classic Dispensationalism (Scofield Bible and Dallas Seminary) are finished as viable *total* systems. In both camps the dam has sprung a giant leak, and all attempts to fix it have failed.

The only way Covenant Theology can continue “as is” is if Theonomy takes over in Covenant Theology circles. But this seems most unlikely, simply because they cannot secure the use and authority of the sword to enforce their theology in the same manner as did the Puritans. The sword, not open debate, is what kept Covenant Theology in force under the Puritans. The basic presuppositions of Covenant Theology are just *assumed* to be true; they cannot be established with texts of Scripture. Covenant Theology will only discuss issues in the light of the WCF. This attitude cannot be acceptable to anyone who really takes *Sola Scriptura* seriously.

There are several key players in the present debate. Master's Seminary (John MacArthur) is fully committed to Dispensationalism. MacArthur himself is a Dispensationalist, but also holds to some vital points of Covenant Theology. The seminary is not nearly as Calvinistic as MacArthur himself. Both MacArthur and his seminary will exert great influence. Where they will finally end up, I do not know. MacArthur has come to a clear acceptance of Particular Atonement. What effect this will have on his overall theological perspective is uncertain. I doubt the Seminary will ever leave Dispensationalism, but it would not be surprising if MacArthur did.

Donald Carson and Douglas Moo are both at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. I think Don Carson is the one of the clearest thinkers and one of the most articulate teachers of biblical theology around today. In this same league are Albert Mohler, Jr. and John Piper. The teaching of these men with its attendant effect on so many, is going to continue to have a great impact. Several Southern Baptist seminaries have different men holding to each of the three positions. As long as all three positions are allowed to be articulated, there is little doubt as to which will ultimately win the day.

So, where are we heading and where are we going to wind up? Being 76 years old, it is safe for me to make predictions since I will already be dead when the time for being stoned to death comes. Here are a few scenarios that could occur.

One: There could be a great forsaking of Covenant Theology. I doubt this, since there is too much at stake and we do not have many "here I stand so help me God" men around today. I rather suspect the implications of the system will be ignored, as they are in many cases now, except by the most radical, even as lip service is paid to the Confession. However, no one will suggest re-writing the confession. That would take a second Pentecost!

Two: There could be an open acknowledgement that Dispensational Theology is a house of cards. Again, I doubt this will happen. Too many schools, mission boards, and churches have Dispensationalism "entombed in ink," or "set in concrete" in their doctrinal statements. Some of the Progressive Dispensationalists have already, for all practical purposes, given up the foundation of the system, and are re-defining things to the place that their Dispensationalism is no longer really Dispensationalism.

Three: NCT could be merged into Dispensationalism by modifying both of them. If this happens, Dispensationalism will soon swallow up NCT. Some NCT advocates would love to see this happen. This happened to Calvinism in the General Association of Regular Baptists shortly after they came into existence. Many of the founding fathers in the GARB understood and believed historic Calvinism. They were also wholeheartedly committed to Dispensationalism. Unfortunately, their Dispensationalism meant more to them than their Calvinism. They passed on their Dispensationalism, in both creeds and preaching, to the next generation; but they did not pass on their Calvinism. The moment Dispensationalism becomes more important than Calvinism, Arminianism is waiting at the door to become the new mistress of the house. It only takes a few generations for those who "knew not Joseph" to arise and take over. The GARB today is vehemently opposed to the truth of sovereign grace, and passionately in love with Dispensationalism. If NCT becomes wedded to Dispensationalism, NCT would suffer the same fate that Calvinism did in the GARB.

Four: NCT could be demonstrated to be just as impossible to unite with Dispensationalism as it is to unite with Covenant Theology. In other words, NCT could stand alone in clear contrast to both classic Covenant Theology and classic Dispensationalism. NCT does indeed agree with both systems on some points, and disagrees with both on some other points. Basically, NCT could finally finish the Reformation in the areas where the Reformers and Puritans stopped. I make no prediction as to which of the above things will happen. I pray it will be the last one.

While I have tipped my hand and admitted that I cannot deliver the goods on the topic assigned, it is essential that we understand where we must start and what the real problems are that we must answer.

What then is NCT?

The answer must involve some interaction with both Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism. Unfortunately, both Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism are being greatly redefined today, and in some cases, changed to the point that the terms are no longer definitive. To illustrate: the footnote in the *Scofield Reference Bible* on Mt. 5:2 shows (as many other Scofield notes show) what all Dispensationalists used to believe; namely, that the words *kingdom* and *millennium* were interchangeable terms. The “coming kingdom” and the “earthly millennium” were one and the same things. The kingdom had been offered to the Jews, they rejected it, and it was postponed and awaited the second coming for its establishment. Today, so-called “Progressive Dispensationalists” argue that the *Kingdom* has indeed come, but the *Millennium* has not come. The Millennium is said to be only an *aspect* of the Kingdom and not synonymous with the Kingdom. This is changing the rules and redefining terms in such a way that allows one to deny the basic foundation of Dispensationalism while still wearing the label *Dispensationalist*. The word *millennium* in old line Dispensationalism was used only to describe the time length (1,000 years) of the “coming kingdom.” The term is now being used to describe the different *nature* of the Kingdom in the “Millennial state.” This is kind of like the old shell game. I have yet to hear a progressive Dispensationalist clearly spell out where the old-line Dispensationalist was wrong in either his basic presuppositions or his application of them.

There are three different theological positions. Most people assume that there are only *two* positions, and you must be one or the other. You must either be a Dispensationalist, or hold to Covenant Theology. If you are not one, then you must, of necessity, be the other. This is why people like me can be labeled Dispensational by a Covenant Theologian, and also be labeled a Covenant Theologian by a Dispensationalist. The basic point that demonstrates that there are clearly *three* distinctly different positions, lies in understanding and clarifying some simple questions that are all related.

1. Exactly what is the *Old* and what is the *New* Covenant?
2. Exactly what is the *relationship* of these two covenants to each other, and to the rest of Scripture?
3. Specifically with *whom* were each of these two covenants made?
4. What is the exact status and function of each of these covenants *today*?

When I answer these questions biblically, it becomes impossible for me to fit into either a Dispensational or a Covenant Theology camp. I answer all four of these questions differently than both a Dispensationalist and a Covenant Theologian. Let's begin with the first question.

What is the *Old* and what is the *New* Covenant?

Hebrews 8:6 is a good place to start. Read the text carefully. We are looking at the words inspired by the Holy Spirit, and not the ‘logical’ statements of a theologian.

“But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.”

There are three distinct comparisons in this text. Notice how they all go together. In order to understand a comparison, you must understand both of the things that are being compared. If one says, “Oranges are sweeter than lemons,” that would be meaningless to you if you had never tasted a lemon. Likewise, if we do not understand the first part of each of these comparisons in

Heb. 8:6, we will never get the writer's point. The overall point of the passage is to show how much greater Christ's ministry as a Priest is, when it is compared to the ministry of Aaron.

What was Aaron's ministry? Why did it have to be replaced? What does Christ's ministry accomplish that Aaron's ministry could not? And why could not Aaron accomplish the same thing? The answer to all these questions involves comparing the two different covenants under which each of the two Priests ministered.

1. First comparison: Christ has a *more excellent ministry* than Aaron.

1.1. *Question:* What is the basic thing that makes Aaron's ministry so inferior, and Christ's so superior?

1.2. *Answer:* The answer is shown in the next comparison.

2. Christ's ministry is better because *it is based on a better covenant*. Christ is the "mediator of a better covenant."

2.1. *Question:* What was the covenant under which Aaron ministered?

2.2. *Answer:* The "old covenant" given to Israel at Mt. Sinai, that established their nationhood (Heb. 8:6-13)

2.3. *Question:* What is the covenant under which Christ ministers?

2.4. *Answer:* The new and better covenant based on grace, that was established by Christ in His obedient life and vicarious death. It is "not like" the old covenant (Heb. 8:6-13).

2.5. *Question:* Why is the new covenant so much better than the old covenant? The answer to that involves the third comparison.

3. The new covenant under which Christ ministers is superior to the old covenant under which Aaron ministered, because it is based on "better promises."

3.1. *Question:* What is the basic difference in the promises upon which the old covenant was based and under which *Aaron* ministered, and the "new and better" covenant is based and under which *Christ* ministers?

3.2. *Answer:* The old covenant was a covenant of law based on works, that said "do and live — disobey and die;" and the new covenant is based on the atoning work of Christ, and says "it is finished — believe."

There you have laid out in one verse, the heart of the message of the New Testament Scriptures, and the foundation of New Covenant Theology. It is the same clear truth set forth in the rest of Scripture. Let's look at the verses that clearly establish these points.

