



PROVIDENCE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY JOURNAL[®]

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).

ISSUE 2 – FEBRUARY 2014

The Grace of God and Departures From It

by Gary D. Long

The writer of Hebrews instructs believers:

“Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.” (Heb. 13:9; NKJV)

This verse is immediately preceded by the words: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” The context makes it clear that the hearers of this Epistle were to remember those who had ruled over them and taught them the Word of God, namely, about Jesus Christ. And the warning of verse 9 is that they are not to be carried about or away with strange doctrines (i.e., teachings which are foreign to biblical truth and practice and, especially, in this context, which lead away from the Person of Christ). In order to prevent being carried about by such strange or false doctrines, the heart must be established by the principle of grace. It cannot be established by continued observance of empty rituals of an old religious order—the Old Covenant order which has been fulfilled and, thereby, done away with as covenantally binding by the resurrected Christ through the blood of the everlasting covenant (v. 20).

It probably is not an overstatement to say that all departures from the grace of God have at their beginning a departure from the doctrine of Christ, especially His cross-work which is the focal point of redemptive history. The

apostle Paul believed this when he exclaimed: “God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14).

There is widespread misunderstanding within present-day Christianity over the lawful use of God’s law (1 Tim. 1:8) in the Christian life. For some, the misunderstanding does not exist over the doctrine of the cross proper, but over the role that God’s law and its covenantal use have in relationship to sanctification of the New Covenant believer. That the sanctification of the believer is vitally linked to the cross of Christ is freely admitted and confessed by all who are evangelical in the faith. Differences (within Reformed Theology in particular, including Reformed Baptists) over the Christian’s relationship to the law and the gospel are not a willful departure over the nature and design of the cross-work of Christ; rather it is a departure resulting from misunderstandings of God’s law as it relates to the movement of redemptive history, especially the meaning of “law” in the Epistles of Paul. It is no understatement to say that Paul’s understanding of the law encompasses one of the most intricate doctrinal and practical issues in New Testament theology.

In this article¹ I will address, first, the biblical teaching of the doctrine of the cross and the doctrine of sanctification.

¹This article is a slightly edited version of a message delivered by the author at the Seventh Annual Sovereign Grace Fellowship Weekend Doctrinal Conference, Salado, Texas, October 12, 1980.

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Historical Forerunners of New Covenant Theology – Part 2

by Zachary S. Maxcey¹

A Comparison of New Covenant Theology and First-Generation Seventeenth-Century English Particular Baptist Theology

Another powerful influence from historical Christian Protestantism which has greatly impacted the development of New Covenant Theology is the first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptist movement. Although there is *vast* agreement between proponents of New Covenant Theology and *these* English Particular Baptists, there are still some significant areas of disagreement between the two groups (e.g., whether there were two covenants made with Abraham—one of grace and one of works). Nevertheless, the first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists share much more common ground with advocates of New Covenant Theology than those of Covenant Theology. A concise analysis of the similarities and differences between New Covenant Theology and first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptist Theology will demonstrate that a strong connection exists between these two theological systems in several prominent doctrinal areas.

Christocentric Focus

The most prominent theological

strength of the first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists which proponents of New Covenant Theology heartily commend and affirm is the Christocentric focus of their theology. For example, Article 8 of the 1644 edition of the FLBC declares, “In this written Word God hath plainly revealed whatsoever he hath thought needful for us to know, believe, and acknowledge, touching the Nature and Office of Christ, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen to the praise of God.”² Moreover, Article 10 of the 1644 edition asserts: “Touching his Office, Jesus Christ only is made the Mediator of the new Covenant, even the everlasting Covenant of grace between God and Man, to be perfectly and fully the Prophet, Priest and King of the Church of God for evermore.”³ Christ alone mediates the New Covenant, and it is through this covenant that “every spiritual blessing” (Eph 1:3; NASB) comes from God the Father to the New Covenant believer. The FLBC (1644 and 1646) *strongly* emphasizes the tri-fold work of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King as the great theme of *all* biblical prophecy. For example, Articles 11 through 20 of the 1646 FLBC function as a rich expansion of Christ’s threefold role as the Mediator of the New Covenant.⁴

Because New Covenant Theology, like first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptist Theology, recognizes the Lord Jesus Christ as the preeminent figure of all Scripture (cf. Matt 5:17; Luke 24:27; 24:44; John 1:45; 5:39; 5:46; 1 Cor 1:20;

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²FLBC (1644), Article VIII.

³Ibid., Article X.

⁴See FLBC (1644), Articles XI-XX. The authors of the 1646 FLBC understood the dual natures of Christ to be vital to His role as *the* Prophet of God. They also taught that the Lord Jesus’ work as *the* great High Priest to primarily consist of His atoning sacrifice on the Cross, His advocacy on behalf of His people, and His continual intercession on their behalf before God the Father. The writers also understood the interaction between Christ’s roles as both High Priest and King as a demonstration of Christ being a king-priest according to the order of Melchizedek (cf. Ps 110).

the new covenant: the promised everlasting covenant secured, ratified and established by the Person & Work of Jesus Christ that fulfills all the covenants in the Old Testament Scriptures; the covenant in which all believers have full forgiveness of sins, are indwelt by the Spirit, & are empowered by the Spirit to please God; the covenant that established the Church as Christ’s spiritual body.

