



# PROVIDENCE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY JOURNAL<sup>®</sup>

*A Herald of New Covenant Theology*

*In  
Loving Memory  
of Jackson &  
Barbara Boyett,  
and  
Charles Sild*

– 1 Corinthians 15:58 –

“...be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” (NASB).

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## Welcome to the PTSJ

*“...since the prophetic Scriptures have their fulfilment in the person and work of Christ, biblical theology must take as its starting point a Christ-centered interpretation of the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments. It must be based upon the way in which the New Testament interprets the Old....How we go about developing this pattern of biblical theology is where the difficulty arises and remains the challenge now and for the future. “Why PTSJ?” The mission for PTSJ is to faithfully work to help meet this challenge by an unwavering stance based upon “Back to the Bible” by “sola Scriptura” all to the glory of God.”*

– Gary D. Long, PTS Faculty President –

### Welcome to Providence

*Theological Seminary Journal (PTSJ)!* The PTSJ is an official publication of Providence Theological Seminary (PTS). This journal is published on a quarterly basis and is unapologetically devoted to the biblical Gospel and New Covenant Theology. PTS has established this periodical with a *fourfold* purpose: **(1)** to serve as a herald of the Doctrines of Grace, New Covenant Theology, and Baptist ecclesiology, **(2)** to help break down the middle walls of doctrinal partition that exist within and between Dispensational Theology and Covenant Theology, **(3)** to further establish PTS as a theological institution, and **(4)** to *positively* contribute to the ongoing reformation of the Church’s collective understanding of Scripture, the

Gospel, and orthodox Christian theology.

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PTS gladly welcomes any questions, comments, or feedback regarding the content of the *PTSJ*. Please e-mail all editorial material and questions to [info@ptstn.org](mailto:info@ptstn.org) and Zachary S. Maxcey, the editor of the *PTSJ*, at [zmaxcey@ptstn.org](mailto:zmaxcey@ptstn.org). We cordially welcome all those who are likeminded to support the seminary through prayer. Graphic design of the *PTSJ* is jointly credited to Ron Adair and Zachary S. Maxcey. *Soli Deo Gloria! Ecclesia Reformata Semper Reformanda Secundum Verbum Dei!*

Providence Theological Seminary

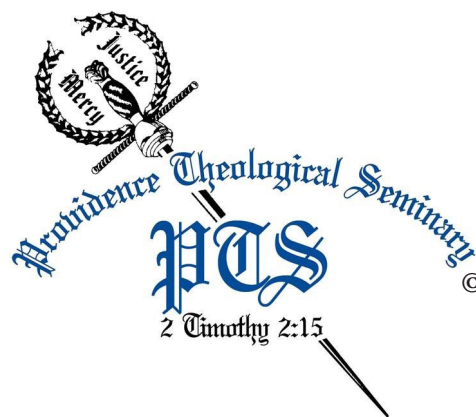
<sup>1</sup>Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. VII: Modern Christianity and the German Reformation (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1910; reprint 1974), 650.

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– 2 Timothy 2:15 –

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the Word of Truth” (NASB).

## Introducing Providence Theological Seminary

Providence Theological Seminary (PTS) inaugurated resident night classes in Colorado Springs, CO on September 4, 2007. A full curriculum was offered during the inaugural year of studies less the Biblical Languages. Instruction in the Biblical languages commenced with the fall semester of 2008.

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- Primary emphasis upon a *Master of Divinity* (M.Div.) degree for training gifted men for the pastoral ministry
- Two bachelor level programs:
  - *Bachelor of Divinity* (B.Div.) degree
  - *Bachelor of Theology* (B.Th.) degree
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New Covenant Theology  
Doctrines of Grace  
Baptist Ecclesiology

### - The Need For PTS -

One of the greatest needs of the Church today is the teaching and proclamation of sound doctrine in the context of obeying the two greatest commandments: love of God and neighbor. The Apostle Paul charged Timothy to “be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15, NASB). In light of this apostolic exhortation and focus upon the ministry of the Church in carrying out the Great Commission, PTS is committed to the training of scholar-saints to become preachers and teachers of the Word of God witnessed by personal holiness in life, both in word and deed.

### - Doctrinal Reasons For PTS -

The doctrinal reasons for PTS can be summed up in The Three Phrases; *New Covenant Theology* (NCT); the *Doctrines of Grace*; and *Baptist Ecclesiology*. The latter two areas are taught in other Christian institutions of higher learning. But the first areas of emphasis, NCT, is not widely and openly taught in the American evangelical educational system. Not to be detached from holiness of life, the focus of NCT, is upon Christ as revealed in the whole

counsel of God inscripturated in the 66 books of the Holy Bible. Instruction is grounded upon the exegetical, biblical-theological and systematic teaching of principles of biblical interpretation (hermeneutic). The hermeneutic is based upon the way that the Lord Jesus and the writers of the New Covenant Scriptures understood and explained the fulfillment of the final revelation of God’s eternal redemptive purpose. In brief, this is what is meant by the term *New Covenant Theology*.

### - The Educational Purpose for PTS -

The educational purpose of PTS, an English-speaking theological institution, is twofold: **(1)** to train spiritually gifted (Rom. 12:3-8) and qualified men (1 Tim. 3:1-7) called by God to preach and teach the gospel of Christ; and **(2)** to train spiritually gifted women to exercise their gifts (Rom. 12:3-8) in a woman’s role (Acts 18:26; 1 Tim. 2:12-14; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15) in the service of Christ (Rom. 16:1).

### - The Educational Purpose for PTS -

The philosophy of education places primary emphasis on training the student to understand and explain the redemptive purpose for the people of God from the sacred text. The principles of interpretation of the Bible for the Christian church are derived from the New Covenant Scriptures. PTS understands the need to consider and interact with gifted scholarship of the past and present, but emphasis would be placed upon the contextual exegesis and exposition of the biblical text itself. Care will be taken to not over-burden the student with hundreds of pages of reading and reporting on writings of contemporary scholarship. Students will be exhorted to be diligent in their studies to handle accurately the Word of God and to put in practice their faith and walk in their personal life and workplace. Emphasis is placed upon their family and upon active participation in a mission-oriented, doctrinal local church while daily beseeching their Heavenly Father to enable them to love God with all their heart, soul and mind and their neighbor as themselves.

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## *The Grace of God and Departures From It*

### – Part 2 –

by Gary D. Long

The first half of Galatians 6:14 serves as the basis for teaching the doctrine of the cross of Christ and the utter tragedy of departing from the substitutionary sacrifice of the Son of God for all who were ordained to believe upon Him by the enabling grace and sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. The last half of the verse and the next two verses serve as the basis for the biblical teaching of the sanctification of the New Covenant believer as a member of the church of God, which is Christ's body (Eph. 1:22-23).

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God." (Gal. 6:15-16; NKJV)

**The Biblical Teaching.** When one's glory and boast is in the cross of Christ, he departs fellowship with the world. Paul says, "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (6:14b; KJV). He also says "I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (2:20; NKJV). With the apostle Paul, the one that has been justified by faith is through the Spirit to wait for the hope of righteousness by faith which works by love (5:5-6).

In the whole Epistle to the Galatians, especially in the context of the closing verses of Chapter 6, Paul is contrasting the false religion of works-righteousness with the true religion of faith-righteousness that issues into love and fulfilling of the law of God (5:14). In the case of the Galatian Christians,

especially the Jewish Christians among them, external obedience to the Old Covenant law of Moses was being pressed upon them by the false teachers, not only as a way of justification but also as a way of life, the way of sanctification. They were being led astray from the finished work of the cross of Christ in redeeming them and from the inward work of the Spirit in their hearts in quickening and sanctifying them to a life of spiritual union and communion with Christ. They had not fully understood that the gospel of Christ and the so great salvation that it proclaims is a sovereign work of grace which is inward and spiritual having its fruit in a faith working by love. And so they were in danger of turning away from the new life they had in Christ having received the promise of the Spirit by hearing and believing the gospel of Christ (3:1-3, 14). They were in danger of going back to a wrong use of the law of Moses as a way of justification and a way of life (see Rom. 9:31-32). Paul is quick to tell them that what really counts with God is the new creation (Gal. 6:15) and the gift of the Spirit, for the promised Spirit is the earmark and the guarantee of the New Covenant (3:14; see Heb. 8:8-13). The gospel of Christ, Paul says to the Galatian Christians—and by application to all Christians—is the norm or standard of measurement in the Christian life for all things under the New Covenant, and especially for moral or ethical and spiritual matters. "As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16, author's translation). This is the New Covenant believer's "canon principle" or rule of life! The cross of Christ forms its starting point and the new creation forms its realization. Everything must be measured by this New Covenant standard.<sup>4</sup>

**The Departure from the Biblical Teaching.** At this point I want to briefly address a problem that presently exists within Reformed Theology. It is a situation that is not so much a departure in doctrine as it is an honest misunderstanding of a right or lawful use of the law (1 Tim. 1:9). It is not a willful departure or perversion

of the truth, as was the case in the teaching of the false teachers among the churches of Galatia. Specifically, it is a misunderstanding of the relationship of God's law to the Christian under the New Covenant dispensation of the Spirit.

This misunderstanding may be related but it is not to be equated with the Galatian error, for all within Reformed Theology desire a godly walk in the life of every Christian and desire to see the Christian ethic based solidly upon the Word of God. But the difference arises over the role that the law of God has in sanctification. One movement within contemporary Reformed Theology, known as "*Theonomy*," holds that the whole law of God including the "*Older Testament commandments*" is binding upon the Christian "as a pattern of sanctification." Theonomy holds to the abiding validity of Old Testament law upon the New Testament believer, including not only the Ten Commandments but also all of the case laws of the Bible. A second element within Reformed Theology—what may be called the modern Westminster Confession element, holds that the eternal moral law of God "is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments."<sup>5</sup> A third element asserts that the law of God cannot be rightly understood or applied to the Christian life until the distinctives of God's eternal, absolute law (Matt. 22:37-40) and His covenantal law are more clearly understood in their administration under the Old and New Covenants.