The first question we sought to answer was, "Exactly what is the old and what is the new Covenant?" So far, we have not spelled out exactly what constituted these two covenants. When we look at what Scripture says, we learn that the foundation document of the 'old covenant' was the Ten Commandments. We must grasp the following biblical facts.

1. The Ten Commandments, or Tables of Stone, was a *covenant document*.

2. The Ten Commandments, or Tables of the Covenant, were the specific covenant terms of the covenant that God made with Israel at Sinai.

3. This covenant document, containing the Ten Commandments, was given *only* to the Nation of Israel.

Can we prove these three statements from Scripture? Yes, we can. We will look at passages in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, that clearly show that the Ten Commandments were a covenant document.

*And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for **after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant** with thee and with Israel. And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables **the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.** (Ex.34: 27, 28)*

This passage explicitly calls the Ten Commandments “a covenant,” and refers to them as the “words of the covenant.” It is impossible for the Holy Spirit to state any more clearly that the Ten Commandments are the actual covenant terms, or covenant document, that God made with Israel at Sinai.

*And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice. And he declared unto you **his covenant**, which he commanded you to perform, **even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.** (Deut. 4:12, 13)*

Again, the text is clear. This passage refers to the second giving of the law. Moses is reminding the people of exactly what happened at Mount Sinai. Notice exactly what Moses wanted the children of Israel to remember. Again, we must remember that we are looking at words inspired by the Holy Spirit.

1. God “declared unto you his covenant.”
2. God commanded them to “perform,” or keep the terms of His covenant.
3. The specific terms of the covenant they were to keep were “even Ten Commandments.”
4. These Ten Commandments, or covenant terms, were “written on the tables of stone.”

Can anyone doubt for a second that these texts prove that the Ten Commandments are a covenant document? What do the New Testament Scriptures have to say in this regard?

The third chapter of 2Corinthians is a comparison of the old and new covenants. Paul’s point is to highlight the great superiority of the new covenant over the old covenant.

He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant — not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! (2Cor. 3:6 ^{NIV})

First of all, the *New International Version* correctly uses *covenant* instead of *testament*.

Secondly, the *letter/spirit* contrast is not “the *letter* of the law versus the *spirit* of the law.” That may or may not be a valid distinction in other passages; but it has nothing to do with Paul’s argument here. The *letter* is not a “spiritual application of the tables of stone;” the letter **is law itself written in stone as a covenant** (verse 3) as opposed to the new covenant written in the heart.

Thirdly, the God-ordained purpose of the old covenant was to bring condemnation and death (verse 7).

Fourthly, the ministry of the new covenant brings life and righteousness. **The new secures what the old demanded but could not produce.** This is the heart of the new covenant message!

Lastly, when you put all of these things together then the contrast in verse 6 becomes even sharper. Look carefully at Paul's argument: *He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant — not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

1. "Not of the letter" is a specific contrast to the "new covenant" just mentioned with the old covenant. It is not possible to read a contrast between a "letter" and "spirit" preaching of the law into this text. This is comparing two distinctly different covenants.
2. It is not the "letter of the law" that kills; it is the law *itself* that kills every hope of life. In no sense whatsoever can a 'spiritual' preaching of the law "give life." The Holy Spirit of God, through the proclamation of the gospel, can alone give life. Moses put us in the grave, and justly so; but nothing Moses can say or do will get us out of that grave. We need someone with the power to give life to dead people.
3. We are very confident (verse 6) that this new covenant we preach, can not only raise men out of death and the grave, it can keep them in grace for eternity. There are no *ifs* or *buts* in the new covenant.

Another study of this passage is required show the real reason that Moses put a veil over his face. For now, the only point has been to show that the Scriptures clearly teach that the Ten Commandments are a covenant document. If the reader wants more proof from the New Testament Scriptures, he need only look at Heb. 8:6-13.

Let us now look at the second statement that must be proven from Scripture: *The Ten Commandments, or Tables of the Covenant, were the specific covenant terms of the covenant that God made with Israel at Sinai.*

First of all, Scripture is clear that the old covenant was (1) made with Israel alone, (2) it was made with them at Sinai, and (3) the specific covenant terms of that old covenant were the Ten Commandments. The Scripture is just as clear that the new covenant will "not be like the old covenant."

As we noted earlier, the first reference to the Ten Commandments in Scripture is Ex. 34:27, 28.

*And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for **after the tenor of these words** I have made a covenant **with thee and with Israel**. And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the **words of the covenant, the ten commandments**. (Ex. 34:27)*

Verse 27 reads, *after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.* This covenant was not made with the Egyptians and the Caananites. It was made with the nation of Israel exclusively. Of course, that is the same thing as saying, "The law (Tables of the Covenant — Ten Commandments) was given only to Israel."

When God instructed Moses concerning the Sabbath being the "sign of the covenant," He made it very clear that both the covenant, and the sign of that covenant, were given to Israel *alone*. Look at the passage carefully. It is so clear that it needs no comments at all.

*Wherefore the **children of Israel** shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a **sign between me and the children of Israel** forever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed. And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, **two tables of testimony, tables of stone**, written with the finger of God. (Ex. 31:12-18)*

Both the New Testament Scriptures and the Old Testament Scriptures make it very clear that the old covenant was not only made at Sinai with Israel alone, but those same Scriptures emphasize

that the new covenant made with the *Church*, would be radically different than the old covenant made with *Israel*. Look first at the *prophecy* (Jer. 31:31-34):

*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a **new covenant with the house of Israel**, and with the house of Judah: **Not according to the covenant** that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to **bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake**, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: **But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel**; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they **shall be my people**. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for **I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.** (Jer 31:31-34)*

And then look at the *fulfillment* (Heb. 8:8-12):

*For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a **new covenant with the house of Israel** and with the house of Judah: **Not according to the covenant** that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is **the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel** after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and **they shall be to me a people**: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For **I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.** (Heb. 8:8-12)*

I can hear the guns cocking and see the big canons being rolled out in the Dispensational camp. Sorry fellows, that battle will have to wait for another day. I will stick with the absolute certainties in the texts for now.

All agree that Hebrews 8:8-12 is quoting Jer. 31:31-34. I bolded some identical phrases in both passages to prove beyond question the one is a direct quote of the other. Jer. 31:31-34 promises (1) God would make a “new covenant” with the “house of Israel.” (2) This covenant was not going to be like the old covenant that he made with the “house of Israel” at Mount Sinai when God delivered them out of Egypt. (3) The law would be “written in the heart,” or every person without exception under the new covenant. (4) The new covenant community would be made up of believers only. Everyone in the new covenant would “know the Lord,” or be regenerate, from the “least to the greatest.” This text is more than sufficient to prove that “children of believers” are *not* in the new covenant by birth. (5) Forgiveness would be for all sin without exception, as contrasted to the old covenant system, and (6) the forgiveness would be forever as opposed to one year under the old covenant.

The primary point of disagreement is whether the “new covenant” described in Hebrews 8:8-12 is the same “new covenant” that the church celebrates at the Lord’s Supper. If the new covenant in Hebrews 8:8-12 has indeed fulfilled the promise made in Jer. 31:31-34, then the church, in some sense, has to be viewed as at least *part* of the “house of Israel,” if not actually the *true* spiritual fulfillment of the promise of Jer. 31:31-34. So the real question is this: Is the writer of Hebrews telling us that, (1) the new covenant has been established in the atoning work of Christ, and the church is partaking of the blessings of the new covenant, or (2) is the new covenant made with national Israel, and is still waiting a fulfillment in the future, or (3) are there *two different* new covenants, one with Israel and one with the church?

I did not quote the last verse in Hebrews 8. It is crucial to our discussion. It is amazing how this text has been either ignored or distorted.

In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. (Heb 8:13 ^{NKJ})

Some folks cannot see, because they are as blinded by their system of theology, as the Jews were by the Talmud written by their 'experts,' that a distinctly *new* and *different* covenant was going to replace the old covenant. It is impossible to make these verses say, "A new administration of the one and same covenant of grace." Two distinctly different covenants are not in any sense the same thing as two administrations of one and the same covenant. The Word of God **never once** speaks of a "new administration" replacing an "old administration" of one and the same covenant. That is pure theological lingo without a single text of Scripture to back it up. The Word of God **does often** speak of a new and different covenant replacing the old covenant given at Sinai.

According to Hebrews 8:13, our Lord's blood did not merely bring in a new administration of an existing covenant, He established a totally new covenant. We do not pick up the communion cup and say, "This cup is to remember the new administration of the same covenant God gave Israel." No, no, no! This text is talking about a specific covenant that has become obsolete and needs to be replaced with a radically new and different covenant.