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Acts 3:18-24), its proponents fervently emphasize that a *Christotelic*⁵ hermeneutic is an essential tool to correctly handle Scripture. Failure to consistently employ such a hermeneutic will *inevitably* result in a distorted interpretation of God's Word. A *Christotelic hermeneutic views the Lord Jesus Christ as the ultimate goal or end of God's Word and seeks to consistently interpret all Scripture in view of this great truth.* A *Christotelic* hermeneutic, as defined by Providence Theological Seminary, assumes outright that the Old and New Testament Scriptures together comprise the wholly inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God, which is the *sole* authority of faith and practice in the life of a believer. Furthermore, this particular method of interpretation emphasizes *five* principles: 1) the Lord Jesus Christ is *the nexus* of God's plan in redemptive history, 2) *all* Scripture either refers to Christ *directly* (e.g., the Gospel narratives, messianic prophecies), refers to Christ *typologically*, or *prepares the way* for Christ by unfolding redemptive history which ultimately points to His Person and Work (e.g., the Flood, the calling of Abram), 3) *the New Testament Scriptures must have interpretive priority over the Old Testament (OT) due to the former being the final revelation of God*, 4) an accurate analysis of a passage's context is key: local, literary, canonical, and historical, and 5) the principle of historical-grammatical interpretation (guided by the first four principles).

The Gospel of Christ, Believer's Baptism and the Nature of the Church

Another theological strength of the first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists with which advocates of New Covenant Theology completely agree is their strong emphasis upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The authors of the 1646 FLBC resoundingly affirmed that the most important purpose of the Church is glorifying God by clearly presenting and manifesting the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For example, Article 7 of the 1646 edition of the FLBC states, "And this is life eternal, that we might know Him the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. And on the contrary, the Lord will render vengeance, in flaming fire, to them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ." Furthermore, Article 21 declares, "Jesus Christ by his death did purchase salvation for the elect that God gave unto him: these only have interest in him, and fellowship with him, for whom He makes intercession to His father in the behalf of, and unto them alone doth God by his Spirit apply this redemption, as also the free gift of eternal life is given to them, and none else."

Interestingly, the first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists astutely observed that infant baptism undermines the Gospel, invalidates justification by faith, and creates a national, mixed-multitude church. For example, Thomas Patient writes:

That it [infant baptism] cannot be of God, my first ground is, **because it doth oppose itself to the express Laws, and Commands of the**

New Testament; and whatsoever consequence men do draw from Scripture, that crosseth the plain Commands of God (to be sure) cannot be of God, but such consequence must needs be (according to Scripture light) of Satan, or at the best, from the vision of a man's own heart. **Now this I would have you seriously to take notice of, That baptism of Believers, is a Solemn Ordinance of the new Testament,** enjoined by divers special commands, and encouraged with promises of remission of sins and salvation on the right performance of the same **[emphasis mine].**⁶

Patient also describes infant baptism as "a sad error" that not only "opposeth itself against the very substance of the Gospel" but also "destroys the doctrine of Justification by faith in Christ, only seeing that it doth hold out another way than by faith, to come to Justification, which is by carnal birth of believing parents."⁷ Furthermore, first-generation English Particular Baptists realized that infant baptism distorts the true nature of the Church, changing it from a body of confessing believers to a mixed multitude. Consider again the words of Thomas Patient:

Now this error destroys the truth, or opposeth it self against the truth of God, lying in all these Scriptures, it brings in the nation of believers, all born of their body, their seeds seed in their generation,

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⁵The word *Christotelic* results from the combination of two Greek words: Χριστός (*Christos* – Christ) and τέλος (*telos* – end or goal). Thus, a *Christotelic* hermeneutic is an interpretive method which views the Lord Jesus Christ as *the* ultimate goal or end of all Scripture. Peter Enns (formerly of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia) is believed to have coined the term *Christotelic*. That being said, Enns' view of the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture is unorthodox and problematic. Although Providence Theological Seminary views *Christotelic* as a biblical term in light of Romans 10:4, it seeks to distance itself from Enns' unorthodox view of the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture.

⁶Thomas Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism, and the Distinction of the Covenants or a Plain Treatise, Wherein the Four Essentials of Baptism Are Diligently Handled* (London: 1654), 25-26. See also Samuel Richardson, *Some Brief Considerations on Doctor's Featley's Book, Entitled, The Dipper Dipt* (London: 1645), Section 6. Samuel Richardson declares that the New Testament is resoundingly clear that only believers should be baptized: "Therefore the New Testament is as clear as the Old, and Christ as faithful as Moses to appoint how everything should be done; and also such persons that are so qualified as aforesaid, have right to baptism, and none but they, because God excludes all from His Holy Covenant, and to have any right in the outward dispensations thereof, only such as believe, Rom. 11:20; Heb. 3:18, 19 & 4:1, 2, 3, and 11:5, 6; Rom. 9:7, 8; Gal. 3:22, 26, 29."

⁷Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 80, 83.

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new covenant theology: a theological system which stresses that Jesus Christ is the nexus & climax of God's plan in redemptive history, that the New Testament Scriptures have interpretive priority over the Old Testament Scriptures, and that the new covenant truly is a new arrangement between God and man; this system also strives to maintain the biblical tension of continuity and discontinuity found in Scripture.