The positions of the Theonomy and Westminster elements stress that the moral law as summarily comprehended in the Mosaic Decalogue is binding upon the Christian today as a rule of life. The New Covenant element of Reformed Theology, especially that which is baptistic and sovereign grace in theology but which usually does not use the term "Reformed" in its name, stresses that the Christian today is not without law (1 Cor. 9:21) or left to live without an objective standard or rule of life. This element does not accept the covenantal aspect of the Ten Commandments as the believer's rule of

<sup>4</sup>See Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), 226.

<sup>5</sup>Larger Catechism, Question 98, *Westminster Confession of Faith*. This understanding of the law of God is held not only by Reformed Theology denominations in particular, but, more broadly, by Reformed Baptist churches which are reformed in theology, but differ primarily due to (1) the nature of the church being comprised of believers only and (2) the subjects and mode of Christian baptism.

life under the New Covenant.<sup>6</sup> This group, consistent with one older confessional Particular Baptist tradition, affirms that “all believers are a holy and sanctified people, and that sanctification is a spiritual grace of the New Covenant, and an effect of the love of God manifested in the soul, whereby the believer presses after a heavenly and evangelical obedience to all the commands, which Christ as head and King in His New Covenant has prescribed to them.”<sup>7</sup> All groups agree concerning the abiding nature of moral law regardless of how specifically defined; yet they disagree over how it is covenantally administered. The third group’s position has a distinctive New Covenant emphasis concerning biblical law and ethics which finds its basis in the New Covenant administration of the law of God as the law of Christ. The first two groups have a distinctive emphasis upon the Ten Commandments of the Old Covenant, equating, for all practical purposes, God’s unchanging moral law with the Ten Commandments. The distinction between the Old and New Covenant is minimized by both, but especially by those of the Theonomy position. In summary, then, the basic difference over the lawful use of law in the Christian life is one of hermeneutics—one of interpreting the Bible. To unravel the difference will take time and much precise exegesis of the Holy Scripture<sup>8</sup> — something that can only be mentioned in this article. Now, that the misunderstandings of the role of God’s law in sanctification have been identified, let us look briefly in a little more depth

at the reason for the departure or misunderstandings within Reformed Theology.

***The Reason for the Departure (Misunderstanding).*** Many factors stemming from a different approach to interpreting the Bible have resulted in serious misunderstandings. They have arisen out of sincere motives but a wrong use of God’s law by those who stress the moral law as summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments as the believer’s rule of life. But there are only two factors which I will mention here, and the first one is a result of the second one. They are: (1) *failing to distinguish doctrinally between the absolute and covenantal distinctives of God’s law*; and, (2) *equating, in practice and emphasis, the Ten Commandments with God’s eternal moral law and the law of Christ*. For example, more than one-third of the Westminster Larger Catechism is devoted to questions and answers on the Ten Commandments (57 out of 154 pages in my edition, or thirty seven percent).

To assert that the Ten Commandments, the heart of the Mosaic Covenant (Exod. 34:28; Deut. 4:13; 9:9, 11) given to the nation of Israel (Deut. 5:1-3) as a constitution, are a rule of life for the believer’s sanctification under the New Covenant causes untold confusion and often leads to binding the believer’s conscience. One only has to

look at the confusion and bondage that comes from trying to make the fourth commandment binding as moral law upon the believer under the New Covenant. The fourth commandment, the seventh-day Sabbath commandment, was the sign of the Old Covenant (Exod. 31:12-17). But the believer under the New Covenant is not governmentally under the Old Covenant or its sign. By faith in Christ the New Covenant believer has entered into an eternal Sabbath rest (Heb. 4:3a, 9-10), not just on the seventh day or on one day in seven. By faith he is to observe the faith-rest of God every day. Yet, he does not forsake the assembling of the saints on the Lord’s Day which was the apostolic practice of the New Testament church (Heb. 10:25). The practice of assembly is a liberty that never existed in its fullness under the Old Covenant. It cannot be fully appreciated under the New Covenant by those who with good intentions, but with a wrong use of Old Covenant law, bind the New Covenant believer’s conscience by equating the Ten Commandments with God’s moral law<sup>9</sup> and the law of Christ (1 Cor. 9:-21; Gal. 6:2).<sup>10</sup>

Now, I want to make it perfectly plain that I am not saying that there is no continuity between the law of Moses and the law of Christ, because, for example, Galatians 5:14, citing Leviticus 19:18: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (NKJV), establishes that there is a relationship. However, it needs to be noted that the commandment to love one’s

<sup>6</sup>Seventy five years ago G. B. Stevens saw the issue; he wrote: “The whole Old Testament system, in all its parts, was taken up into the process of fulfillment and that all its elements of permanent value and validity have been made part and parcel of the gospel. To the old system as such we have no need to go back, because the gospel is its completion, and we have no occasion to supplement Christianity by additions from Judaism. . . . If it be asked, Is not the Christian under the authority of the ten commandments? the reply is, In their Old Testament form and as part of that system, he is not. The essential substance of the ten commandments consists of changeless principles of righteousness, and is therefore a part of Christianity; in that sense the Christ is under the commandments, and in no other. . . . The truth which we are considering, stated on its positive side, is that Christianity is complete and sufficient in itself as a guide to faith and action. The whole philosophy of the subject is [revealed] in that most expressive figure of Jesus [where He affirms that] His gospel is not a patch to be sewed on the old garment of Judaism, but a wholly new garment. . . . While, then, we are not under the old system at all, it must always have the greatest value in helping us to understand historically its own fulfillment in Christianity. To speak in Paul’s language, the Old [Covenant] is glorious, but not with ‘the glory that surpasseth’ (2 Cor. iii.10); that is, it has its true glory in the fact that its mission is to prepare for and to usher in a more perfect system. It was glorious, not so much in itself, as in the great [eschatological] end which it contemplated. In this view it will be seen that the old [covenant] system could well be both temporary and divine.” George Barker Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 2d rev. ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1918), 25-26.

<sup>7</sup>Article XXIX, *The First London Baptist Confession of Faith, 1646 ed. with an Appendix by Benjamin Cox* (repr. N. Charleston, SC: www.Createspace.com), 11.

<sup>8</sup>Complicating the resolution of the differences within Reformed Theology is the theology and practice of “The New Charismatics,” known as the “Third Wave” movement in 20th century charismatic theology. The teachings and practice of this movement are spreading throughout the ecumenical world emphasizing that the miraculous gifts of signs and wonders were spiritual gifts not only for the apostolic era but are for the church today. The theology of this movement, which departs from the “second blessing” teaching of earlier forms of Pentecostal and Charismatic theology, will have to be seriously dealt with in many important doctrinal areas, especially the biblical doctrine of sanctification, if such doctrines are to be handled accurately from the Scripture.

<sup>9</sup>The Old Covenant as a governing covenantal code was fulfilled and done away in the institution of the New Covenant (Matt. 5:17; II Cor. 3:6-18; Heb. 8; 9:15).

<sup>10</sup>See John Murray’s bondage experience on “Sabbath keeping” in the special 1975 memorial issue to him in “The Banner of Truth,” 22-23.



neighbor and to love God antedate and have divine priority over the covenant law of Moses. How so, you say? Because Jesus, the Lawgiver, Himself, declared that loving God and one's neighbor are the first and second great commandment and "on these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40; NKJV). This means, among other things, that the Old Covenant law of Moses, the Ten Commandments and other statutes, depend or hang upon the first and second great commandments, not the other way around! The two great commandments are the eternal and unchanging "moral law" of God ruling all mankind by virtue of man's being created in God's image. All rational human beings, beginning with Adam, know by nature (Rom. 2:14-15) that they ought to love God with all their heart, mind and soul, and their neighbor as themselves. And as they so love God, they do well if they love their neighbor as themselves. In so doing they "fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture" (Jas. 2:8; NKJV). The continuity of God's law stems from these two great commandments which are absolute and eternally binding apart from covenantal administration. Indeed, they are integral to both the Old Covenant's Ten Commandments and the New Covenant commandments of Christ.

#### **But there is also a discontinuity.**

For example, Paul contrasts the covenant made by God with Abraham and fulfilled by Christ with the Old Covenant. What does the Scripture say in Galatians 4 concerning the law of Moses given as Old Covenant law at Mount Sinai? It says: "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman" (4:30; NKJV). So the law of God is something wider and more inclusive than the law of Moses under the Old Covenant administration, as 1 Corinthians 9:20-21 should make clear. For the sake of this article, let me say this. Much confusion would be avoided if we would understand the term "the law of God" to represent the eternal unchanging and righteous law of God, the term "law of Moses" to represent the *covenant* law God gave to Israel through Moses under the Old Covenant, and the term "law of Christ" to represent the *covenant* law God gave to believers

through Christ under the New Covenant. Certainly, until we define what we mean by the terms "the law of God," "covenant law," and "moral law," we will never avoid misunderstanding the proper role that God's law and Christ's commandments have in the sanctification of the believer under the New Covenant. Until we biblically define our terms and seek to live by the New Covenant administration of the law of God, our Christian liberty is subject to being bound to Old Covenant law which is no longer in force. The Christian is not under the law of Moses [as Old Covenant law], yet he is not without law to God, being in-lawed to Christ [under the New Covenant] (1 Cor. 9:20:21). The apostle Paul learned this distinction between the law and the gospel by direct revelation in the Arabian Desert; the Christian ought to learn it by accurate handling of the objective revelation of the word of truth.