Another group finds it difficult to fit the church into these texts of Scripture. Granted, the word *church* does not occur in either Jer. 31 or Heb. 8. However, as noted above, these verses are either speaking specifically of the church (or at least including the church in this new covenant), or else there are two *different* new covenants. You may decide which one you choose to believe.

Another group that grossly misuses this text, is a group called Preterists. They believe the second coming of Christ took place in AD 70. They combine Heb. 8:13 with Heb. 9:8 which says, "*the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing*" (NKJ). They claim that Heb. 8:13 is showing that the old covenant was only "ready to vanish," but was still in force when the Book of Hebrews was written. Heb. 9:8 is then used to prove the "tabernacle" was not destroyed until AD 70. Therefore, as long as it was "standing," the old covenant was still in force and there was "no entrance into the Most Holy Place."

Hebrews 8:13 is not making a prophecy about 70 AD. The writer is not predicting that the old covenant was going to pass away at some future date from the time in which he was speaking. He is saying that when something is obsolete, it is ready to pass away and be replaced. Exactly when did the old covenant become obsolete? When were its terms fully met? When was its curse fully endured? When was it "finished"? When was the "new and living way" into the Most Holy Place opened up? Even a sophomore should answer without hesitation, "At the Cross!" What in the world does the destruction of a physical building in Jerusalem have to do with the payment of sin by shedding of blood? What does any and all of the horrible things that happened to the Jewish nation in 70 AD have to do with the sufferings of Christ through which we have forgiveness of sins?

But what about Heb. 9:8? It specifically says the way into the Most Holy Place was "*not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.*" Does that mean that Heb 10:19-22 was not yet, at that time, in effect? It *has* to, if the Preterists are correct. Look at these words and see if they are talking about something *then* present, or something *future*.

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Heb. 10:19-22 ^{NKJ})

Did our Lord enter into His priestly work at the time of resurrection and ascension, or did that work have to await the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD? Why would the Holy Spirit say “tabernacle” instead of “temple” since the tabernacle had not been standing for many years? The Preterists misuse these verses and the meaning of the word *stand*. Look at the definition of the word translated *standing* in Heb. 9:8 and then some other verses that use the same word.

Here is Strong’s definition:

2476 *histemi* (his’-tay-mee); a prolonged form of a primary *stao* (stah’-o) (of the same meaning, and used for it in certain tenses); to stand (transitively or intransitively), used in various applications (literally or figuratively).

Strong then gives the various words used to translate this word.

KJV — abide, appoint, bring, continue, covenant, establish, hold up, lay, present, set (up), stanch, stand (by, forth, still, up).

Notice the word has both a literal and a figurative meaning. The word means *to continue* or *establish*, as well as to literally *stand*. It is impossible to give it the literal meaning of *stand* in Heb. 9:8 without contradicting many other verses. Other verses that use the identical word in the same figurative sense as Heb. 9:8 are:

*And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not **stand**: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom **stand**? (Matt 12:25-26)*

The house “standing” does not mean a physical building, literally standing on a plot of ground. It is referring to a family being discontinued. Likewise a “kingdom” does not literally “stand” in a given spot.

*By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we **stand**, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (Rom 5:2)*

This does not refer to standing on two legs. Here the word *stand* must refer to our position before God. We stand in grace before God. Notice the tense. Paul said, “we have” and “we stand.” That was written in around 57 AD. That means that Paul, and all other believers, had by personal experience, access into the true Most Holy Place for at least 20 years while the “tabernacle was still standing.” The tabernacle system of worship, Judaism, and everything that the tabernacle system typified, ended when the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom. The building remaining erect has nothing to do with adding something to the cross-work of Christ that was essential to bring in the new covenant.

*(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might **stand**, not of works, but of him that calleth;) (Rom 9:11)*

Here *stand* means to demonstrate or prove. As long as the tabernacle system was in force — and it was until the veil was rent from top to bottom — it was proof that man could not approach God in the Most Holy Place. What demonstrates and proves beyond question that the situation has forever changed, has nothing to do with destroying a physical building in a place called Jerusalem, but the destruction of a holy body at a place called Calvary. By the way, how could the destruction of the temple open up the way into the Most Holy Place? There would not have been a Holy Place left to enter into if the temple was destroyed — and if the Preterist tries to spiritualize it, and make it refer to a *heavenly* Most Holy Place, then he is denying his basic premise.

I remember discussing this subject with an ardent Preterist. I asked him if he still celebrated the Lord’s Supper. He got a bit sheepish and admitted he was not sure. If the second coming of Christ took place at 70 AD, and we are *now* in the kingdom, then the Lord’s Table is passé. We were

instructed to observe it “until the Lord came.” So the only people who could have celebrated it were those from the time of Christ’s death until He supposedly came in 70 AD. But wait! The Lord’s Table is a celebration of the Lord establishing the new covenant; and according to Preterism, the new covenant did not come into force until the temple was destroyed in 70 AD! If the Preterists are correct, then (1) nobody could take the cup and celebrate the new covenant before 70 AD, when the new covenant came into being, and (2) since the Lord’s Supper was only to be observed “until Christ came,” and He came in 70 AD, no one could take the Lord’s Supper after 70 AD. If the Preterists are correct, then **no one ever took the Lord’s Supper!**

In the next article we will finish answering the four basic questions that we have raised. I trust everyone has seen the importance of knowing exactly what both parts of a comparison are, before we can understand why one is so much better than the other. It is impossible for us to see why the old covenant was so inferior until we understand exactly what that covenant was, and what its specific terms and blessings were.

Part 2. Three Theological Positions

In our last article we insisted that there are *three*, not merely *two* theological positions, and raised four questions to help find some clear answers. We did not finish answering the first question. We said,

There are three different theological positions. Most people assume that there are only *two* positions, and you must be one or the other. You must either be a Dispensationalist, or hold to Covenant Theology. If you are not one, then you must, of necessity, be the other. This is why people like me can be labeled Dispensational by a Covenant Theologian, and also be labeled a Covenant Theologian by a Dispensationalist. The basic point that demonstrates that there are clearly *three* distinctly different positions, lies in understanding and clarifying some simple questions that are all related.

1. Exactly what is the *Old* and what is the *New* Covenant?
2. Exactly what is the *relationship* of these two covenants to each other and to the rest of Scripture?
3. Specifically with *whom* were each of these two covenants made?
4. What is the exact status and function of each of these covenants *today*?

When I answer these questions biblically, it becomes impossible for me to fit into either a Dispensational or a Covenant Theology camp. I answer all four of these questions differently than both a Dispensationalist and a Covenant Theologian. Let's begin with the first question.

What is the *Old* and what is the *New* Covenant?"

We then looked at Hebrews 8:6 and other passages and established that: (1) The Ten Commandments, or Tables of Stone, was a *covenant document*; (2) The Ten Commandments, or Tables of the Covenant, were the specific covenant terms of the covenant that God made with Israel at Sinai; and (3) this covenant document, containing the Ten Commandments, was given only to the Nation of Israel.

We need to draw some specific conclusions to what has been established. If the *old*, or *first* covenant was the covenant made with Israel at Sinai, and the *new* is the new covenant established by Christ, then these are obviously the covenants around which the bulk of Scripture is built. These would be the two covenants spoken of in the following passages:

*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make **a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers** in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jer 31:31-33).*

*Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; **the one from the mount Sinai**, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. (Gal 4:24-25).*

*But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also **he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises**. For if that **first covenant** had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a **new covenant with the house of Israel** and with the house of Judah: not according to the*

covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: **And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.** For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. (Heb 8:6-13).

Now I want to ‘gird up the loins’ of your minds. This is a vital point. First of all, the Bible is quite clear in the above verses, that it is discussing the two major covenants around which the bulk of Scripture is built. It is just as clear that the texts *identify* these two covenants. One covenant, called the *old*, or *first*, is the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai. This covenant is distinct and different from the new covenant. The second covenant, called the *new covenant*, was established and we celebrate its institution at the Lord’s Supper. This new covenant replaces the old covenant. These are crystal clear truths in the above texts. What is also clear is the fact one of the great distinguishing marks of the new covenant community, is that every member of that community is a believer. The new covenant community of the Bible is *not* made up of “believers and their children,” but with only believers.

Let me review and solidify in your minds what the Scripture is saying on the subject of the two covenants.

- There are two major covenants around which the bulk of the Bible is built.
- The Bible clearly identifies these as the “old” and “new” covenants.
- The old covenant was the covenant made with Israel at Sinai.
- The new covenant established by Christ totally replaces the old covenant made with Israel.