Insights from Revelation Commentaries of the Early Church

by Francis X. Gumerlock

Revelation is arguably one of the most difficult of the 66 books in the Bible to understand. Jerome (d. 420) knew Hebrew and Greek so well that he carefully translated the Old and New Testament from those languages into Latin. He wrote commentaries on large and difficult books like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel. But when he came to the Book of Revelation he paused. He believed that it was inspired by God and profitable, saying “all praise of it is inadequate.” But, he said, “it has as many mysteries as it does words.”¹

Augustine (d. 430) wrote about the Book of Revelation: “Although this book is called the Apocalypse,” meaning something unveiled, “there are in it many obscure passages to exercise the mind of the reader.”² Charles Spurgeon was perplexed by it saying, “There is a whole Book of Revelation which I do not understand, but which I fully believe.”³

Illumination from the Holy Spirit who inspired the Book of Revelation is essential for properly interpreting it. God has been illuminating His church to understand His word for over nineteen centuries. This is the value of reading, studying, and translating the biblical commentaries of earlier Christians. For, just as God gives illumination to us today, He gave our Christian forefathers

illumination from which we can surely benefit. Often, these early commentaries bridge temporal, cultural, and linguistic gaps that exist between the biblical writers and Christians today. They are:

First, that the structure of Book of Revelation contains recapitulation.

Secondly, that the “book of life” refers to the elect of God.

Thirdly, that the millennial reign of Rev 20 is a symbol of the present reign of souls with Christ.

Recapitulation in the Book of Revelation

When looking at the structure of the Book of Revelation, some people believe that the visions are laid out progressively, and that the visions of Chapters 4-22 reveal in chronological progression what is going to happen at the end of the world. A better approach understands that Revelation’s structure contains recapitulation. That is, in the visions there is often a “recapping” or a repetition of something mentioned earlier, which points to the *same* event. For example, a great end-time battle is described in a vision in 16:12-16. Then again in another vision in 19:19-21 an end time battle appears. And still again an end-time battle appears in a vision in 20:7-10. These three different visions of end time battles, I believe, are all different ways that God spoke about *one* end-time battle between Christ and Antichrist with his followers.

Similarly, the Second Coming of

Christ for the Last Judgment is described in various ways in a vision in 6:12-17, a vision in 11:15-18, a vision in 16:14-16, one in 19:11-16, and again in 20:10. There are five different visions of the Lord coming for the Last Judgment. But it is not as if the Lord is coming back five times. They are all pictures of the *one* return of our Lord. Such recapitulation does away with the belief that the visions in Revelation symbolize events as they will occur during the last seven years in *chronological order*.⁴

Some of the church’s earliest interpreters of the Book of Revelation recognized that the structure of Revelation contains recapitulation or ‘recapping’. For example, the earliest Latin commentator on Revelation, Victorinus of Pettua (c. 260), commenting on the relationship of the seven trumpets to the seven bowls, writes this: “Do not regard the order of what is said, because [Revelation, inspired by] the sevenfold Spirit, when it has passed in review the events leading to the last times and the end, returns once again to the same events and completes what it had said more briefly. Do not seek the temporal order in the Apocalypse, but look for the inner meaning.”⁵

Similarly Tyconius of Carthage, writing about a century later, saw that the visions in the Book of Revelation recapitulate. At the end of his commentary on Rev 6, after interpreting the sixth seal, he writes:

Attention must be given to the type of narrative which the Holy Spirit

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¹Jerome, *Letter* 53.9. NPNF, 2nd series, 6:102.

²Augustine, *On the City of God*, 20.17. Cited in Dennis Eugene Engleman, *A Rumor of War: Christ’s Millennial Reign and the Rapture of His Church* (Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 2001), 256.

³Spurgeon cited in Ian Murray, *The Puritan Hope: A Study in Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (London:Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), 262. Murray cites his source as Volume 45, page 402, of the works of Spurgeon.

⁴On recapitulation in the Book of Revelation see R. Fowler White, “The Recapitulation of Revelation 19 and 20,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 51:2 (Fall 1989):319-44; Charles Homer Giblin, “Recapitulation and the Literary Coherence of John’s Apocalypse,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 56 (1994):81-95; Aaron Goerner, “The Structure of Revelation,” in Jonathan M. Watt, ed., *Pro Gloria Christi: A Festschrift in Honor of Edward A. Robson* (Beaver Falls, PA: Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 2005), 161-93.

⁵Victorinus of Pettua, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*. On Rev 8:2. Cited in Bernard McGinn, “Turning Points in Early Christian Apocalypse Exegesis,” in Robert J. Daly, *Apocalyptic Thought in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 81-105 at 102.

recapitulation: a type of literary & theological parallelism or repetition which features prominently in biblical prophecy.

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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).

(Insights from Revelation Continued from Page 4)

preserved in this book in every section. For, he kept chronological order up to the sixth [seal], and having passed over the seventh, recapitulates, and concludes the two narratives in the seventh as if having followed [chronological] order. But also this recapitulation must be understood from the passages: for sometimes he recapitulates from the beginning of the passion, sometimes from the middle time, and sometimes he will speak only about the last tribulation or a little before it; nevertheless, he preserves as fixed the [principle] that he would recapitulate after the sixth. Therefore, now, with the sixth having been described, he returns to the beginning and is going to say the same things briefly and in another way.⁶

According to Tyconius' explanation above, the vision of the trumpets recapitulate the narrative of the seven seals.