#### **Conclusion**

In conclusion it needs to be stressed that the Christian's freedom from the law of Moses covenantally administered was of great concern to the apostle Paul in his defense of the faith against the charges of false brethren who were trying to pervert the gospel (see Gal. 2:4 in context). The false brethren were spying out the Christian liberty of the Galatian saints so that they might bring them into bondage. The perversion of the doctrine of Christ in modern Christianity by a theological and personal denial of an effective, penal-substitutionary death, and the danger of destroying the Christian's freedom from the law of Moses must be checked with sound biblical exegesis and a bowing to the authority of Christ as Lord of the New Covenant. The freedom (liberty) that the apostle Paul is speaking about in Galatians, writes John Gill, is "**in Christ** because Christ is the author of it; it is that with which Christ makes His people free; and such as are made free by Him, are free indeed; and is what they come to enjoy by being in Him."<sup>11</sup>

I submit that the following articles cited in the 1646 appendix to the 1646 edition of "*The First London Confession of Faith*" by Benjamin Cox<sup>12</sup> clearly state a New Covenant understanding of law,

grace and covenant. They read:

**Article IX:** Though we that believe in Christ, be not under the law, but under grace, Rom. 6:14; yet we know that we are not lawless, or left to live without a rule: "not without law to God, but under law to Christ" 1 Cor. 9:21. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a law, or commanding rule unto us; whereby, and in obedience whereunto, we are taught to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, Titus 2:11, 12; the directions of Christ in His evangelical word guiding us unto, and in this sober, righteous, and godly walking, 1 Tim. 1:10, 11.

**Article X:** Though we be not now sent to the law as it was in the hand of Moses, to be commanded thereby, yet Christ in His Gospel teacheth and commandeth us to walk in the same way of righteousness and holiness that God by Moses did command the Israelites to walk in, all the commandments of the Second Table being still delivered unto us by Christ, and all the commandments of the First Table also (as touching the life and spirit of them) in this epitome or brief sum, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, etc.," Matt 22:37, 38, 39, 40; Rom. 13:8, 9, 10.

#### **The Solution: Galatians 6:14-16**

The solution to the doctrinal departures and misunderstandings that we have been addressing is summarized in the text of Galatians 6:14-16 itself. There the Christian church's rule of life is said, in context, to be the cross of Christ and the new creation, not anything else, not even the moral law of God summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments. The rule that the apostle Paul sets forth in Galatians 6:16 is the rule of life for the New Covenant Christian. It is this rule that the church and the individual Christian must walk by and continually conform to in doctrine and life. Only then will God's peace and mercy be upon us. Peace in our Christian life with and among the brethren is impossible when we depart from this God-given rule.

**FINIS**



<sup>11</sup>John Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament*, vol. 3, p. 2. London: Mathews and Leigh, 1809.

<sup>12</sup>*The First London Baptist Confession of Faith*, 1646 ed. with an Appendix by Benjamin Cox, 27.

## Historical Forerunners of New Covenant Theology - Part 3

by Zachary S. Maxcey

### The Theological Shift of Second- Generation Seventeenth-Century English Particular Baptist Theology

During the period from 1660 to 1688, the English Particular Baptists and other ‘dissenting’ groups suffered *intense* persecution at the hands of the English monarchy and Anglican Church. The continual ‘smear’ identification of the English Baptists with the excessively radical wings of Continental Anabaptism by the Crown and state Church of England contributed *greatly* to the hostile attitude and oppression which assailed the movement during this time. The resulting persecution influenced many Baptists, especially the Particular Baptists, to ally with the Presbyterians and other ‘dissenting groups.’<sup>1</sup> This development explains why the Second London Confession adopted in 1689 (1689 SLBC) aligns much more closely with the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) than all versions of the First London Baptist Confession (FLBC).<sup>2</sup> Lumpkin also describes this development:

The renewal of persecution brought dissenting groups nearer to one another and especially brought Baptists and Congregationalists nearer to Presbyterians. Defiance of the Conventicle Act [of 1664] by the large Presbyterian party, which had been the dominant ecclesiastical group under the Commonwealth, made enforcement of that Act all but impossible. Observing the success of the Presbyterians, other Dissenters were emboldened. Moreover, it was important that Dissenters

form a united front, which might be demonstrated by a show of doctrinal agreement themselves....The Particular Baptists of London and vicinity determined, therefore, to show their agreement with Presbyterians and Congregationalists by making the Westminster Confession the basis of a new confession of their own....[Their] purpose was clearly stated as showing: ‘...our hearty agreement with them (Presbyterians and Congregationalists) in that wholesome protestant doctrine, which, with so clear evidence of Scriptures they have asserted.’<sup>3</sup>

In another place, Lumpkin details how the 1689 SLBC differed from the earlier FLBC: “As a matter of fact, there are numerous and marked differences between this Confession [1689 SLBC] and that of 1644. To be sure, certain phrases were taken from the former confession, and there are evidences

that other reminiscences from it were included, but, nevertheless, a number of significant and far-reaching changes were made. Among the innovations were treatment of such subjects as the Scriptures, the Sabbath, and marriage.”<sup>4</sup> Although not specifically addressed by Lumpkin, the two most profound differences between the FLBC and the SLBC relate to the Law of God and the covenants.

One of the most striking differences between the FLBC and the SLBC is its definition of the Law of God. The SLBC, like the WCF, teaches a tripartite division (moral, ceremonial, civil) of the Law of God with the Ten Commandments being the transcovenantal,<sup>5</sup> moral law written upon the heart of every human being. Compare the following excerpts from the Appendix to the FLBC, the SLBC, and the WCF (in the chart below):

#### Articles 9-10, FLBC Appendix:

Article 9. *Though we that believe in Christ be not under the law,* but under grace, Rom. 6:14; yet we know that we are not lawless, or left to lie without a rule; “*not without law to God, but under law to Christ,*” 1 Cor. 9:21. *The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a law, or commanding rule unto us....*  
Article 10. *Though we be not now sent to the law as it was in the hand of Moses,* to be commanded thereby, yet Christ in His Gospel teacheth and commandeth us to walk in the same way of righteousness and holiness that God by Moses did command the Israelites to walk in, all the commandments of the Second Table being still delivered unto us by Christ, and all the commandments of the First Table also (*as touching the life and spirit of them*) in this epitome or sum, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, etc.,” Matt. 22:37,38,39,40; Rom. 13:8,9,10 [emphasis mine].<sup>6</sup>

#### Article 19, SLBC:

2. The same law that was first written in the heart of man continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall, *and was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in Ten Commandments, and written in two tables, the four first containing our duty towards God, and the other six, our duty to man....3. Besides this law, commonly called moral....5. The moral law does for ever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof, and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it; neither does Christ in the Gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation [emphasis mine].<sup>7</sup>*

#### Article 19, WCF:

I. God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which he bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience; promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it; and endued him with power and ability to keep it....II. This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, *was delivered by God upon mount Sinai in ten commandments, and written in two tables; the first four commandments containing our duty toward God, and the other six our duty to man....III. Besides this law, commonly called moral....V. The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator who gave it. Neither doth Christ in the gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen, this obligation [emphasis mine].<sup>8</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>B. R. White, *The English Baptists*, 111.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 119.

<sup>3</sup>Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 236.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 237.

<sup>5</sup>The word “transcovenantal” is used here to describe the so-called “moral law” instead of the word “eternal,” since there are differences in Covenant Theology circles as to whether God’s “moral law” (i.e. the Decalogue) endures for eternity or whether they endure from the Creation to the end of the New Covenant Age (when believers are glorified and subsequently unable to sin). R.C. Sproul advocates the first position, while theologians such as William Hendriksen and Richard Barcellos advocate the latter. See also Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*, 17-18. Sproul writes: “Some laws in the Bible are directly based on the character of God. These laws reflect the permanent, trans-cultural elements of relationships, both divine and human....This means that some laws are absolute and eternal....God’s moral law is exhibited in the Ten Commandments.”

<sup>6</sup>Cox, Appendix to the 1646 First London Baptist Confession of Faith, Article IX, X.

<sup>7</sup>Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 276-77.

<sup>8</sup>Leith, *Creeeds*, 213-14.



It is evident that the second-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists differed *significantly* from the first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists with regard to the Law of God. The writings of Nehemiah Cox, a second-generation English Particular Baptist and son of Benjamin Cox, strongly agree with the SLBC's definition of the Law of God. Cox understood God's Law to be both an "internal and subjective" law written upon the heart of Adam.<sup>9</sup> He described the law in the following manner: "The sum of this law was afterward given in ten words [i.e. Ten Commandments] on Mount Sinai and yet more briefly by Christ who reduced it to two great commands respecting our duty both to God and our neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40)."<sup>10</sup> Thus, like the Westminster Divines, Nehemiah Cox believed that the Ten Commandments as God's transcovenantal, moral law were written upon Man's heart at his creation.

Proponents of New Covenant Theology reject this understanding of the Law of God for *three* reasons. *First*, we assert that the law written upon Adam's heart was the *absolute* law of God – the two greatest commandments, love of God and love of neighbor. Every system of *covenantal* law (i.e. the Law of Moses for the Old Covenant; the Law of Christ for the New Covenant) is an *age-enduring, covenantal outworking*<sup>11</sup> of these two commandments. *Second*, we reject the teaching that the Ten Commandments constitute the transcovenantal, moral law of God. Rather, we teach that the Ten Commandments are the *summary statement*<sup>12</sup> of the Law of Moses, the *covenantal* law of the Old Covenant. Thus, the Ten Commandments cannot be excised from the Old Covenant of which it is a principal part. *Third*, we believe that there is *no* Scriptural warrant for a tripartite *division* of the Law into moral, civil, or ceremonial categories, as the Old Testament Jew was under moral obligation to keep the *whole* law.