With the above facts fixed in your mind, ask how the following statements (from the WCF) can be reconciled with the clear biblical data?

The first covenant made with man was a *covenant of works*,¹ wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity,² upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.³

Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second,⁴ commonly called the *covenant of grace*; wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved,⁵ and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.⁶

The only similarity between what the Bible says, and what the WCF says above, is that there are two major covenants in Scripture. After that point, they part company. The two covenants in the Bible are not the same two covenants in the confession. When the WCF talks about “the first covenant” being a “covenant of works” made with Adam, it is talking about a purely theological covenant that exists only in the system of covenant theology. It does not have a stitch of scriptural support. Lets look carefully at the ‘proof texts’ used to support each statement in the confession.

¹ Gen. 2:16-17; Hos. 6:7; Gal. 3:12.

² Gen. 3:22; Rom. 10:5; Rom. 5:12-14; see Rom. 5:15-20.

³ Gen. 2:17; Gal. 3:10.

⁴ Gal. 3:21; Rom. 3:20-21; Rom. 8:3; Gen. 3:15; see Isa. 42:6.

⁵ John 3:16; Rom. 10:6, 9; Rev. 22:17.

⁶ Acts 13:48; Ezek. 36:26-27; John 6:37, 44-45; 1Cor. 12:3. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 7, Section 2, 3.

Remember that we have already established with specific texts of Scripture, that the old, or first, covenant was made at Sinai with Israel, and not with Adam.

The first covenant made with man was a *covenant of works*...⁷ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Gen 2:16-17).

The first problem here is that Hebrews 8 speaks of the first covenant being made with *Israel*. Either Hebrews is wrong, or we have two ‘first covenants,’ one with Adam and one with Israel. The Old and New Testament Scriptures always identify the first or old covenant with *Sinai* and never with *Adam* in Eden. Look at the second proof text.

...wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity...⁸ But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me (Hosea 6:7). And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them (Gal. 3:12).

The second problem is that the only thing promised to Adam is *death* if he disobeyed God’s clear command. There is no mention of either a covenant, or of Adam being rewarded with some kind of life by obeying this mythical covenant.⁹

The third problem is that Hosea 6:7 may be translated “they like men” or “they like Adam.” Like the farm deal, there was nothing to gain since Adam “had it all;” but there was everything to be lost. Hosea 6:7 is the closest thing to textual proof that covenant theology has to support its position. Most translations use “like men” because the text is teaching that *all men*, like Adam, are sinners.

Professor John Murray in his later writings disagreed with many modern Covenant Theologians concerning a supposed ‘covenant of works’ with Adam. He even chides them for using the phrase *covenant of works* in connection with Adam, and also for attempting to connect the Mosaic covenant with Adam in any way. Murray also admits that one of the favorite texts used by covenant theologians as their key proof text to prove a covenant of works with Adam, does not prove that at all. I have yet to read a modern covenant theologian, besides Murray, that admitted this! Earlier writers did not use Hosea 6:7 the way modern writers do.

This administration [Adamic] has often been denoted **the Covenant of Works**...It is not designated a covenant in Scripture. Hosea 6:7 **may be interpreted otherwise** and does not provide the basis for such a construction of the Adamic economy... It should never be confused with what the Scripture calls the **old covenant** or first covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; 2 Cor. 3:14; Heb. 8:7,13). The first or old covenant **is the Sinaitic**. And not only must this confusion in denotation be avoided, but also any attempt to **interpret the Mosaic covenant in terms of the Adamic institution**. The latter could only apply to the state of innocency, and to Adam alone as a representative head. The view that in the Mosaic covenant there is a repetition of the so-called covenant of works, current among covenant theologians, is a grave misconception and involves an **erroneous conception** of the Mosaic covenant...¹⁰

It amuses me to hear modern writers quote John Murray as the final authority on covenant theology, and in the same breath deny that the law covenant at Sinai was the ‘first’ or ‘old covenant.’ Most of Murray’s devotees vehemently defend what Murray himself calls an “erroneous conception of the Mosaic covenant.”

⁷ Gen. 2:16-17; Hos. 6:7; Gal. 3:12.

⁸ Gen. 3:22; Rom. 10:5; Rom. 5:12-14; see Rom. 5:15-20.

⁹ See page 9 (?) for a short article on ‘the covenant of works.’

¹⁰ From: *Collected Writings of John Murray*, Vol. 4, pp 49, 50, Banner of Truth.

Using Gal. 3:12 to prove there was a covenant of works with Adam, is simply dishonest. It is impossible to read Gal. 3:10-12 and not see it is referring back to *Sinai*, and not *Adam*. This is ‘proof-texting’ at its worst. Where in the world does either Hos. 6:7 or Gal. 3:12 promise “life to Adam?” Where is a covenant mentioned in Gen 2:16, 17 that promised Adam he would earn some kind of life that he did not already possess if he obeyed it?

I do not have space to cover all of the statements and so-called proof texts; but I do want to look at a few misused texts concerning the so-called *covenant of grace*. Let me continue with statements from the WCF.

Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the *covenant of grace*...¹¹

Following are the texts that are supposed to support the above statements:

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law (Gal 3:21).

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference (Rom 3:21-22).

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3).

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel (Gen. 3:15).

I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles (Isa. 42:6).

There is not a single word in any of those texts that can be connected with Adam. The first three texts are specifically referring to the law given at Sinai. Here is a quote from my book *Abraham’s Four Seeds* that deals with one of the proof texts.

2. The unique Seed predicted — Christ — is *the Seed of woman*.

And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and **her Seed**;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise **His heel** (Gen. 3:15^{NKJV}).

I use the word *predicted* instead of *promised* because the words in this text of Scripture are not spoken to Adam, but to Satan. The only thing promised in this verse is Satan’s destruction. Theologians often call this verse the *protevangelium*. They are correct in that designation. However, they may or may not be right in their *application* of that designation. No one can deny that the verse predicts the coming of Christ to destroy the work of Satan. However, the verse nowhere suggests that God is making a covenant of grace with Adam.

Using Genesis 3:15 as a proof text for a covenant of grace with Adam, demonstrates the obvious fact that men are talking about a theological *invention* rather than a truth established by biblical exegesis. God’s revealing a specific purpose in a threat to *Satan*, cannot be turned into his making a formal covenant with a *man*. God’s speaking to Satan and informing him of his certain doom is a far cry from God’s entering into a covenant of grace with Adam. If anyone insists on using Genesis 3:15 to prove the establishment of a covenant, then we must insist that the

¹¹ Gal. 3:21; Rom. 3:20-21; Rom. 8:3; Gen. 3:15; see Isa. 42:6.

covenant, according to the text, was made with Satan. If there is such a thing as an eternal covenant of grace between the members of the Trinity, then God's action in Genesis 3:15 is a definite step taken in time and history to bring his purpose in that covenant of grace to pass. However, even if such a covenant could be proven to exist, it still must not be equated with God putting either Adam or Abraham under a covenant of grace.

Why not just let the verse mean what it says? God told Satan his days were numbered, and it would be the seed of the woman that would destroy him. If one is going to teach a covenant of grace made with Adam, then he should not try to 'proof text' it with Genesis 3:15.¹²

Our first question was, "Exactly what is the 'old' and the 'new' Covenant?" The Bible clearly identifies them as (1) the 'old,' or 'first' covenant made with Israel at Sinai, and (2) the new covenant as the one established by Christ, that replaces the first, or old covenant. These are the two major biblical covenants around which the bulk of Scripture is based. The Westminster confession, however, has two totally different covenants. It says that (1) the first, or old, covenant made with Adam man and (2) the second covenant, "commonly called the covenant of grace" was also made with Adam *after he fell*. When we ask them what happened to the two biblical covenants mentioned in Hebrews and Galatians, we are told, "Oh, they are really only different administrations of the second covenant made with Adam." If they were consistent, when they took communion they would say, "This cup of the blood of the new *administration* of the same covenant God made with Adam and Moses." Covenant theology insists on putting the word *covenant* into Genesis 2:16, 17 and Genesis 3:15, even though the Holy Spirit did not. And then they refuse to allow the word *covenant* to actually mean *covenant*, but insist on understanding it as *administration* instead.

If you choose to follow the WCF and make two purely theological covenants (a covenant of works made with Adam *before* he fell and a covenant of grace *after* he fell) take the place of two clear biblical covenants (the old covenant made with Israel at Sinai, and the new covenant that replaces it), then you are exalting human logic above the words inspired by the Holy Spirit. Until you take seriously what the Word of God says about (1) a true and real covenant of works with Israel, and not a covenant of works with Adam, and (2) a true, real, and totally different new covenant based on grace and the redeeming work of Christ, you will never understand the history of redemption and the relationship of law and grace.