Another example that Tyconius gives of recapitulation in the Book of Revelation is his interpretation of John's description of the "rest" of the saints in Rev 8:1 as a brief glimpse of what John will describe more fully in Rev 21-22. He wrote: "In the silence of a half hour he shows the beginning of eternal rest. But he saw [only] a part of the silence because he was still going to see the same things [in Rev 21-22]."⁷

Then on Rev 11:13: *In that hour a great earthquake occurred* Tyconius

wrote: "It is a recapitulation of the persecution."⁸ For him, the earthquake of Ch 6, Ch. 8, and here in Ch. 11 all symbolically speak of the same event.

On Rev 20:11, right before John describes the great white throne judgment, Tyconius says: "What he is going to say recapitulates the same judgment."⁹ For Tyconius, there is just one Last Judgment, but it shows up several times in the Book of Revelation under different visions. And this vision of the great white throne judgment is another picture of that same Last Judgment.

"Some of the church's earliest interpreters of the Book of Revelation recognized that the structure contains recapitulation or 'recapping'"

A commentary on Revelation, once attributed to Alcuin of York (d. 804), also affirmed that the structure of the Book of Revelation contains recapitulation, saying:

Sometimes it [a vision] starts with the arrival of the Lord and carries through to the end of time. Sometimes it starts with the arrival of the Lord, and before it finishes, it returns to the beginning and by repeating in different figures both what it has left out and what it has said, it hastens to the second coming of the Lord. Sometimes it begins with the last persecution. But before

it comes to the end it recapitulates and connects both [beginning and end]."¹⁰

Understanding that the Book of Revelation contains recapitulation is very helpful in interpreting its visions, so that one does not believe in three different end-time earthquakes, three end-time battles, or five Second Comings of Christ. And we learn this about the structure of the Book of Revelation from some of the earliest Christian commentators on this wonderful book of Scripture.

How to Interpret the 'Book of Life'

The imagery of the 'book of life' appears several times in the Book of Revelation, in Chapters 3, 17, and 20. This section will show how some of the early commentators on Revelation understood the book of life. After providing translations of their comments, I shall summarize their views.

In Rev 3:5 our Lord said to the angel of the church at Sardis: *He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.* On this passage the aforementioned commentary attributed Alcuin of York says: "On this passage a huge question arises for us."¹¹ The question relates to whether a person who has been chosen by God for salvation, and has been provided the means of salvation, can be removed from the book of life. The author answers the question by affirming that the book of life "is the particular divine decree, which before the world predestined a certain

(Continued on Page 6)

⁶Tyconius of Carthage, *Exposition of the Apocalypse*. On Rev 6:16-17. CCSL 107A:145-146. Translation mine.

⁷Tyconius of Carthage, *Exposition of the Apocalypse*. On Rev 8:1. CCSL 107A:152. Translation mine.

⁸Tyconius of Carthage, *Exposition of the Apocalypse*. On Rev 11:13. CCSL 107A:172. Translation mine.

⁹Tyconius, *Commentary of the Apocalypse*. On Rev 20:11. CCSL 107A:221. Translation mine.

¹⁰The commentary attributed to Alcuin cited in Barbara Nolan, *The Gothic Visionary Perspective* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 7. Cf. PL 100:1089.

¹¹pseudo-Alcuin, *Commentariorum in Apocalypsin libri quinque [Five Books of Commentaries on the Apocalypse]*. On Rev. 3:5. PL 100:1110: *Magna nobis hoc loco oritur quaestio*. Translation mine.

semper reformanda: Latin for "always reforming;" the Protestant theological maxim detailing the church's need to constantly reassess and conform her theology to the truth of Scripture.

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analogia fidei: Latin for "the analogy of faith;" an interpretive axiom whereby less clear passages of Scripture are interpreted by clearer biblical passages.

(Insights from Revelation Continued from Page 5)

and definite number of the elect unto future glory." For that reason, the author of the commentary recommended that his readers understand that it is "the names of the reprobate," not of the elect, which will be erased from the book of life.¹²

Richard Rolle (d. 1349), who died during the Black Death in Europe, explained Rev 3:5 in this manner: "And I will not erase his name from the book of life, that is, from the divine presence which is his according to predestination."¹³

In Rev 17:8, an angel is interpreting a vision for John, saying: *The beast that you saw, was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth will wonder, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast, that he was, and is not, and will come.* Haymo of Auxerre (d. 875), in his commentary on the Apocalypse, wrote on this passage:

The book of life is the divine decree,¹⁴ that is, the foreknowledge and predestination of the omnipotent God. For, those who will follow the Antichrist have not been predestined, that is, foreordained, to life since from those whom God predestined from the beginning of the world to be saved none will perish (cf. John 10:28), about whom the Apostle [wrote]: *Those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to His image* (Rom 8:29-30). For, God knows to whom He is going to say: Go into eternal fire and to whom He is going to say: *Come, blessed of my Father* (Matt 25:34, 41).¹⁵

In Rev 20:15 the scene is the Last Judgment. John concludes his description of it saying: *And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.* Augustine, who wrote an extended commentary on Rev 20 in his *On the City of God*, wrote on this passage:

This book [of life] is not for reminding God, as if things might escape Him by forgetfulness, but it symbolizes His predestination of those to whom eternal life shall be given. For it is not that God is ignorant, and reads in the book to inform Himself, but rather His infallible prescience is the book of life in which they are written, that is to say, known beforehand.¹⁶

Ambrose Autpert, a monk from central Italy in the eighth century, wrote a commentary on Revelation between the years 757 and 767. He explained this passage in several paragraphs:

Truly, it should be known that when it is said: *Whoever was not found written in the book of life*, it is as if it were said "whoever has not been predestined to life." For, that book should not be understood carnally, as containing the names of the righteous in ink or some other substance, or in such a way that it gives information to God, so that in case he forgets that information, reading it will recall it to his memory. Rather, it signifies the predestination of those to whom eternal life will be given. Therefore, by no means does God not know and recognize them, as was said, as if he reads a book so that he may gain knowledge. But

rather, the book is that foreknowledge of his, yea, even their predestination, which is not able to fail. In this book, the elect were written before the ages, that is, were foreknown and predestined.