Another striking difference between the FLBC and the SLBC is its definition of the covenants. In this particular area, the latter draws heavily from the WCF. Compare the following (in the chart to the upper right):

Sections 2-3, Article VII, SLBC:

2. *Moreover, man having brought himself under the curse of the law by his fall, it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace, wherein He freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ*, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life, His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe....3. *This covenant is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament...*and it is alone by the grace of this *covenant* that all the posterity of fallen Adam that ever were saved did obtain life and blessed immortality....[emphasis mine].<sup>13</sup>

Section 6, Article XIX, SLBC:

*Although true believers are not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned....though not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works;* so as man's doing good and refraining from evil, because the law encourages to the one and deters from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law and not under grace[emphasis mine].<sup>14</sup>

Article 2, Chapter VII, WCF:

2. *The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience* [emphasis mine].<sup>15</sup>

Articles 3, 5-6, Chapter VII, WCF:

3. *Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant* [i.e. 'covenant of works'], *the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace: wherein He freely offered unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ*, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life, His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe....  
5. This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel....[Article 6] There are not, therefore, two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations. [brackets & emphasis mine].<sup>16</sup>

As demonstrated by the SLBC, the second-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists clearly understood the 'covenant of works,' in a manner *virtually identical* to that of the WCF. Moreover, Nehemiah Cox, a second-generation English Particular Baptist, not only described the so-called 'covenant of works' as a pre-fall covenant between God and Adam but also insisted that Adam would have secured for himself eternal

life had he remained obedient to God.<sup>17</sup> The SLBC's explanation of the 'covenant of grace' constitutes a mediating view between the FLBC and WCF, as it was revealed "to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman" (i.e. it unites all of redemptive history) yet its "full discovery...was completed in the New Testament" [i.e. the New Covenant].<sup>18</sup> As a result, the 'covenant of grace' of the 2LBC *still* flattens the redemptive-

<sup>9</sup>Nehemiah Cox, "A Discourse of the Covenants." Cited in *Covenant Theology: From Adam to Christ*, ed. Ronald D. Miller, James M. Renihan, and Francisco Orozco (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2005), 43.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>11</sup>New Covenant Theology holds that all Divine-human covenants are executed in time according to God's *eternal purpose*, see, e.g., 2 Timothy 1:9.

<sup>12</sup>See Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*, 25.

<sup>13</sup>Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 259-60.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 277.

<sup>15</sup>Leith, 202.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 202-3.

<sup>17</sup>Cox, "A Discourse of the Covenants," 43-45.

<sup>18</sup>1689 Federalism (i.e. embodied in the SLBC) *overwhelmingly* rejects the Westminster Confession's presentation of the 'covenant of grace' as *one covenant with multiple administrations*. Instead, modern 1689 Federalists assert that the 2LBC's 'covenant of grace' is the New Covenant. Admittedly, 1689 Federalism's view of the 'covenant of grace' is far closer to NCT than that of Westminster Federalism (embodied in the WCF). Nevertheless, proponents of NCT reject 1689 Federalism's understanding of the 'covenant of grace'. Although modern 1689 Federalists identify the 'covenant of grace' as the New Covenant, they teach that it was revealed to Adam in the *protoevangelium* of Genesis 3:15. *If* the New Covenant was *not* established until Christ Jesus' first coming and *if* the 'covenant of grace' was revealed to Adam in the *protoevangelium* as an *informal covenant*, how can the 'covenant of grace' be the New Covenant *in substance*? Such reasoning appears to be self-contradictory, tending to the irrational. Why interpret Genesis 3:15 as a covenant at all and not simply as God's promise of redemption? Or if one understands Genesis 3:15 as the heart of a post-fall covenant, why not understand said covenant as one that ultimately anticipated the New Covenant yet was redemptive-historically distinct from the New Covenant?

historical distinctions of the biblical covenants (e.g., consider the 1689 Federalist teaching that all Old Testament saints received the indwelling Holy Spirit prior to Pentecost, in light of such texts as John 7:38-39; 14:16-17; Luke 24:49; and Acts 1:4-5-8). In brief, such understandings *significantly* differ from the first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists, such as John Spilsbery, who equated without qualification the ‘covenant of works’ with the Mosaic Covenant and the ‘covenant of grace’ with the New Covenant.

A rising number of New Covenant theologians argue that God forged not only a pre-fall covenant but also a post-fall covenant with Adam, agreeing with Nehemiah Cox that God has *never* communed with man outside of a covenantal relationship. However, such individuals do not define these covenants as do Covenant Theologians. Believing the titles ‘covenant of works’ and ‘covenant of grace’ to be misleading, they refer to these arrangements merely as a pre-fall covenant and a post-fall covenant. *First*, with regard to the pre-fall covenant, these New Covenant theologians do not believe that Adam would have secured eternal life by his obedience even for a *probationary period* of time; instead, his obedience would have only secured a continued existence in the Garden of Eden. *Second*, with regard to the post-fall covenant, they believe that this covenantal arrangement is encapsulated in the promise of Genesis 3:15 revealed to Adam. However, such individuals assert that this post-fall covenant is a single covenant, not an over-arching covenant of which all subsequent covenants are distinct outworkings.

### John Owen: A Theological Forerunner of New Covenant Theology?

Although John Owen, a Puritan

Congregationalist, stands as a strong proponent of Covenant Theology, his later writings do not completely agree with that particular theological system as evidenced in his work “An Exposition of Hebrews 8:6-13.” His writings here stand as a remarkable improvement on Covenant Theology’s understanding of the Old and New Covenants. However, it also demonstrates a noticeable inconsistency as he attempted to reconcile his new insights with traditional Covenant Theology—insights that are incompatible with that system. This final section of the article will investigate the writings of John Owen to determine whether or not proponents of New Covenant Theology can *legitimately* claim him in several respects as a theological forerunner.

*First*, Owen’s exposition of Hebrews 8:6-13 marks a *significant* departure from the Covenant Theology understanding of the Old Covenant. Unlike most Covenant Theologians, Owen connected the Old Covenant with the pre-fall ‘covenant of works,’ not with the over-arching ‘covenant of grace.’<sup>19</sup> Owen writes:

God had before given the covenant of works, or perfect obedience, to all mankind, in the law of creation. But this covenant at Sinai did not abrogate or disannul that covenant, nor in any way fulfill it. And the reason is, because it was never intended to come in the place or room if it, as a covenant, containing an entire rule of all the faith and obedience of the whole church. God did not intend in it to abrogate the covenant of works, and to substitute this in the place of it; yea, in various things it re-enforced, established, and confirmed that covenant.<sup>20</sup>

In other words, the Old Covenant was not another administration of the over-arching ‘covenant of grace,’ as taught by traditional Covenant Theology.

*Second*, Owen unmistakably taught not only that the Old Covenant was a *temporary* covenant *full of types and shadows* but also that it had been *completely abrogated* by the New. He describes the differences between the Old and New Covenants: “They differ in their substance and end. The old covenant was typical, shadowy, and removable, Heb. 10:1. The new covenant is substantial and permanent, as containing the body, which is Christ. Now, consider the old covenant comparatively with the new, and this part of its nature, that it was typical and shadowy, is a great debasement of it.”<sup>21</sup> In another place, Owen speaks of the Old Covenant’s types and shadows: “So it was with them under the law. The types and shadows that they were enclosed in, and which were the only medium they had to view spiritual things in, represented them not to them clearly in their proper shape.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, Owen taught that the Old Covenant was abrogated and replaced by the New Covenant: “From both these, fully proved, the apostle infers the necessity of the abrogation of that first covenant in which they trusted and to which they adhered, when the appointed time was come.”<sup>23</sup> Although Owen concluded that the New Covenant abrogated and replaced the Old Covenant, he inconsistently distinguished the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) from the Old Covenant and Law of Moses. He did this in order to ensure the Ten Commandments’ status as the transcovenantal, moral law of God.

Proponents of New Covenant Theology agree with Owen on two-fronts: *first*, that the Old Covenant was a temporary covenant full of types and shadows and, *second*, that the Old Covenant was abrogated and replaced by the New Covenant.<sup>24</sup> However, there are two areas of disagreement with his teachings regarding the Old Covenant. *First*, advocates of New Covenant

<sup>19</sup>This is a *significant* departure from Covenant Theology as that entire system was developed originally by Ulrich Zwingli to theologically justify the practice of infant baptism.

<sup>20</sup>John Owen, “An Exposition of Hebrews 8:6-13: Wherein, The Nature and Differences between the Old and New Covenants is Discovered,” cited in *Covenant Theology: From Adam to Christ*, ed. Ronald D. Miller, James M. Renihan, and Francisco Orozco (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2005), 188.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>24</sup>Interestingly, John Owen taught that no covenant is necessary after believers are glorified when the Lord Jesus Christ returns at the end of the age. See Owen, “An Exposition of Hebrews 8:6-13,” 176. For example, he states, “And therefore when we come to heaven, and the full employment of God, there will be no use of any covenant any more, seeing we will be in eternal rest, in the enjoyment of all the blessedness of which our nature is capable, and will immutably adhere to God without any further expectation.” Some individuals in the NCT community believe the New



Theology do not accept his teaching that the Old Covenant is a renewed pre-fall 'covenant of works,' as we reject the 'covenant of works' as understood by Covenant Theologians, most specifically that Adam would have merited **eternal** life if he would not have sinned even for a **probationary period** of time. *Second*, we do not believe that the Ten Commandments can be differentiated or distinguished from the Old Covenant itself, since they are the summary statement of the Old Covenant. In *Tablets of Stone*, Reisinger astutely teaches that the Ten Commandments are the *summary statement* of the entire Mosaic Law and therefore the Old Covenant:

The basic covenant document that contained the actual terms of the Old Covenant was the tablets of stone or Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments can also be looked upon as a summary of the whole covenant relationship between God and Israel. When we think of the Old Covenant, there are two ideas, both of which must be held at the same time. (1) We must see that the Ten Commandments are the basic covenant document that established Israel as a theocratic nation. At the same time, (2) we must see that all of the laws, holy days, priesthood, and sacrifices became part of the 'Old Covenant.' Scripture, in Exodus 24:1-8 and other places, clearly makes this distinction.<sup>25</sup>

Since the Ten Commandments are the summary statement of the Old Covenant itself and therefore its essence, they cannot be distinguished from the covenant itself.