In our next article we will attempt to answer the second question: "Exactly what is the relationship of these two covenants to each other and to the rest of Scripture?"

¹² From: *Abraham's Four Seeds*, pp 37, 38.

Part 3. The Relationship of the Covenants

I should have started this series of studies on New Covenant Theology by stating that the first and basic premise of NCT concerns the New Testament Scriptures being the documents upon which the life and worship of the Church is built. B. H. Carroll, President, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, wrote an excellent book entitled *Baptists and Their Doctrines* (Broadman Press, Nashville, TN, 1913). In the following article, Dr. Carroll has stated very clearly the historic view of the Baptists concerning the “The New Testament — The Law of Christianity.”

We thank God for the revival of the Doctrines of Grace in our day, especially among the Baptists. However, we fear that many ‘Reformed Baptists’ today are little more than immersed Presbyterians. Dr. Carroll’s article sets forth a biblical truth that is basic to any clear understanding of the life and worship of the *ekklesia*, or church, of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is strange indeed that the worst condemnation and caricature that I have received from many of my Reformed Baptist brethren has been over the very truth that Dr. Carroll sets forth. It is even stranger when that condemnation and caricature comes from Calvinistic Southern Baptists who are seeking to go back to their own founding fathers.

This article is part of a section titled “Distinctive Baptist Principles,” and it sets forth the basic distinctive biblical principles of true historic Baptists. We plan to publish all of these distinctives. Our generation needs to hear the truths that cost some of our forefathers their lives.

If this first Baptist distinctive were understood and believed, it would settle a lot of disagreements among Christians today. For instance, there would never be another baby sprinkled if the New Testament were accepted as the Law of Christianity.

Supplement: Distinctive Baptist Principles

B.H. Carroll

“A declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us” Luke 1:1.

“It was needful for me...to exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints” Jude 3.

The distinctive principles of the Baptists are those doctrines or practices which distinguish us from other Christian denominations. It is held by some, that no doctrine or practice should be classed as *distinctive* which has at any time been shared, in whole or in part, by any other denomination. But this limited sense of the word *distinctive* is too narrow for ordinary speech or common sense. For example: The Greek church and the Baptists both practice immersion, but their doctrine of baptism is widely different from ours. Authority, subject, and design all enter as much into the validity of this ordinance as the act itself. More than mere immersion is necessary to constitute New Testament baptism. Again, the Congregationalists agree with Baptists in the form of church government, but their doctrine of the church is widely different from ours. Yet again, the statement of Chillingworth, “The Bible, and the Bible alone, the religion of Protestants,” is widely different from the Baptist principle, “The New Testament, the only law of Christianity.”

Moreover, this entire subject has an *historic* aspect, which may not be ignored. There has been great progress in Baptist principles since the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Throughout the Protestant world there has been steady approximation by nearly all other denominations to many Baptist principles, very materially narrowing the once broad margin dividing us from other people. So that the distinctive in *history* is much more marked than the distinctive of the present day. Notable among the Baptist doctrines towards which there has been this steady approximation are “Freedom of Conscience” and “Separation of Church and State.” It is one of the best-

established facts of history, that Protestants equally with Romanists, once held to the unchristian and horrible maxim: “Whose is the government — his is the religion.” Geneva, Germany, Holland, Old England, and New England shared it with Italy, Spain, and France, as Baptists found to their cost. While, therefore, the more recent approximations towards our principles are warmly welcomed, and while the hope of still greater approximation is fondly cherished, we are not thereby estopped [hindered] from entrance into the domain of history in discussing distinctive principles.

Before coming to affirmative statements, allow me to clear away the brush obstructing a fair view, by disclaiming as *distinctive* the only two doctrines which in the world’s estimation constitute the sum of our distinctive principles:

(1) *Immersion is Baptism*

Immersion is not disclaimed as a Baptist doctrine, but it is disclaimed as a distinctive tenet. Think of it. For the first thirteen hundred years, all Christendom held this belief. Even today other Christian denominations, aggregating nearly one hundred million people, believe and practice it as the only baptism. How, then, can it be our most distinguishing tenet? If, indeed, it be distinctive of our people, it is the least distinctive and the least important of all our principles. In this discussion it will not even be named as a distinctive principle.

(2) *Baptism is Essential to Salvation*

So far from being distinctive, this is not now and never has been a Baptist doctrine. More than all other people, they do repudiate it. Indeed on the contrary, the Baptists are the only people in the world who hold its exact opposite: *Salvation is essential to baptism*.

On these premises and disclaimers we may now announce in order, the distinctive Baptist principles:

THE NEW TESTAMENT — THE LAW OF CHRISTIANITY

Doubtless many of my fellow Christians of other denominations may be disposed to smile at the announcement of this as a distinctive Baptist principle. But let us not smile too soon. Patiently await the development of the thought. To expand the statement: *All the New Testament is the Law of Christianity. The New Testament is all the Law of Christianity. The New Testament will always be all the Law of Christianity.* This does not deny the inspiration or profit of the Old Testament, nor that the New is a development of the Old. It affirms, however, that the Old Testament, as a typical, educational, and transitory system, was fulfilled by Christ; and as a standard of law and way of life, was nailed to the cross of Christ, and so taken out of the way. The principle teaches that we should not go to the Old Testament to find Christian law or Christian institutions. *Not there* do we find the true idea of the Christian church, or its members, or its ordinances, or its government, or its officers, or its sacrifices, or its worship, or its mission, or its ritual, or its priesthood. Now, when we consider the fact that the overwhelming majority of Christendom today, whether Greek, Romanist, or Protestant, borrow from the Old Testament so much of their doctrine of the church, including its members, officers, ritual ordinances, government, liturgy, and mission, we may well call this a distinctive Baptist principle. This is not a question of what is the Bible. If it were, Baptists would not be distinguished from many Protestants in rejecting the apocryphal additions incorporated by Romanists in their Old Testament. Nor is it a stand with Chillingworth on the proposition, “The Bible, and the Bible alone, the religion of Protestants.” If it were, Baptists would not be distinguished from many Protestants in rejecting the equal authority of tradition as held by the Romanists. But when Baptists say that the New Testament is the only law for Christian institutions they part company, if not theoretically at least practically, with most of the Protestant world, as well as from the Greeks and Romanists.

We believe that the church, with all that pertains to it, is strictly a New Testament institution. We do not deny that there was an Old Testament *ecclesia*, but do deny its identity with the New Testament *ecclesia*. We do not deny the circumcision of infants under Old Testament law, but do deny their baptism under New Testament law. We do not deny that there were elders under the Mosaic economy, nor even deny the facts of uninspired history concerning the elders of the Jewish synagogue. We simply claim that the New Testament alone must define the office and functions of the elder in the Christian church. Christ himself appointed its Apostles and its first seventy elders. We not only stand upon the New Testament alone in repelling Old Testament institutions, in repelling apocryphal additions thereto, in repelling the historic synagogue of the inter-biblical period as the model of the church, but do repel the binding authority of post-apostolic history, whether embodied in the literature of the ante-Nicene fathers or in the decisions of councils, from the council at Nice, A.D. 325, to the Vatican Council, A.D. 1870. We allow not Clement, Polycarp, Hippolytus, Ignatius, Irenus, Justin, Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, Jerome, Eusebius, Augustine, Chrysostom, Erasmus, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Henry VIII, Knox, or Wesley either to determine what is New Testament law or to make law for us. In determining the office and functions of a bishop, we consider neither the Septuagint *episcopos*, nor the Gentile *episcopos*, nor the developed *episcopos* of the early Christian centuries.

We shut ourselves up to the New Testament teaching concerning the bishop. But recently the Christian world has been invited to unite on the historic episcopacy of the early Christian centuries. We made no response to this unscriptural invitation. Yet more recently, the eccentric, and I may add, the heretical higher critic, Dr. Briggs, seeks, it seems, to unite the Christian world on the word *katholikos* (universal) as applied to the church, and as defined in these same early Christian centuries. We utterly disregard this invitation, not only because his word *katholikos* is found nowhere in the Greek of either Old or New Testament, but because the idea of catholicity must not be learned from post-apostolic fathers, but from the inspired Testament; and because it was this word, *katholikos*, which led to the idea of the church as an organized general body having appellate jurisdiction over the particular congregations, and led to the union of church and state under Constantine. We are willing enough to enter the domain of uninspired history as a matter of research, and ready enough to concede all its fairly established facts, whatever sound proof may show them to be, but we recognize as the only ground of union, now or hereafter, the impregnable rock of the New Testament.