Accordingly also, the Apostle says: *Those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to his image, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. But those whom he foreknew and predestined, those he also called; and those whom he called, those he also justified; and those whom he justified, those he also glorified* (Rom. 8:29-30).

And on this again he says: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we might be holy and blameless before him in love, who predestined us unto adoption as children through Jesus Christ in him, according to the purpose of his will unto the praise of the glory of his grace* (Eph. 1:3-6).

On this again he says: *According to the good pleasure of God which he purposed in him, in the dispensation of the fullness of times to restore all things in Christ which are in heaven and which are on earth in him; in which lot also we have been called, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, that we may be unto the praise of his glory* (Eph. 1:9-12).¹⁷

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¹²pseudo-Alcuin, *Five Books of Commentaries on the Apocalypse*. On Rev. 3:5. PL 100:1110-1: *Restat itaque ut secundum usitatem sacrae Scripturae locutionem intelligamus reprobatorum nomina de libro vitae deleri...Liber autem iste est vis quaedam divina, quae electorum numerum certum ac definitum ante saecula praedestinavit in Gloria futurum*. Translation mine.

¹³Richard Rolle, *Biblical Commentaries*. Robert Boenig, trans (Salzburg, Austria: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1984), 170.

¹⁴Latin, *jus divinitas*.

¹⁵Haymo of Auxerre, *Expositio in Apocalypsin [Exposition of the Apocalypse]*, Book 6. On Rev 17:8. PL 117:1146. Translation mine.

¹⁶Augustine, *On the City of God*, 20.15. Marcus Dods, trans. (New York: Random House, 1950), 734-5.

¹⁷Ambrose Autpert, *Expositio in Apocalypsin [Exposition on the Apocalypse]*. On Rev. 20:15. CCCM 27A:774-5. Translation mine.

premillennialism: the belief that the return of Christ will occur *prior* to the millennium, which is *generally* held by this school of thought to be a *literal* one thousand years.

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postmillennialism: the belief that the return of Christ will occur *after* the millennium, which is *generally* held by this school of thought to be a long, indefinite period of time during which the world will be progressively Christianized.

(Insights from Revelation Continued from Page 6)

These early biblical commentators on the Book of Revelation, such as Augustine and Ambrose Autpert, believed that to have one's name written in the book of life before the foundation of the world was another way of saying that one was divinely foreknown and predestined for salvation. It is interesting that they did not shrink away from this teaching, or try to explain it away. They saw that the omnipotent God, being eternal and all wise, had a plan from all eternity that is going to be fulfilled, and is not going to fail. That is, a very large number of people from all time periods—from Adam to the last generation before Christ comes again—, from all nations, from every tongue, from all stations of life, the small and the great, will be among His people, “the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven” (Heb 12:23).

“The Lord knows who are His,” Paul says. Predestination is God's business. Concerning our responsibility, Paul continues, “let everyone who names the Name of the Lord abstain from iniquity” (2 Tim 2:19). Our responsibility is not to try to comprehend the hidden things of God, but to believe in Christ, repent of our sins, and make our calling and election sure (cf. 2 Pet 1:10), so that when the roll is called up yonder, we'll be there.

The Reign of Souls with Christ for a Thousand Years

Another insight from early commentaries on Revelation regards how to interpret the first resurrection and the reign of the saints with Christ for a thousand years. Christians have been debating this for a long time; and many

think that it teaches an earthly reign of Christ with His saints after the Second Coming. But realizing that Rev 20 is a recapitulation of an earlier vision, where the souls of the martyrs came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years (20:4), aids in a proper interpretation. Notice the parallel between Rev 6:9 and 20:4:

“I saw...the souls of those who had been slain” (6:9).

“And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded” (20:4).

“Because of the word of God and because of the testimony which they maintained” (6:9).

“Because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God” (20:4).¹⁸

Both visions describe the disembodied souls of deceased believers. Chapter 20 speaks of them reigning with Christ. Augustine explained the passage in this manner:

“And the souls,” says John, “of those who were slain for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God”—understanding what he afterwards says, “reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Rev 20:4)—that is, the souls of the martyrs not yet restored to their bodies. For the souls of the pious dead are not separated from the Church, which even now is the kingdom of Christ.... Therefore, while these thousand years run on, their souls reign with Him, though not as yet in conjunction with their bodies. And therefore in another part of the same book we read, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord

from henceforth; and now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works do follow them.” (Rev 14:13) The Church, then, begins its reign with Christ now in the living and the dead. For, as the apostle says, “Christ died that He might be Lord both of the living and of the dead.” (Rom 14:9) But he mentioned the souls of the martyrs only, because they have contended even to death for the truth, themselves principally reign after death; but, taking the part for the whole, we understand the words of all others who belong to the Church, which is the kingdom of Christ.”¹⁹

For Augustine, the thousand year reign is the reign of souls of believers who have died, but have not yet received their resurrected bodies, which awaits the final resurrection, after which they will reign, body and soul, with Christ forever and ever. And although John only mentions martyrs, they should be regarded, he said, as a part designating the whole, a synecdoche which means all who have died in Christ between His first and second comings.