Richard Barcellos, a Reformed Baptist and author of *Defense of the Decalogue*, has persistently attempted to defend John

Owen from being claimed as a theological forerunner of New Covenant Theology. Near the beginning of his article "John Owen and New Covenant Theology" in Appendix 2 to *Covenant Theology: from Adam to Christ*, Barcellos concedes that "it cannot be granted that his [Owen's] meditating position be considered as a forerunner to John G. Reisinger and NCT, unless highly qualified on several fronts."<sup>26</sup> However, the concluding comments of his article prove this to be a disingenuous concession: "...it is safe to say that Owen cannot be claimed by NCT on the grounds that Wells [a NCT writer] claims him. He [Owen] held views with which NCT is sympathetic. But his views did not change, at least as far as the perpetuity of the Decalogue under the New Covenant goes, nor were they contradictory or novel."<sup>27</sup> Contrary to Barcellos, Owen's exposition of Hebrews 8:6-13 does constitute a *significant* departure from Covenant Theology's understanding of the Old and New Covenants. Furthermore, Owen's work demonstrates a noticeable inconsistency as he, a Puritan Congregationalist, attempted to reconcile his new insights with the tenets of traditional Covenant Theology. Although proponents of New Covenant Theology must qualify any appeal to John Owen as a theological forerunner in all respects, there is enough similarity with *some* of his teachings to justify a connection.

As previously stated, Owen *clearly* connected the Old Covenant with the pre-fall 'covenant of works,' not with the over-arching 'covenant of grace.'<sup>28</sup> Barcellos readily concedes this: "Owen did not view the Old Covenant merely as an administration of the covenant of

grace. He did not avow the 'one covenant two administrations' motif of many of his comrades. He viewed it as a distinct, subservient covenant with a very limited and temporal purpose. He saw within it a revival of the Edenic covenant of works, superadded to the promises of grace."<sup>29</sup> Whether John Owen was the only Puritan to promote such a view of the Old Covenant, as Barcellos states, does not nullify the fact that his teaching constitutes a *significant* departure from Covenant Theology's understanding of the Mosaic Covenant.

As previously stated, Owen taught that the Old Covenant was a temporary covenant which was superseded by the New.<sup>30</sup> Barcellos concedes this as well: "He [John Owen] also viewed it as abolished by the New Covenant."<sup>31</sup> Advocates of New Covenant Theology unabashedly teach that the New Covenant superseded the covenant God made with Israel. For example, Reisinger writes:

The blood of Christ ratified the New Covenant, thus nullifying the Old Covenant, the moment Christ 'gave up the ghost' and died on the Cross. The entire theocratic kingdom established at Sinai ended at the same moment. Both of these things happened the moment the finger of God rent the veil of the temple from top to bottom....At the very moment that the veil was rent, Israel's national status and privileges were ended, along with everything that was connected to that special covenant relationship. Aaron's priesthood was finished, the sacrifices were done, the tabernacle was no longer holy, and the tables of the covenant (Ten Commandments) in the ark of the covenant were no longer in force as the covenant foundation of God's relationship to Israel. A 'better covenant', based on

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Covenant will *in some sense* end when Christ returns. Although the results secured by the New Covenant (i.e. justification, sanctification, glorification, creation of the Body of Christ, etc.) **are** everlasting and continue into eternity, the New Covenant will *in some sense* end when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. This conclusion is viable for at least two reasons. *First*, the sign of the New Covenant, the cup of the Lord's Table, (cf. Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25) will be terminated *in its present* form when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory. 1 Corinthians 11:26 declares, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death **until** He comes" [**emphasis mine**]. Just as the Old Covenant Passover points to and gives way to the Lord's Supper in the NC, the Lord's Supper will itself be replaced by the Wedding Feast of the Lamb in the New Heavens and New Earth (cf. Matt 26:29). The termination of the covenant sign indicates the end of the covenant itself. *Second*, the Law of Christ will also come to an end at the consummation of all things when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. This conclusion is likely, since all of the negative imperatives in the Law of Christ (e.g. Eph 4:30, "do not grieve the Holy Spirit") will be superfluous in the eternal state for the elect, who will be *unable* to sin in glory. As a result, the covenantal law of the NC (i.e. the Law of Christ) will end at the consummation, giving way to the absolute law of God (i.e. love of God and love of neighbor).

<sup>25</sup>Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*, 25. See also pages 3-4, 13-14.

<sup>26</sup>Richard Barcellos, "John Owen and New Covenant Theology," cited in Appendix 2, *Covenant Theology: From Adam to Christ*, ed. Ronald D. Miller, James M. Renihan, and Francisco Orozco (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2005), 323.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 354.

<sup>28</sup>Owen, "An Exposition of Hebrews 8:6-13," 188.

<sup>29</sup>Barcellos, "John Owen and New Covenant Theology," 322.

<sup>30</sup>Owen, "An Exposition of Hebrews 8:6-13," 210.

<sup>31</sup>Barcellos, "John Owen and New Covenant Theology," 322.

'better promises' (Heb. 8:6), replaced the tablets of stone. The 'moment' described by Matthew is the exact moment that the decisive historical shift from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant took place.<sup>32</sup>

Hence, New Covenant Theology stands in agreement with Owen on this particular point.

Although Owen concluded that the New Covenant abrogated and replaced the Old Covenant, he inconsistently distinguished the Decalogue from the Old Covenant in order to ensure that it "is nothing but a divine summary of the law written in the heart of man at his creation,"<sup>33</sup> hence, transcovenantal moral law. However, Owen also declared that the laws written upon the New Covenant believer's heart (Heb 8:10, 10:18) are not comprised of the Decalogue: "It is that knowledge of the mind and will of God which is revealed in the law, and taught by it, which is promised. The 'laws of God,' therefore, are here taken largely, for the whole revelation of the mind and will of God."<sup>34</sup> Reisinger comments on this second quotation from Owen:

John Owen offers a convincing explanation of why the writer of Hebrews changed from the singular to the plural when quoting Jeremiah 31:31-34. He also posits a plausible understanding of the phrase *write my laws*. Owen helps us see the significance in the Holy Spirit's obvious and deliberate change from the singular *my law* and *it* in Jeremiah 31:33, to *my laws* and *them* in the New Testament Scriptures (Heb. 8:10 and Heb. 10:18.... Owen not only does not support Barcellos' idea that God writes the Decalogue on the believer's heart; he opposes such an idea. Owen sees the primary promise in Jeremiah to be that of motivation and not of content.<sup>35</sup>

When viewed together, the two preceding quotations from Owen evince an

inconsistency in his theology, likely resulting from his attempts to forcibly reconcile his new insights with traditional Covenant Theology.

Although proponents of New Covenant Theology agree with Owen that the Old Covenant was *superseded* by the New Covenant, we differ with him on two fronts. *First*, we disagree with the teaching that the Decalogue can be distinguished from the Old Covenant itself. *Second*, although we do not believe that the Decalogue is the transcovenantal, moral law, we do believe that there is a sense in which they still apply to the New Covenant believer (cf. Matt 5:17-18; 2 Tim 3:16-17). For instance, Wells states: "Does that mean that the Decalogue is abolished? Not at all. It just means that the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:33 is a fulfillment that involves a transformation from the Ten Commandments as written in the OT to the teaching of Jesus and his writing disciples."<sup>36</sup> Reisinger also states: "The Ten Commandments, *as they are interpreted and applied by our Lord and his apostles*, are a vital part of a Christian's rule of life." Although proponents of New Covenant Theology *must* qualify any appeal to John Owen as a theological forerunner, John Owen has rightly been claimed as a theological forerunner of that system, particularly with regard to his understanding of the Old and New Covenants.

### Conclusion

Although New Covenant Theology is a recent theological development, this system, like Dispensationalism or Covenant Theology, has its own historical and theological roots. Can proponents of New Covenant Theology *legitimately* claim both the sixteenth-century Anabaptists and the first-generation seventeenth-century English

Particular Baptists as their theological forerunners? *Indeed, in part, they can.* Significant commonalities do exist between New Covenant Theology and both the Swiss and South German strains of the Anabaptist movement and first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptist Theology. Furthermore, the fact that the 1644 FLBC borrows significant portions from Menno Simons' *Foundation-Book* indicates that a demonstrable relationship did exist between the Anabaptists and first-generation English Particular Baptists.

When the historical and theological evidence is carefully considered, it becomes readily apparent that advocates of New Covenant Theology can *legitimately* claim not only the sixteenth-century Swiss and South German Anabaptists but also the first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists as their theological forerunners. *First*, proponents of New Covenant Theology can rightly claim those Anabaptists with regard to their view of Scripture, believer's baptism, and the nature of the church. *Second*, they can legitimately claim the first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists as theological forerunners with regard to their Christocentric focus, their emphasis on the Gospel of Christ, believer's baptism, the nature of the Church, the doctrines of Grace, their understanding of the Old and New Covenants, and their understanding of the covenantal law of the New Covenant. Furthermore, proponents of New Covenant Theology may rightly claim John Owen as another forerunner of their system, specifically with regard to his understanding of the Old and New Covenants.

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<sup>32</sup>Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*, 49-50.

<sup>33</sup>Owen, "An Exposition of Hebrews 8:6-13," 188.