And mark you the first form of the expanded statement: *All the New Testament is the law of Christianity*. To apply this thought: One Christian denomination, in determining the law of pardon, would shut us out of the four Gospel narratives up to the resurrection of Christ, and shut us up to the latter half of the New Testament. Here we say, give us *all* the New Testament. The cases of forgiveness of sin, at the mouth and hand of our Lord himself, must be considered in determining the law of pardon.

The New Testament is the law of Christianity. All the New Testament is the law of Christianity. The New Testament is all the law of Christianity. The New Testament always will be all the law of Christianity. Avaunt [Begone], ye types and shadows! Avaunt, Apocrypha! Avaunt, O Synagogue! Avaunt, Tradition, thou hoary-headed liar. Hush! Be still and listen! All through the Christian ages — from dark and noisome dungeons, from the lone wanderings of banishment and expatriation, from the roarings and sickening conflagrations of martyr fires — there comes a voice — shouted here, whispered there, sighed, sobbed, or gasped elsewhere — a *Baptist* voice, clearer than a silver trumpet and sweeter than the chime of bells, a voice that freights and glorifies the breeze or gale that bears it. O Earth, hearken to it: *The New Testament is the law of Christianity!* Let the disciples of Zoroaster, Brahma, Confucius, Zeno, and Epicurus hear it. And when Mahomet comes with his Koran, or Joe Smith with his book of Mormon, or Swedenborg with his new revelations, or spirit-rappers, wizards, witches, and necromancers with their impostures, confront each in turn with the all-sufficient revelation of this book; and when science — falsely

so-called (properly speculative philosophy) — would hold up the book as moribund, effete, or obsolete, may that Baptist voice rebuke it. Christ himself set up his kingdom. Christ himself established his church. Christ himself gave us Christian law. And the men whom he inspired furnish us the only reliable record of these institutions. They had no successors in inspiration. The record is complete. Prophecy and vision have ceased. The canon of revelation and the period of legislation are closed. Let no man dare to add to it or take from it, or dilute it, or substitute for it. *It is written. It is finished.*

Part 4. The Authority of Moses and of Christ

One of the main points of contention between classic Covenant Theology and New Covenant Theology concerns the authority of Moses, versus the authority of Christ. By way of review, let us remember the basic foundation blocks of classic Covenant theology, which are:

One: There is one covenant of grace with two administrations.

The ‘new’ covenant spoken of in Hebrews and other places is in reality the new ‘administration’ of the one and same covenant of grace. There is a ‘new’ and ‘old’ covenant of grace but there are not two covenants that are different in their nature. The covenant given at Sinai cannot be in any sense either a legal covenant, or in any way basically different than the covenant of grace with Abraham, or the new covenant instituted by Christ. It must be an ‘administration of the covenant of grace.’ Many Covenant Theologians speak of the “Older and Newer Covenant of Grace” instead of the biblical terms of “Old and New Covenant.”

Two: There is only one redeemed people of God under this one covenant of grace.

Israel is the redeemed ‘church’ and the saved Gentiles have been added to this one true church. The church, even as the Body of Christ, did not begin at Pentecost. The Christian Church and the Jewish Church are one and the same under one and the same covenant. The words *loved, chosen, redeemed, and called* are given the same meaning when used of Israel as when used of the Church. Thus the redemption by blood out of Egypt qualifies Israel to be treated as the “redeemed and blood-bought church.” This is using typology as reality.

Three: There is one unchanging canon of moral conduct for the one people of God.

That one moral canon, or standard, is the ‘one, eternal, unchanging, moral law of God’ written on the Tables of the Covenant at Sinai. If the Tables of the Covenant, or Ten Commandments, as they were written at Sinai, have in any way been changed or added to, then the whole system of Covenant Theology collapses

In other words, it is absolutely essential to Covenant Theology that the Ten Commandments, as they are written on the Tables of the Covenant, must come into the life and worship of the Church without one single change, or else we have *two* canons of conduct. To have one canon of conduct for Israel and another canon for the Church, is impossible in Covenant Theology. This is why there is so much fuss over the Sabbath. The people that insist the Sabbath is ‘part of the moral law’ are not concerned with your actual behavior on Sunday (they call it the Christian Sabbath) since they insist any specific behavior is up to the individual’s personal ‘Christian liberty.’ In other words, eating out on Sunday or watching football on Sunday is entirely left up to the individual. All this view is concerned with, is that one acknowledges the Sabbath is part of the ‘moral law’ so that the system is kept intact. In a tract on this subject entitled *Six Views of the Sabbath*, I called this view “Sabbath Anti-nomianism.” The following is from the tract.

Excerpt from *Six Views of the Sabbath*.

Let me say a bit more about the inconsistent, or anti-nomian Sabbatarian view. It is probably the most dangerous of all the views, simply because it is so vehement in preaching the necessity of affirming that the fourth commandment is a moral absolute, while in actual *practice* treating it as if each individual believer could choose what is, or is not, right or wrong for him. This effectively destroys the practical authority of Scripture over actual conduct.

When anyone wants to discuss the nature of the Sabbath commandment, I always ask, “Do you mean *theologically* or do you mean as something to be *obeyed*?” People who sincerely believe the fourth commandment is in force today, want to sincerely obey it. People who want to affirm

that they believe the fourth commandment with no intention whatever of building a clear theology of *practice* on the Sabbath, are simply not being honest. To these people, the only sin is to theologically deny that the fourth commandment is “part of the moral law,” regardless of how you actually live on that day. Likewise, the only test of orthodoxy in this area is that you affirm and defend, in word and confession but not actual practice, the holy Sabbath. The concern is not how you actually live on the Sabbath. So, you see, the vital question in this view, is not concerned with *doing* — that is, how you actually live — but merely intellectual *believing*; that is, that you theologically affirm the Sabbath is ‘part of the moral law.’ The only reason for this being that if the Sabbath commandment is pulled out of the ‘unchanging moral law of God,’ then the whole system is destroyed. If we treated faith in Christ for salvation the way these people treat ‘believing in the Sabbath,’ as compared to actually ‘obeying the Sabbath commandment,’ we would justly be accused of the worst kind of “easy believism.”

If anyone thinks I am misrepresenting these people or building a straw man, I encourage you to test out what I have said. (1) Find when someone was disciplined out of your congregation for Sabbath breaking. (2) Ask your pastor this specific and simple question: “Specifically and categorically, what must a person do, or not do, in order to disobey God’s holy Sabbath law in such a way that he will be, as a result of his clear disobedience, disciplined out of our church?” Discussion ended! Point proven!

Is it really being honest to say, “We do not make any rules, because we do not want to become legalists?” Since when does obeying God’s clear laws become legalism? Or are there no clear rules for keeping the Christian Sabbath? Are these champions of ‘absolute theology and flexible practice’ insinuating that Moses was a legalist because he had a man stoned to death for picking up sticks on the Sabbath? Or was Moses right in punishing a clear act of disobedience to a clear case of Sabbath breaking? Just because we do not punish men for picking up sticks on Sunday, the Christian Sabbath, that surely does not mean that there is nothing at all that would justify us in disciplining a Sabbath breaker out of the church. Unless, of course, you believe that we have a moral absolute law with no specific rules showing us how to keep it.

Were the Puritans legalists when they drew up a clear list of “do’s and don’ts” for Sabbath behavior, and consistently disciplined church members for disobeying those rules? No Puritan preacher that ever lived would have said to a sincere sheep, seeking advice on Sabbath behavior, “Whether you eat out on Sunday, play, or watch football on Sunday is entirely up to you. We do not make any rules.” And, I might add, I believe that every person who reads this, even including those who are theologically wedded to a creed that they not only do not consistently practice, but also will not insist that their hearers practice it, knows in his heart of hearts, that I speak the truth! The logical and sincere question coming from a tender conscience asks, “Exactly how does my heavenly Father want me to live on His Holy Sabbath,” would never in a million years have been answered in the “glorious days of the Puritans” by one single preacher, the way that question is answered today in the typical Reformed church, especially Reformed Baptist churches.

Just suppose a professing Christian wanted to join your congregation. He said, “I love and practice nine of the Ten Commandments, but I do not believe the Sabbath is a moral commandment. I believe it is a ceremonial commandment.” Would you be willing to accept such a person as a church member? Strangely enough most Reformed churches would not only accept such a person, they would openly boast about how “flexible and non-legalistic” they were.