An anonymous *Handbook on the Apocalypse* from the seventh or eighth century interpreted Rev 20 similarly, saying on verse 5: “*The first resurrection* is of the righteous, when they leave from their body and go into rest.”²⁰ Likewise, Theodulph, bishop of Orleans, in his *Exposition of the Apocalypse* dated 810 wrote almost the same thing: “This first resurrection is of the righteous, when they leave from their body and go into rest.”²¹

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¹⁸I am indebted to Gary D. Long (*Context*, 40) for notice of this parallelism.

¹⁹Augustine, *On the City of God*, 20. Dods, 726-7.

²⁰Anonymous, *Handbook on the Apocalypse*. On Rev 20:5. CCSL 107:225. *RESURRECTIO PRIMA iustorum est, quando exeunt de corpore et vadunt ad requiem*. Translation mine.

²¹Theodulph of Orleans, *Exposition of the Apocalypse of John*. On Rev 20:5. CCSL 107:334. *Haec resurrectio prima iustorum est, quando exeunt de corpore et vadunt ad requiem*. Translation mine.

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amillennialism: the belief that the return of Christ will occur *after* the millennium, which is *generally* held by this school of thought to be the inter-advent period during which Christ's cosmic reign in fulfilment of the Davidic Covenant is progressively realized until its consummation at His Second Coming.

(Insights from Revelation Continued from Page 7)

Some believers today think that the first resurrection is a physical resurrection, and that the reign is an earthly reign for a thousand years after the Lord returns. Some early church fathers believed similarly. Others today see the first resurrection as the believer's resurrection from sin at conversion, as when Paul said, "If you then have been raised with Christ, seek the things which are above." (Col. 3:1). There were also plenty of early Christian writers who expressed that interpretation.

But the three commentators above—Augustine, the author of the *Handbook on the Apocalypse*, and Theodulph of Orleans—saw that the first resurrection was that of the soul leaving their body at death, and living and reigning with Christ in the intermediate state. The thousand year reign, they believed, was the reign of those souls in heaven with Christ even now before He returns. Then, when Christ returns with its accompanying general resurrection, the souls of all who have died will be reunited with their bodies. They will stand before Christ in the Last Judgment in body and soul. The unrighteous will be assigned to eternal damnation in hell with the devil and his angels. But the righteous will reign with Christ in heaven forever.

Conclusion

The commentaries on Revelation from the early church can be very helpful when trying to interpret the Book of Revelation, one of the most difficult books in the New Testament to interpret. The very earliest Latin commentators on Revelation—Victorinus and Tyconius—recognized that the structure of the Book of Revelation contains recapitulation. That is, the prophecies of Revelation are not laid out progressively as if an event that John saw in Chapter 11 necessarily will follow chronologically something he saw in Chapter 6. Rather, some of the visions contain glimpses of the same prophetic

event with different emphases or different shades and details. In three different visions in Revelation John describes the end-time battle between the Antichrist and Christ. The Second Coming with its accompanying Last Judgment is seen in at least five different visions in the Book of Revelation. But all signify just one end-time battle and one Second Coming of Christ.

This article also showed how some early Christian writers interpreted the names of those written in the book of life before the foundation of the world. They believed that those written in the book of life were a reference to the elect, divinely foreknown and predestined for salvation.

In addition some early Christian writers interpreted the first resurrection and the reign of the saints for a thousand years in Rev 20:4-5 as the state of the souls of those who have died in Christ, reigning together now with Christ in the intermediate state before He returns.

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Editor's Note: Dr. Gumerlock, a professor of historical theology at Providence Theological Seminary, is currently finishing a translation from Latin to English of the *Exposition on the Apocalypse* by Tyconius of Carthage. Details about its publication will be forthcoming. Other articles and books on Revelation by Dr. Gumerlock can be accessed at www.francisgumerlock.com.



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(Grace of God & Departures Continued from Page 1)

Second, the departure from the biblical teaching on each of these two doctrinal themes will be stated and illustrated. Then, third, the reason for the departure from the biblical teaching will be given. And, finally, a conclusion will be made concerning the departures from both the cross of Christ and the doctrine of sanctification followed by a solution to prevent departure from these two doctrinal areas.

The Grace of God and the Glory of the Cross of Christ

The Epistle to the Galatians deals with vital issues of Christianity—issues which concern the true nature of the gospel of Christ. False teachers were present among the churches of Galatia. They were deliberately perverting the gospel (1:7) that they might escape persecution for the cross of Christ (6:12), and so that they might glory (6:13) in causing the Galatian Christians to turn away from the gospel of Christ (1:6) and come again under the bondage of the Law of Moses (5:1). [Today, it may not be so much the bondage of the law of Moses, but more the bondage of human works, so-called "good works" apart from the cross of Christ.] But for the apostle Paul, persecution for the cross of Christ was not something to escape: just the opposite—it was something in which to boast, to glory. Thus he stops dictating to his secretary (*amanuensis*) at 6:10, and with his own hand he writes in large bold letters: "God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (6:14).

Paul's answer to the question, "How can the unjust be justly made just?" is the cross of Christ. The whole epistle is full of the cross, because salvation is possible only through the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross. That is why, in his preaching, Paul placarded Christ clearly before the eyes of the Galatians (3:1).