<sup>34</sup>John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, vol. 6, *Hebrews 8:1-10:39*, ed. W.H. Goold (London: Johnstone & Hunter, 1855; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980), 149, cited in Reisinger, *In Defense of Jesus*, 95-6. Barcellos argues that Owen did hold the traditional Covenant Theology view that God writes the Decalogue upon the heart of the New Covenant believer. See John Owen, *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), XXII: 215, cited in Barcellos, "John Owen and New Covenant Theology," 331. Owen writes: "What was in the tables of stone was nothing but a transcript of what was written in the heart of man originally; and which is returned thither again by the grace of the new covenant, Jeremiah 31:33; 2 Corinthians 3:3." However, Barcellos seemingly ignores the fact that this quote conflicts with the quotation produced by Reisinger, thus evincing a noticeable inconsistency on the part of Owen.

<sup>35</sup>Reisinger, *In Defense of Jesus*, 95-6.

<sup>36</sup>Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology*, 184-85. See also page 189, where Wells states: "For NCT, the Decalogue functions as a unit because it all, every commandment, like all the rest of the Old Covenant and OT is fulfilled in the person, work, teaching and body of Jesus Christ."

<sup>37</sup>Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*, 115.



# The Doctrine of Salvation

## - Part 3 -

by William W. Sasser

### Benefits of Conversion

I suppose that the benefits of conversion are innumerable and indescribable. Every spiritual blessing from heaven is promised to the convert to Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3). And how can tongue begin to tell what it is to have been converted, to have had one's destiny everlastingly changed, to have Almighty God as one's Father, to be righteous in the sight of the thrice-holy God? I shall only mention four benefits. These are fundamental, and form the foundation for most all others.

Perhaps the most basic benefit of conversion is **the forgiveness of sins** (Eph. 1:7). The converted soul need never fear answering for any sin, for there are none to answer for - Jesus has paid for them all. And if I owe nothing to the justice of God, how can I answer for anything? Forgiveness of sins includes past sins, present sins and future sins. Perhaps one will ask, "But how can I be forgiven for future sins?" I answer, "All your sins were future when Jesus paid for them."

**Peace with God** is a fundamental benefit of conversion. For the converted soul, the war is over. This means that God is not angry with me any longer. Sin separated me from God, but by the blood of Christ I am made nigh to God (Eph. 2:13). Through Ezekiel the prophet God said, "*the soul that sins, it shall be separated*" (18:4; RSV). But through the Apostle Paul God announced that the converted soul has "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1; RSV). As Isaiah said, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever" (Isa. 32:17; KJV).

**A joyful heart** is a third cardinal benefit of conversion. Nehemiah said, "the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10; KJV). Paul said, "Rejoice in the

Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice," and "Rejoice evermore" (1 Thess. 5:16; KJV). When the Lord Jesus Christ converts the heart, He becomes the Joy of the heart. To sense His Presence, to know His Love, and to hear His Voice, as He speaks in His Word by His Spirit, transcends any experience this world is capable of giving. To rejoice in the Lord is to delight in Him, to boast in Him and to trust Him. Heaven is my home and God is my Father, how can I not have a joyful heart. Oh that all the peoples of the earth could know the joy of the Lord!

**Happiness** is a fourth principal benefit of conversion. Solomon said, "whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he (Prov. 16:20; KJV)." Happiness is caused by what is happening. If what is happening to me, in me and around me is favorable, I am happy. I am being conformed to the very image of Christ, this is what is happening to me (Rom. 8:29). I am being taught to submit to His perfect will, this is what is happening in me (Rom. 8:1-4). All things are working together for my good, this is what is happening around me (Rom. 8:28). My sins are blotted out and forever put away, how can I not be happy. "Happy is that people... yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD" (Ps. 144:15; KJV).

### Questions About Conversion

#### Conversion: Spiritual & Experiential

Conversion, like every other aspect of salvation, is a spiritual act. As to its cause, it is wrought by the Spirit of God, who sovereignly comes and goes like the wind (John 3:1-8), working where and when He will. But as to its effect, it is a real experience, known by all who have come to faith in Christ. Every believer can say, however weak his or her faith is, "I know whom I have believed (2 Tim. 1:12; KJV).

#### Conversion: Crisis or Gradual

Every believer is converted, but all believers are not converted alike. Paul was unhorsed, blinded and led about for three days, while Peter was called from his fishing boat, but both were converted. It is a mistake to try to have someone else's conversion experience, or to establish one experience as genuine but

another as false. I can neither convert another nor 'un-convert' one who is converted. Some undergo a deeper work than others in that they sharply feel the terrors of conscience and the fear of punishment hanging over them, while others experience these things in a much lesser degree and are drawn to the Lord with chords of love.

Conversions fall into two types - crisis conversion, or gradual conversion. Saul of Tarsus experienced a radical crisis conversion (Acts 9:1-19); so did Manassah (2 Chron. 33:11-13). But Peter, Zaachaeus, Andrew, James, John and Cornelius had a more moderate conversion experience.

#### Conversion: Assurance Thereof

It must be remembered that regeneration is an instantaneous act, a passing from death to life, from darkness to light. But conversion is the effect of regeneration. Regeneration may be compared to conception and birth, while conversion is analogous to growth and maturity. All do not grow and mature alike, though all alike have been conceived and birthed into the world. Because conversion is empirical, i.e., involves experience, truly converted persons can doubt the reality of their conversion. Lack of assurance can be caused by want of information, comparison with the experience of others, and even disobedience. But if one is truly converted, he or she will not turn away from seeking the Lord: "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief" (Prov. 24:16; KJV).

Christ is the Giver of assurance. A lady once complained to her Pastor that she had examined and re-examined herself, and, said she, "I just cannot find any assurance." Her very wise Pastor replied, "You must stop looking for assurance, and look to Christ. When you were saved you looked to Christ, look to Christ now and He will give you assurance." One who continues looking to and obeying Christ shall soon have the assurance of His love. Our Lord promised, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:18; KJV).

### Justification

#### The Meaning of Justification

It has been said that regeneration has

to do with that change that takes place in the soul; conversion has to do with that change that takes place in the life; and justification has to do with that change that takes place with regard to one's standing before God. Theologically speaking, justification is that instantaneous, everlasting, gracious, free, judicial act of God, whereby, on account of the merit of Christ's blood and righteousness, a repentant, believing sinner is freed from the penalty of the law, restored to God's favor, and given the righteousness of Christ.

Justification is the English translation of a Greek word which means, 'to declare righteous'. Justification is more than pardon, more than ransom, and more than redemption. The individual who is pardoned still has a record. The individual who is ransomed may really be guilty, and the individual who is redeemed may never really be treated as free. But the justified soul has no record, is declared 'not guilty', and is declared free indeed by the High Court of Heaven: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed (John 8:36; KJV)." If I am justified, I am in a "just-as-if-I'd never sinned" state before the thrice holy God of creation.

### Justification & Miser Guy

Justification may be illustrated in the following way. Long ago in England there lived an eccentric miser whom everyone called, 'Miser Guy'. He was so thrifty that when a visitor called one evening, on a matter of business, Miser Guy inquired whether or not the business at hand required light. Upon learning that it did not, Miser Guy put out the candle to save it, a savings of less than one cent a day.

One day the old miser was standing on one of the many bridges in London, dressed in threadbare clothes, when a stranger passing by pressed forty pence in his hand. Needless to say, the old miser was taken completely by surprise. He was so moved by the act of the stranger that he hurried after him. Although he was not able to catch the man, he did learn of his name and address.

A few years later Miser Guy was reading the local newspaper, in the debtors column, and saw the name of the gentleman who had given him the money. Reading on he learned that the man had been imprisoned because of a bad debt charge. Miser Guy hastened out of his home, went straight to the jail, and paid the debt for his friend. Then he went personally to the cell and brought his friend out, explaining that he had paid the debt for him. The same law that had condemned and imprisoned his friend now liberated and declared him free, in as much as it had nothing against him. This man was not pardoned, he was justified! Pardon does not necessarily demand a removal of guilt, but justification does. The man now appeared before the law as if he had never violated it.

### The Problem of Justification

The theme of Romans chapter one is 'Gentiles are under sin'. The theme of Romans chapter two is 'Jews are under sin'. The theme of Romans chapter three is 'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Rom. 3:23). The Bible presents *hamartiology*, i.e., the doctrine of sin, as a universal problem. The first man, Adam, sinned, and when he did so every fiber in him was poisoned with depravity. Since Adam was the first and original man - the only man at the time he sinned - Adam was mankind. Thus when Adam sinned, mankind sinned. According to Romans 5:12, "sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned." According to the Word of God, because of the sin of the first man, every human being is born of sinful parents, is spiritually dead, and is under judgment unto condemnation (Rom. 5:15-19).

Because God is holy, He must deal with sin. Because men and women are sinners, God must deal with them in keeping with His holiness, righteousness and justice. The guilty must be judged and condemned for every violation of divine law, because the God of divine law must maintain the righteous requirements of that law. A holy and just God cannot arbitrarily pass over sin. Herein lies the problem: How can God be just and Justifier? How can God punish sin and yet pardon sinners? It is an abomination to God to either punish the innocent or

let the guilty go free: "He that justifieth the wicked, and He that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD" (Prov. 17:15; KJV).

That which is impossible to men is possible with God. God, in His infinite wisdom, found a way to remain just and yet justify the ungodly (Rom. 4:5). First, He took upon Himself flesh (John 1:1-3). He who was in the form of God took the form of sinful man (Phil. 2:5-7). God cannot die, but God as a man can. Being in the form of man, death became possible for Him.

Secondly, all of the sins of all His people were charged to His account. This the Bible calls 'imputation'. Although Jesus Christ was not *personally* guilty, by virtue of imputation He became *legally* guilty, i.e., answerable to the law for all whose sins He voluntarily became responsible. This was the only way a perfectly innocent man could be justly punished. Whereas the incarnation of God the Son made death possible for Him, the imputation of sin made His death certain.