Suppose the following month another man wanted to join your congregation, and he said, “I love Christ and sincerely believe and follow nine of the Ten Commandments, but I do not believe the seventh one. I am living with two different women and sincerely love them both.” Would you be willing to accept this man on those terms? Strangely enough most Reformed churches would not even consider taking such a person into membership. I say “strangely enough”

because the man was not one bit more wicked than the first case, if Covenant Theology is true. Both men kept nine of the 'holy Laws' of God and rejected one. If all ten of those laws are equally 'the unchanging moral law of God,' how dare anyone treat any of the ten as anything less than God's moral law? Or is acceptance in your church dependent on which one of the Ten Commandments you choose to reject? (End of excerpt from *Six Views of the Sabbath*)

My point in the above is to show the lengths that men will go to protect a system of theology that is not biblical in its basic presupposition. The Bible clearly teaches that the canon of conduct for Israel under the old covenant is not the same as the canon of conduct for Christians under the new covenant. In order to maintain their position that the Ten Commandments are the "one, eternal, unchanging, moral law of God," men will deny and fight the truth that Jesus replaces Moses as a Lawgiver. Of all the things that we have taught about New Covenant Theology, nothing has brought down such strong condemnation on our heads as our insisting that the *Sermon on the Mount* sets forth a higher moral standard than the Tablets of the Covenant, or Ten Commandments. Someone gave a dear brother a booklet I wrote entitled *Christ, Lord and Lawgiver Over the Church*. The man wrote across the title, in big letters, "Christ is a *Lawkeeper*, not a *Lawgiver*." He was being consistent with his Covenant Theology.

I want to demonstrate from Scripture that Jesus is both a Lawkeeper and Lawgiver, and both of those things are equally important to any correct understanding of law and grace. If I can prove that Christ in any way changed, added to, or raised any of the Ten Commandments to a higher level, then Christ has indeed replaced Moses in the same sense that he has replaced Aaron. In our book *But I Say Unto You*, we clearly demonstrated many instances of Christ changing the Law of Moses. Lest you think I am building a straw man, let me give you a couple of quotations that demonstrate how adamant Covenant Theologians are on this point. Remember the question we are discussing. Covenant Theology insists that the Ten Commandments, as written on the tables of stone at Sinai, are the "eternal, unchanging, moral law of God." We are saying that Jesus gave us a much higher law than that given to Moses and written on stone. We agree that the Ten Commandments were the highest moral code ever given up to that point in history, however, we also insist the Sermon on the Mount and the Epistles give us a higher code of conduct than that given to Moses. All we need to show is one clear change in the Ten Commandments, and we have proven our case. As noted, we can show many changes.

Here are three quotations that set forth Covenant Theology's view. All of the emphasis in bolding is mine.

Christ's primary concern at this point [Mat. 5:17-48] was the validity and meaning of the older Testamental law. From the antitheses listed in verse 21-48, we see that Christ was concerned to show how the meaning of the Law was being distorted (and thus its fine points overlooked).

These radical commands (Mat. 5:21-48) do NOT supercede the older Testamental law; they illustrate and explain it... In six antitheses between *His* teaching and the *Scribal* interpretations, Christ demonstrates His confirmation of the Older Testamental law...

So we see in Matthew 5:21-48 examples of how Christ confirms the older Testamental law and reproves the Pharisaical use of it; the antitheses are case law application of the principle enunciated in Matthew 5:17-20. Christ did not come to abrogate the law; far from it! He confirmed it in full measure, thereby condemning scribal legalism and showing us the pattern of our Christian sanctification.¹³

Bahsen is quite emphatic that Jesus is not giving any new laws, but merely correctly interpreting the Ten Commandments. Christ merely "confirms the older Testamental law." Bahsen does not like to even use the term "Old Testament." He is a consistent Covenant Theologian; and since

¹³ Bahnsen, Greg L., *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, The Craig Press, pp 63, 90, 119.

there is only “one covenant with two administrations,” Bahsen, consistent with the system, refers to the Old Testament as the “older Testamental law.” In Bahsen’s theology Jesus is the great interpreter of Moses but is not a lawgiver in His own right. It would be most appropriate for him, and all Covenant Theologians, to call the Sermon on the Mount the “Talmud of Jesus” because that is all it is in Covenant Theology. The Sermon on the Mount gives no new or higher laws; it is merely an interpretation — granted the best interpretation — of Moses, but it is not the words of a lawgiver laying down the higher laws of His kingdom.

A.W. Pink is also a representative of this view:

Christ is not here [Mat. 5:28-42] pitting Himself against the Mosaic law, nor is He inculcating a superior spirituality. Instead, He continues the same course as He had followed in the context; namely, to define that righteousness demanded of His followers, which was more excellent than the one taught and practiced by the Scribes and Pharisees; and this He does by exposing their error, and expounding the spirituality of the moral law.

...our Lord’s design in these verses has been misapprehended, the prevailing but erroneous idea being held that they set forth the vastly superior moral standard of the New Covenant over that which was obtained under Judaism.¹⁴

I am one of those people that believe the “erroneous” idea, that Jesus is indeed setting forth a “vastly superior moral standard of the New Covenant over that which was obtained under Judaism.” I am sure it was not Pink’s intention, but his view nonetheless reduces Christ to merely a rubber stamp of Moses, and denies Christ’s office as *new Lawgiver*. Christ’s teaching merely gives us the true spiritual meaning of Moses.

R.L. Dabney gives a classic statement of Covenant Theology’s view of the Law of Moses compared to the Law of Christ.

The whole Decalogue is found written out in full in two places in the Bible... It is the doctrine of the Catechism ¹⁵ that these “Ten Words” were intended to be a summary of man’s whole duty. Why, it may be asked, is so much made of them? Why not make equal account of some verses taken from Proverbs, or the Sermon on the Mount? ¹⁶

You will notice that Covenant Theologians do not need a verse of Scripture to prove a theological point. They need only quote the Confession or the Catechism. We prefer to use Scripture texts to prove our points.

If Christ is nothing more than an interpreter of Moses, then Dabney is correct in placing the Ten Commandments on a higher level than the Sermon on the Mount. However, if Christ is indeed the *new Lawgiver*, then Dabney has denied the Lordship of Christ in His role of Lawgiver. Dabney is not the least bit ashamed to admit that he exalts Moses, as a Lawgiver, above Christ. The Sermon on the Mount does not even get “*equal* account,” let alone *superior* account, in Dabney’s thinking.

¹⁴ Pink, A.W., *An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*, Bible Truth Depot, pp 110, 127, 129.

¹⁵ Quoting either the Catechism or the Confession of Faith is, for all practical purposes, equal to quoting a text of Scripture in a “Confessional” Church. This is one of the major differences between a Baptist and a Presbyterian. A Baptist may set out his convictions in a confession of faith, but he will never treat his statements in the same way as a Presbyterian. Any individual Baptist church may write its own confession of faith, but not so a Presbyterian. This is what is meant by “Confessional Church.” The Presbyterian Church (singular) is a “Confessional Church” where every individual local church is legally bound by every word in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Baptist churches (plural) are not a “Confessional Church” (denomination) in the above sense. A local Baptist church may question and reject certain things in a historic creed like the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* and still be part of an Association of Baptist churches. Some present day Baptists seem to be forgetting this fact and are using historic Baptist Creeds to “prove” debatable points of doctrine. When a Baptist refuses to discuss a point of theology with the Bible and says, “The Creeds have spoken,” he ceases to be a Baptist.

¹⁶ Dabney, R.L., *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Banner of Truth, p 354.

Walter Chantry gives one the clearest statements of the Covenant Theology view of law and grace.

Unfortunately, those who snipe at the Ten Commandments never give their hearers an objective canon of moral law to follow. Thus the hearers of anti-law men are cast back upon uncertain resources of a depraved conscience and a personal judgment rising from a perverse heart...

Our Lord Jesus Christ in himself did not give a condensed and definitive code of morality. In his great sermon on kingdom righteousness (Matt. 5), the greatest Prophet produced no new standard. He merely gave clear exposition of old statutes. These were selected, not to make a complete list of duties, but to correct the prevailing misrepresentations of the hour.¹⁷

I assume that the statement that “the greatest Prophet produced no new standard” is meant to remind us that Jesus is a great Prophet, but is not a Lawgiver. Chantry is adamant in stating that Christ in no way gives the children of grace a higher moral standard than He gave to Israel on the Tables of the Covenant. One writer, in a bit of a satirical manner, responded to the above quotation as follows:

It seems that Pastor Chantry did not have time to think through the implications of this statement. Yet, his statement does seem to capsule the opinions of those who contend for the perpetuity of the Decalogue as ‘the’ summary of God’s ‘moral law.’ His statement reveals two startling ramifications of that view.