(Continued on Page 9)

– Hebrews 11:3 –

"By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible" (NASB).

(Grace of God & Departures Continued from Page 8)

He presented the finished work of the cross to them so clearly that they could see its enduring benefits through the eye of faith as clearly as Abraham could see the stars when God promised Abraham as many descendants as there were stars in the heavens. Paul, like Abraham, had believed the gospel, and God had accounted their faith for righteousness. The way of salvation was the same in both the Old and New Testaments: justification by faith alone. God had declared them righteous by faith that it might be by grace (Rom. 4:16). That is why Paul gloried in the cross of Christ (6:14).

The Biblical Teaching. Christ's death was a:

1) **Substitutionary sacrifice.** In approaching the biblical teaching of the cross-work of Christ, it may be asked, why did Paul glory in the cross of Christ? What did Christ do on the cross? By way of brief exposition, consider these three statements: He “gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age” (1:4; NASB); “the Son of God . . . loved me and gave Himself for me” (2:20; KJV); and Christ redeemed believers from “the curse of the [Old Covenant] law” (3:13). Christ, Paul says, became “a curse for us” that we who receive the promise of the Spirit through faith might be justified, that is, declared righteous, like Abraham (3:13-14; NASB). But how could the curse of the broken law—whether Jewish Christians previously under the law of Moses or Gentile Christians under the curse of the law written in their hearts (Rom. 2:14-15)—how could the curse of the law rest upon Christ who was sinless? *The answer: Christ was our substitute!* The context makes it clear that Christ died not only for the benefit of, but that crucified, He also stood in the place and substitutionarily bore the guilt and

penalty of those who seek by grace the righteousness of God by faith. This doctrine, Paul says elsewhere (Rom. 9:33; 1 Cor. 1:23), is a stumbling stone to unbelieving Jews and foolishness to unbelieving Gentiles, but “unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18; KJV); “it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes” (Rom. 1:16). This is the gospel of the cross of Christ, and Paul and whoever believes it are not ashamed of it (Rom. 1:16; 9:33). The gospel that the believer glories in is the gospel of Christ, the gospel that teaches the doctrine of substitutionary doctrine of Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). This is what the apostle Paul and every Christian glories in! **The substitutionary sacrifice of Christ lies at the heart of the doctrine of the cross of Christ.**

“...the penal-substitutionary sacrifice lies at the heart of the doctrine of the cross of Christ.”

2) **Penal sacrifice.** Another aspect of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ is penal. There are many theories of the atonement, but only substitutionary atonement saves from God's wrath to be justly and fully poured out upon unsaved mankind at the return of Christ. When the cross of Christ is said to be a substitutionary atonement, it is meant that *Christ's death was, first-most, a representative, penal-satisfaction for the guilt and penalty due from the sin of those whom He represented.* His death renders

God propitious toward sinners. Christ's death satisfies God's punishing justice on behalf and instead of those for whom Christ died. God will not pour out His wrath upon those who by grace believe in Christ as their substitutionary Savior. They will not suffer the eternal torments of God's wrath in hell. No, by blood atonement, Christ's voluntary sacrifice of Himself appeased the righteous wrath of God for those whom the atonement was designed to save. As a result, through the gospel, God's people are converted one-by-one throughout time and brought into a saving relationship with Christ through the miracle of the new birth. At that time they are placed into spiritual union with Christ and His body, which is the church, as the result of the application of the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13) accomplished at Pentecost. The Spirit's sovereign application of the benefits of the atonement always results in the spiritual twin fruits of repentance and faith. So, **the penal-substitutionary sacrifice lies at the heart of the doctrine of the cross of Christ.**

3) **Effective sacrifice.** Because Christ's death was a penal sacrifice, it was also an *effective sacrifice*; that is, actually designed to accomplish redemption for those whom Christ died. This means that the atonement of Christ was designed to save some, not everybody; *not the whole world without exception, but the whole world without distinction, whether those saved be Jew or Gentile, male or female, bond or free.* Why did not Christ die for everybody? Because, to say that Christ died for everybody without exception is the quickest way to prove that He died for no one effectively. Why? Because Christ was either a substitutionary Savior for the guilt and penalty of sinners or He was not. If He was (and He was), then He died either for all sinners or some: if for all, then all must come to faith in Christ. So, **an effective, penal-substitutionary sacrifice lies at the heart of the doctrine of the cross of Christ.**

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the principium of the Christianity: the *principium* (i.e. fundamental presupposition) of biblical Christianity is “The Triune God exists, and He has revealed Himself in His Word, namely the Bible.”

– 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 –

“Now we have received....the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who possess the Spirit” (NASB).

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PTS BLOG† CORNER

The Fundamentals of New Covenant Theology

- Part 2 -

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the PTS Blog Site.**

New Covenant Theology (NCT) maintains that God's eternal purpose of redemption is progressively revealed and administered in the biblical covenants of the Old Testament. In other words, the covenants manifest the eternal kingdom purpose of God throughout redemptive history. As mentioned in the previous post, the Lord Jesus Christ is the *telos* (i.e. the end, goal) of the biblical covenants. Moreover, the New Covenant itself may be viewed as the *telos* of the Old Testament covenants in the sense that the preceding covenants not only anticipated the New Covenant (via shadows and types) but also find their fulfillment in the New Covenant which Christ Himself secured, ratified, established, and fulfilled.