Thirdly, the righteousness Christ earned by obedience to the holy law is imputed to every sinner who believes, thus making that person righteous before the law. In this way God can be just, and yet justify the individual who believes in Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

The problem of justification is solved by means of the incarnation through imputation. "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21 (KJV); cf. 1 Cor. 1:30; Phil.3:7-9).

### The Author of Justification

Of necessity the first cause of all things is God, thus God alone must be the author of justification. It is impossible but that man, being a fallen creature, could justify himself. It is quite natural for man to justify himself in his wrong, but he cannot justify himself from his wrong. Once fallen, man found no way to recover himself, to right himself again. *Humpty Dumpty* could not put himself together again, even with the help of 'all the king's horses and all the king's men'. It would be easier to weigh a musical note, or lift



oneself by one's own boot straps, or come back from where one has never been, than to justify oneself.

### Justification & Guilt

But why is this? The answer is not a difficult one. Man cannot justify himself because he cannot not find a way to erase his guilt before God. He cannot find a way to wash the blood of sin from his hands, to remove depravity from his soul. He may educate his mind, give his alms to the poor, and sacrifice his body for every worthy cause, yet his conscience accuses him night and day, ever charging him with crimes against his Maker. No amount of prayers, penance, or power will give the soul of man peace so long as he endeavors to justify himself.

Let the reader understand, the question is not, "How can one be just," but how can one be just with God?" The whole question of justification finds its meaning and significance in two very basic realities: the existence of God, and the fact that man has sinned against Him. Were there no God, there would be no need for justification. There is a demand for justification in the nature of man because God is.

The knowledge of the existence of a Personal God is endemic to human beings. Not only is the revelation of God written in the created universe, but in the very nature of man (Rom. 1:18-20; Ps. 19:1-3). Man was created by God in God's image, and, try as he may, man cannot remove this divine stamp of ownership, nor the nagging feeling that all is not well with his soul; hence, the dread and fear of death. Philosophers have tried to prove the non-existence of God in order to escape the instinctive craving for justification with God, but to no avail. From Nietzsche, who went insane, to Darwin, who died confessing that he had played the fool, the need for justification remains in the soul of every man and woman.

### The Path Toward Justification

The path toward justification is built upon a four-fold revelation: (1) God is. (2) God has made me. (3) I have sinned against Him and am therefore in need of justification. (4) I cannot justify myself. The only question which remains to be answered was asked long ago by Job,

the ancient patriarch: "How should man be just with God (Job 9:2; KJV)?" The apostle Paul, by divine inspiration, gave the following answer: "It is God that justifieth (Rom. 8:33; KJV)." That is, the only one who can make man just with God is God. And how does God do it, how does God make man righteous, how does God justify? "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate His justice, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- He did it to demonstrate His justice at the present time, so as to be just and the One who justifies those who have faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:22-26; NIV).

### The Means of Justification

Having seen that God is the Author of justification, we must now turn our attention to the means of justification. That is, what is the formula, the method, the procedure by which justification comes? It is God that justifies, but by what means does He justify? This question cannot be answered fairly with a single response, rather it must be given a multifaceted rejoinder. There are at least seven divine means of justification.

First, we are **justified legally by God**. According to Romans 8:33-34, God Himself is both the Author and Finisher of our justification. Second, we are **justified meritoriously by the blood of Christ** (Rom. 3:24-26). It is the atonement of Jesus Christ that merits for all believers justification and full remission of sin. His blessed death and continuing mediation are the ground of justification (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Cor. 1:30). Third, we are **justified instrumentally by faith** (Rom. 3:28; 4:5; 5:1). Faith, which is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9), is the only instrumental means of justification exercised by the believing sinner. Fourth, we are **justified efficiently by grace**. The efficient cause of justification can only be the sovereign grace of God. Justification can never be caused or procured by any word, act, or performance by any son or daughter of the fallen race of Adam. Paul clearly declares, in Romans 3:24 and Titus 3:7,

that we are justified by God's grace. Fifth, we are **justified agentially by the Holy Spirit** (1 Cor. 6:9-11). That is, the Spirit of God is the divine Agent who brings both justification and a knowledge of it to the believer. Sixth, we are **justified evidentially by works** (Jas. 2:21-26). The evidence of justification before men and the world is good works. James must have been from Missouri, the "Show Me" state, for he is of the opinion - the divinely inspired opinion, I might add - that talk is cheap, that actions speak louder than words. If one is justified, says James, he will evidence it by his works. In fact, the only way to justify one's justification before the world is by one's works. Both Rahab and Abraham are James' examples of this truth. Seventh, one is **justified essentially by Christ** (2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:6; 1 John 4:17). Everything God requires to justify the believer has been essentially and thoroughly provided in, by and through Jesus Christ.

Thus, God justifies by the blood of Christ, through faith, by grace, by the Holy Spirit, by works, and by Christ. These are the divine means of justification.

### The Benefits of Justification

So wonderful and countless are the benefits of justification that they cannot all be listed. The following list comprises the principal ones.

Restoration to divine favor is a benefit of justification. Upon justification by faith one is brought into favor and harmony with God. This means that the enmity that subsisted between God and the sinner is completely removed. Where there was wrath, there is now favor; where there was cursing there is now blessing; and where there was war, there is now peace. To the justified one is restored all that was lost in the fall of man into sin, and more, for it is eternally secured by the death of Christ.

**Imputation of divine righteousness** is a benefit of justification. The individual who is not justified has no righteousness which is acceptable to God, but only that which is compared to filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). But in justification one is given the perfect and divine righteousness of Jesus Christ Himself. Imputed righteousness is the righteousness of another charged to one's account. There are three great cases of imputation recorded in the Bible: the sin of Adam was imputed to his posterity; the sin

of the believer is imputed to Christ; and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer. As Paul said, “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin (Rom. 4:7-8 (KJV); see also 10:4; 1 Cor. 1:30).

A third benefit of justification is **Adoption**. The justified one becomes a child of God, adopted into God’s family. This means, of course, that there is a personal relationship between the believer and the Divine Persons of the Godhead. God becomes the believer’s Father, Christ becomes the Elder Brother, and the Holy Spirit becomes the Comforter, Teacher and Guide (Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 8:17; Eph.1:4-5).

Another benefit of justification is **freedom from the law**. One is freed not only from the condemnation of the law, but from its power to provoke sin. Not that the law is sinful, but the enmity of the natural man is quite naturally opposed to authority, and so the sin within him is stirred up by the commands or prohibitions of the divine law. The believer, however can sing, “Free from the law, oh happy condition, Jesus has died, and there is remission. Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall, Christ hath redeemed me, once for all (Rom. 6:14; 7:4-6).

A fifth benefit of justification is **freedom from condemnation**. Paul said, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:1-2; KJV). Being free from the law, one is free from all condemnation. The justified one can challenge the world, the flesh and the devil: “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the Right Hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8:33-34).

Finally, one who is justified has the benefit of **peace with God**. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). Not only is the war over, but

one has an inner peace and tranquility, a peace that passes all understanding, a peace which keeps the heart and mind (Phil. 4:7).

## Sanctification

### The Meaning of Sanctification

There are two parent words of *sanctification*. One is in the Old Testament and the other is in the New Testament. The Hebrew word is *quodesh*. The Greek word is *hagiazō*. In the Latin, the equivalent word is *sanctus*, from which our English word sanctification comes. Basically, as the Bible uses the term sanctification, there are four meanings: separation, cleansing, holiness, and to count holy.

**To Separate.** The primary meaning of the words *quodesh* and *hagiazō* is to separate something or someone from every other use for God’s exclusive use. In Leviticus 27:16, a field is thus separated; in Exodus 19:23, a mountain; and in Exodus 12:2, the first born. All are said to be sanctified, set apart for God.

The word *temple* conveys this idea. Its root is from the Greek word *temno* which means to cut. It was first applied by the Greeks to a piece of ground cut from surrounding fields for the site of a wayside shrine to house an idol. It was also applied to the shrine itself, and lastly to the ornate building, or the temple which housed the shrine. It is perhaps in this sense that Paul spoke of the believer’s body as “the temple of the Holy Ghost” (1 Cor. 6:19; KJV).

**To Cleanse.** The second meaning of sanctification is that of cleansing what is separated. The person or thing sanctified is not only separated from everything which is inconsistent with its belonging to God, but from every blot of defilement (1 Sam. 16:5; 2 Chron. 29:5; Eph. 5:25-27; Heb. 9:13-14).

**To Be Holy.** The third meaning of sanctification is holiness. The person that has been separated unto the Lord by faith has been cleansed, purified from all unrighteousness by Christ’s blood (1 John 1:7-9; Acts 15:8-9).

**To Count Holy.** The fourth and final meaning of sanctification is ‘to

count holy’. Every justified individual positionally sanctified, i.e. counted absolutely and thoroughly holy before God. This does not mean that they are holy in themselves, but rather that they are counted holy because of the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

### The Schools of Sanctification

There are several different views regarding sanctification. Some hold to what has been called the **suppression school**. According to proponents of this view, holiness is attained by suppressing the old nature unaided by any power from the new nature. Others adhere to the **counter-action school**, which advocates that the pull, force, and gravity of the old nature are “counter-acted” by the indwelling of the Spirit. That is, the Holy Spirit mortifies the deeds of the “old man.” Still others are of the **eradication school**. The eradication theory advocates that the “old nature” is eradicated or annihilated.

### The Problem of Sanctification

There is no doubt that in regeneration a new nature is given to the believer (John 3:3-8; 2 Pet. 1:1-4). And there is no doubt that every believer still struggles with sin (Rom. 7:15-25). The problem of sanctification for many Bible teachers seems to revolve around the question of whether or not the old nature is completely eliminated, or only suppressed. Is the regenerated individual basically the same person with a new spiritual dimension added, or has the Lord through regeneration built a completely new spiritual structure?