First, A Diminished View of the New Testament Scriptures. It is impossible to escape the conclusion that, for Pastor Chantry, as well as for others of his theological persuasion, the New Testament body of truth is, in some way, defective as ‘a definitive objective standard’ of behavior. To say that we who have been given the New Testament Scripture may be ‘sent into a haze of imprecise ethics’ unless we cling to the Tables of Stone as a synopsis of the moral law, is to diminish the value of the New Testament Scripture as an objective standard of behavior. The truth is that it is impossible to give such a disproportionate emphasis to the Decalogue without de-emphasizing other expressions of the will of God. Are we who, for our final authority, look to Christ who has replaced Moses as the greater and final lawgiver, really “adrift, without a definitive objective standard by which to judge righteousness?” If so, the writers of the New Testament Scriptures will be astonished to hear that they wasted so much papyrus.

Second: A Lack of Confidence in the Work of the Spirit. Another alarming implication of Pastor Chantry’s statement is that it seems to betray a lack of confidence in the work of the Holy Spirit. Does he really believe that apart from the Decalogue, the moral thinking of the child of God is directed by ‘unsafe subjective impulses?’ If so, then what does that say about his confidence in the ability of the Spirit to lead and sanctify believers, in accordance with the Scripture? Is the New Testament expression of the ‘moral law’ really so complex that believers cannot be led by the Spirit to grasp its significance for a life of godliness? If so, why did the writers of the New Testament spend so much time and energy composing such enigmatic letters? Why not just give these poor, baffled saints a copy of the Decalogue?

John Murray is one of my favorite writers. He is one of those rare writers who does not wait for you to raise obvious objections to his position, he will raise them himself. Murray was the Professor of Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary for many years, and one of the most loved and respected theologians in the Reformed camp. His writings are invaluable. Professor Murray was also a convinced covenant theologian. He wrote a book entitled *Principles of Conduct*. His stated purpose was to prove that (1) even though polygamy and easy divorce were practiced “without overt disapprobation in terms of the canons of behaviour which were recognized as regulative in the Old Testament period,” they were none the less “not sanctioned and approved by God.” He starts by insisting that there can only be one unchanging canon of

¹⁷ Chantry, Walter, *God’s Righteous Kingdom*, Banner of Truth, p 81.

moral conduct in Scripture. Professor Murray immediately raises the obvious problems to his position.

“It is quite obvious that this statement of the case poses several questions. And the most basic of these is the question: Is there in a sense defined, a biblical ethic? Is there one coherent and consistent ethic set forth in the Bible?”

Professor Murray will argue that the Ten Commandments, as written on the Tables of the Covenant, are that “one [and only] coherent and consistent” canon of conduct in Scripture. All men in all times have always been under the Ten Commandments. The Tables of the Covenant are “the unchanging moral law of God.”

Is there not diversity in the Bible, and diversity of a kind that embraces antithetical elements? Are there not in the Bible canons of conduct that are contrary to one another? To be specific: Is there not an antithesis between the canons of conduct sanctioned and approved of God in the Old Testament, and those sanctioned and approved of God in the New, in respect of certain central features of human behavior? It is a patent fact that the behavior of the most illustrious of Old Testament believers was characterized by practices which are clearly contradictory of the elementary demands of the New Testament ethic. Monogamy is surely a principle of the Christian ethic. Old Testament saints practiced polygamy. In like manner, under the Old Testament, divorce was practiced on grounds which could not be tolerated in terms of the explicit provisions of the New Testament revelation. And polygamy and divorce were practiced without overt disapprobation in terms of the canons of behavior which were recognized as regulative [JGR: But not ‘sanctioned and approved by God?'] in the Old Testament period.¹⁸

The heart of the problem that Professor Murray states, is the obvious fact that there “appears” to be a clear “antithesis in canons of conduct” between the old and new covenants.

(1) Murray’s Covenant Theology demands that polygamy is always a sin, or a violation of the seventh commandment. If this is not so, then there are two canons of conduct.

(2) As Murray states, it is a “patent fact” that Old Testament saints (true believers) practiced polygamy.

(3) There were clear “canons of behaviour which were recognized as regulative in the Old Testament” and these “recognized canons of behaviour” clearly allowed polygamy to be practiced “without overt disapprobation by God,” even though, according to Murray and Covenant Theology, polygamy was in reality adultery in the sight of God.

(4) In the next quote, Murray adds to the difficulty to be faced. How could polygamy (a) be a clear sin against “the revealed will of God and rested under His judgment,” while (b) at the same time being acceptable to the “canons of behaviour [JGR: Given by God to Moses] which were recognized as regulative in the Old Testament” even though it was not *treated* as such? In other words, how can “canons of behaviour, given by God, which were recognized as regulative in the Old Testament” not treat sin as sin? Again, Professor Murray does not dodge the obvious question.

These are questions that must be faced, remembering that in these instances of polygamy and divorce we are not dealing with deviations from the explicitly revealed provisions of Old Testament law as, for example, the adultery and murder committed by David for which he was so sharply reprovved in terms of recognized law. Such examples of wrongdoing do not perplex our inquiry in the least degree. They are in the same category as instances of wrongdoing in the New Testament itself, for which there is, in like manner, condemnation and reproof. We may be

¹⁸ Murray, John, *Principles of Conduct*, Eerdmans, p 14.

reminded again that the ethic we are seeking is not that elicited from the empirical facts of history and experience — there is always inconsistency and contradiction there — but that enunciated in and approved by the Bible itself.

Our study is not empirical ethics but the biblically approved ethic. The polygamy and divorce with which we are now concerned would meet with the severest reproof and condemnation in the New Testament; but in the Old Testament there appears to be no overt pronouncement of condemnation, and no infliction of disciplinary judgment. Are we not compelled to recognize that the New Testament not only marks a distinct development in the progress of revelation, but also, in some of the basic particulars of human behaviour, institutes a change from one set of canons to another? And that therefore there is not only development and addition, but reversal and abrogation? Is the case such that it was perfectly consonant with the law established and revealed by God in the old testament for a man to have more than one wife at the same time, and for a man to put away his wife for relatively light cause, whereas in the New Testament it is unequivocally wrong and severely censurable for a man to have more than one wife and to put away one's wife except for the cause of adultery? Is there this open contrast in respect of conduct as elementary and far-reaching as the marital relations of man and wife? We are required to face squarely the question of the relation of the Old Testament to the NEW in respect of the criteria of upright and holy living.¹⁹

It is vital to understand that we do not have to prove that there “appears” to be two different sets of canons of conduct for Israel and for the Church. Professor Murray has already done that. The only question now is whether his explanation of the problem raised by his Covenant Theology can be resolved with biblical exegesis. I remember having three people in one week ask me this question: “How could godly men like Abraham and David have more than one wife and still live under the blessing of God?” I really had no clear answer. I was speaking at a youth retreat and the other speaker was a professor of ethics from a Reformed school. During one question and answer period the other speaker was asked about “godly men have many wives.” I could not wait for the answer! I was shocked to hear the man say, “Well, I guess God just kind of looked the other way.”

It was that incident that led me to really study the subject. I remember getting a copy of John Murray's *Principle of Conduct*. When I read the first few pages and realized that the whole purpose of the book was to prove that polygamy was just as sinful for David as for us today, I thought, “Finally, a biblical answer to the problem.” Professor Murray's book is what pushed me out of Covenant Theology. He did not prove his case at all. I remember thinking, if the master theologian himself cannot prove the position, then the position is wrong.

Why did God allow godly men like David and others to marry and live with more than one wife? The answer is simple. Polygamy was not a sin under the canon of conduct given to Israel under the old covenant! Polygamy is a sin under the new laws of the new and final Lawgiver who replaces Moses! Outlawing polygamy is only one of many changes our new Lawgiver has made. There are two different canons of conduct in the Bible, just as there are two different covenants in the Bible. The specific covenant under which any individual lives, gives him the specific laws under which he is to live.

In our next article we will demonstrate from Scripture that polygamy was not a sin under the old covenant. David and Abraham did not live most of their lives in multiple adulterous relationships. Some may ask, “How can God condone polygamy without contradicting His ‘unchanging moral character?’” We will try to answer that and other questions in a later article.

Covenant Theology's “One canon of conduct for the one people of God under the one covenant of grace” is a product of human logic applied to some bad basic presuppositions. Our Lord Jesus is

¹⁹ *Ibid.* pp 14, 15.

a new Lawgiver who replaces Moses and gives His Church much higher laws than God ever gave through Moses.

If you struggle with this truth, I urge you to read *But I Say Unto You* and *Christ, Lord and Lawgiver Over the Church*. Both are available from Sound of Grace.

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