Part of the problem is the lack of understanding just exactly what sanctification for the believer means. As has been noted, the Greek word *hagiazō* has for its basic meaning the concept of being separated unto the Lord for His exclusive use, service and glory. But what seems to present a problem for theologians is the degree of personal separation necessary in one’s walk with the Lord. Personally, I don’t think that such a thing can be determined. Besides, there is only one acceptable standard to a Holy God, and that is perfection. But it is not possible for even a regenerated person to live continually and



perpetually above sin (1 John 1:8-10). On the other hand, one can be sure that if there is a continual walk with sin, one has not been regenerated (1 John 1:5-6). But this I do know, if one has been justified, one has been at the same time sanctified unto the Lord. The sanctified one, because he or she is regenerated, now has a deep desire to walk with the Lord who has redeemed him. Yet, because the believer is not yet glorified, he has the world, the flesh and the devil to contend with, which, of course, means that there will be a continual battle to walk in holiness. The believer is plainly instructed not to serve sin (Rom. 6:6), not to give in to the flesh (Col. 3:5-11), and to resist temptation and the devil (Jas. 1:12; 4:7). Why? Because the believer is to be separated unto the Lord to serve and glorify Him.

The believer is promised that the grace of God is sufficient for every need in every trial or temptation (1 Cor. 10:13), that the blood of Christ will continually cleanse from daily contamination, and that one day full and final victory over sin will be realized (Rom. 7:24-25). Until then, the believer is to fight, pray and wage spiritual warfare with all of his might, endeavoring always to be separated unto the Lord in his or her walk (Eph. 4:17-32).

### The Idea of Sanctification

**Annihilation.** Some have the idea that sanctification is really a work of the believer, without which one cannot be fully and finally saved. According to advocates of this theory, one is justified by the Lord, but sanctification awaits their pressing on in holiness and good works. Many who embrace such a theory teach that one may become more and more sanctified, more and more holy. What is wrong with this concept?

If it is meant that one is actually and really progressing in degrees of holiness, ridding oneself of more and more sin, the end result of such progress would be the complete annihilation of sin altogether. This is the doctrine of *perfectionism*, and is contrary to the Bible. Personally, one is just as sinful after one is saved as before. One may rid himself or herself from many external faults and shortcomings, but one cannot rid oneself of sin. John the Apostle, writing to believers, declared, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive

ourselves, and the truth is not in us," and again, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:8,10). Although the believer is certainly exhorted to cleanse himself from all that is unholy and unrighteous, complete freedom from sin awaits glorification, when one shall be made like unto the Son of God. Simply put, human flesh cannot perfect itself.

**Degrees of Sanctification.** The basic idea of Bible sanctification is separation, not degrees of separation. And sanctification is no less an act of the Persons of the Godhead than justification or regeneration. God is the source of sanctification. The Spirit sets apart experientially (Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 6:11), the Son cleanses the sanctified (Heb.2:11; 10:10,14; 13:12), and the Father preserves the sanctified (1 Thess. 5:23; Jude 1:1). One is preparatorily sanctified by the Holy Spirit, positionally sanctified by the blood of Christ, and progressively sanctified, in the sense of growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ, by the Word of God. In this state one looks forward to prospective sanctification, i.e., being made personally and practically holy by being in the very presence of the glorified Christ. In the words of Dr. Nelson Foster, "Sanctification is a work for us, in us and on us. It is a PAST work, a PRESENT work, and a FUTURE work."

### The Method of Sanctification

**Grace.** Sanctification is a work of the divine Persons of the Godhead. Initially, as has been previously pointed out, it is God the Spirit who sanctifies experientially, God the Son unto whom the people of God are sanctified, and God the Father who preserves the sanctified ones. But exactly what method does the Lord use to set one apart unto Himself?

We might call God's method of sanctification the 'method of grace', for just as in regeneration and justification, sanctification is of the Lord. God's method of sanctification involves the written Word of God, the means of grace, faith, blood, confession and chastisement.

**The Word.** In God's method of sanctification much is made of the written Word. For example, our Lord prayed that the Father would use the written Word to sanctify the disciples (John 17:17); Peter exhorts believers to

feed on the Word in order to grow in the Lord; it is the Word that cleanses (John 15:3; Psa. 119:9), and it is the divine written Word that Christ uses to sanctify His Church (Eph. 5:25-26).

**The Means of Grace.** The means of grace, which are a part of God's method of sanctification, include prayer, worship, the communion and fellowship of the saints, and the edifying ministry of the Church. By these means the children of God are set apart unto the Lord. Not only must one 'come apart' to utilize the means of grace, but the means themselves, by the power of the Holy Spirit, sanctify the heart and mind of the believer.

Faith is an important aspect of God's method of sanctification. Faith itself is a gift of God, a work of grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). Through faith the children of God "come apart" unto the Lord, to serve, worship and praise Him. And this "coming apart unto the Lord" is itself part and parcel of biblical sanctification.

**The Blood of Christ.** An integral part of God's method of sanctification is the blood of Christ, and the confession of the believer. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that the very location of Christ's death for us was an indication of the separating, sanctifying power of the blood of Christ. Christ suffered outside the city of Jerusalem, thus all who would come to Him must, as it were, go outside the religious and worldly systems (Heb. 13:12). Confession sanctifies in a two-fold way. First, the believer will often go the Lord to confess sin and to plead cleansing therefrom. This is a sanctifying work in itself. Secondly, the believer will confess, both by faith and life, that the blood of Christ shed for sin, is the very thing that sanctifies him unto God.

**Chastisement.** Finally, God's method of sanctification includes chastisement. The Scripture clearly informs us that the Lord chastens His erring children. In chapter twelve of the book of Hebrews we are told "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him" (vs 12, KJV). But for what purpose does He do this? "for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness (vs 10, KJV)." That is, in order to separate us from sin and unto Himself and His holy will.

## Christ Our Salvation

**Christo-centric Salvation.** As was mentioned at the beginning of these articles on salvation, the longest word in any language is eternity, the most dreadful is hell, the greatest word is salvation, but the sweetest word is Christ. In fact, Jesus Christ Himself is our salvation. The Lord Himself said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent (John 17:3)." To know the doctrine of salvation is one thing, but to know Christ is salvation.

The gospel of the salvation of God is Christo-centric, i.e., Christ centered. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End of biblical salvation. Without Him there is no salvation, because without Him there is no Savior to save, no Redeemer to redeem, and no King to Rule. He is the way to salvation, the truth of salvation and the life of salvation. Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing, and without life there is no knowing or going (John 14:6).

**Saving Faith.** When the Philippian jailor cried out to Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?", they answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:30-31; KJV). Friend, you must believe to be saved. The grace of God is given through the gift of faith (Eph. 2:8-9). Salvation does not come through joining the Church, or walking an aisle, or being baptized, but through faith.

And what does such faith believe? First, faith believes on Jesus as Lord, that is, that He is the only true and Living Sovereign over the universe. Second, faith believes that Jesus is the only Savior, for that is what the very name 'Jesus' means. Thirdly, faith believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, the One especially suited and equipped to save, for that is what "Christ" means. All who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.

To believe is more than mere intellectual assent, i.e., agreeing with a certain set of propositions. Rather, to believe is to trust and obey. One believes only so far as one acts, talk is cheap. Someone has said that the English letters which spell "faith" may be formed into an

acrostic to explain what it is to savingly believe on Christ: ***Forsaking All I Trust Him.***

Have you trusted Christ? Have you bowed to Him as Lord? Have you embraced Him as Savior? Have you received Him as the only One who can save you? If so, you should confess your faith in Him through baptism, and sit under the teaching of His Word to learn more of Him, and of His will. As you learn, you will be better equipped to tell others of this wonderful salvation. Let me sum it up for you.

Here are our Lord's instructions for His disciples:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:19-20).

- (1) **Go** - we are to be active for our Lord, not sitting still
- (2) **Teach** - [*matheteuo*]; to instruct
- (3) **All nations** - [*ethnos*]; without ethnic distinction
- (4) **Baptizing** - [*baptizo*]; to immerse, dip or submerge in water
- (5) **Them** - all who believe
- (6) **In the Name of** - [*onoma*]; by the authority of
- (7) **The Father, Son and Holy Ghost** - the One true God manifested in the Tri-unity of His sacred Persons
- (8) **Teaching** - [*didasko*]; indoctrinating, teaching doctrine
- (9) **Them to observe** - [*tereo*]; to carefully watch and hold fast
- (10) **All things whatsoever I have commanded you** - all the will of Christ revealed in the holy Scriptures

## A Word of Exhortation to the Reader

**C.H. Spurgeon:** "I call upon every man and woman here to do what our Lord Jesus bids' 'Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven (Matt. 10:32).' I call upon you to receive the gospel of Christ, to believe on the Name of the Son of God, and to confess Him before men! The first proof

that you believe Christ is to be openly identified with Christ and His people. True disciples are not secret disciples! 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved' (Rom. 10:9). Confess Christ by yielding to Believer's baptism. I charge you to neglect nothing the Lord commands, however trivial it may seem to you. What ever He says to you, do it with childlike obedience. I know that baptism has been misplacred and misapplied, but it is the scriptural way to confess Christ."

To the one God of heaven and earth, in the tri-unity of His sacred Persons, be all honor and glory: to the glorious Father as the covenant God; to the gracious Son, the Redeemer of His people; to the Holy Ghost, the author of sanctification; be everlasting praise for that gospel of the free grace of God.

**FINIS**



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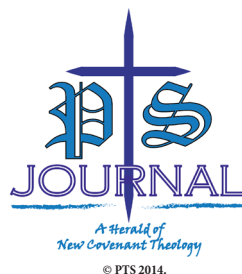
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