Many advocates of NCT (or *progressive covenantalism*) insist that the biblical covenants begin with a pre-fall covenant and post-fall covenant, both of

which God forged with Adam.

At this juncture, it is important to note that Covenant Theology (CT) teaches the existence of a pre-fall covenant, a covenant which it designates the *Covenant of Works*. R.C. Sproul describes the *Covenant of Works*: "The original covenant between God and humankind was a covenant of works. In this covenant, God required perfect and total obedience to His rule. He promised eternal life as the blessing of obedience, but threatened mankind with death for disobeying God's law."¹ In contradistinction, those proponents of NCT who hold to a pre-fall covenant refuse to define such an arrangement as do Covenant Theologians. They insist that CT's "covenant of works" is a non-Scriptural theological deduction, which suffers from at least two systemic inaccuracies. **First**, they readily assert that Adam could not have earned eternal life by obedience to the stipulations of the pre-fall covenant as taught by CT's "covenant of works." Adam would have simply had a perpetual existence in the Garden in the manner and form that he was already experiencing. **Secondly**, Scripture defines **no** probationary period which Adam was required to successfully negotiate in order to be confirmed in his holiness, be glorified and gain eternal life.² To be fair, other adherents of NCT believe a pre-fall covenant constitutes a theological concession to Covenant Theology, insisting that a pre-fall covenant, no matter how defined, is theologically deduced and unnecessary.

Although the creation narrative

does not use the term *covenant* (בְּרִית, *bērit*) to describe Adam's relationship with the Lord, many in NCT contend there is ample biblical evidence for a pre-Fall covenantal relationship between God and Adam. These individuals readily concede that the absence of the word *covenant* in Genesis 1-2 constitutes a strong, **but not insurmountable**, objection to the existence of a pre-fall covenant. Why? 2 Samuel 7:1-29 recounts the historical ratification of the Davidic Covenant, but the word *covenant* appears nowhere in this particular biblical text. However, Psalm 89 clearly identifies God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7 as a *covenant*. Just as the Davidic Covenant is identified as such by biblical references external to 2 Samuel 7 (cf. Ps. 89:4ff), many proponents of NCT would state that Adam's pre-fall relationship with God is identified as a covenant by Hosea 6:7.

Admittedly, this understanding hinges upon interpreting the Hebrew word *kē'ādām* in Hosea 6:7 to mean *like Adam*: "But they *like Adam* transgressed the covenant; there they dealt treacherously with Me." Many argue that this is the most natural rendering of Hosea 6:7, as the verse is comparing the Israelites and Levitical priests to Adam. The prophet Hosea is comparing Israel's transgression of the Mosaic Covenant to the willful, rebellious transgression of Adam in the Garden of Eden. Since all Israel would have been familiar with Adam's transgression, they, so it is argued, would have readily understood what the Lord declared to them through the prophet Hosea who references the book of Genesis on numerous occasions (e.g. Hos 11:8, 12:1-14).

Many advocates of NCT find Scriptural support for a pre-fall covenant in the type – antitype relationship between Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15. Just as

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¹Robert C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 1992), 73.

²As far as Adam was concerned, he had to maintain a perfect perpetual obedience to God's command in the pre-fall covenant. CT bases their so-called probationary period with Adam on how God dealt with the elect angels, namely, that after a certain probationary period, God confirmed the elect angels in their holiness, so that they would never sin. However, it must be noted that God does not deal with us as He does the angels. The fallen angels fell individually and cannot be redeemed. All mankind fell corporately in Adam, and the elect of humankind are corporately redeemed in Christ.

sola Scriptura: Latin for "Scripture alone;" the Protestant theological maxim encapsulating the truth that Scripture (which is the plenary inspired, wholly infallible, wholly inerrant, and all-sufficient Word of God) is the **sole** authority of faith & practice for the believer.

(Fundamentals of NCT Continued from Page 10)

Christ is the Head of those represented under the New Covenant (i.e. the Elect of God), Adam, so it is argued, was the head of those represented under a pre-fall covenant (i.e. all those who have ever lived, except for Christ). Thus, it is insisted that this representative or federal³ headship directly implies a covenantal relationship both in the case of Christ and in the case of Adam. Resultantly, many argue that the imputation of Adam's first sin and the imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness are both strongly depend upon a covenantal relationship.

Many NCT proponents of a pre-fall covenant assert that when the Old Testament describes the ratification of the various biblical covenants it *primarily* uses one of two Hebrew constructions: to *make / cut* a covenant or to *establish* a covenant. The first construction, *kārat bērit*, 'to *make or cut* a covenant', is used with regard to the Abrahamic Covenant (cf. Gen 15:18), the Old Covenant (cf. Exod 34:10, 27; Deut 5:2-3, 29:14; Jer 31:32), the Davidic Covenant (cf. Ps 89:4), and the New Covenant (cf. Jer 31:31,33; 32:40; Ezek 34:25; 37:26). This particular construction appears when a covenant is being ratified for the *first* time. However, it is argued that the second construction, *hāqim bērit* 'to *establish* a covenant', is used when a previous covenant is amended, reconfirmed, or reestablished. For instance, when the Lord amends the *already-standing* Abrahamic Covenant by making physical circumcision its covenantal sign, He uses *this* particular Hebraic construction in Genesis 17:7 and again later in 17:21 (when God promises to reconfirm the Abrahamic Covenant with Isaac). Thus, this distinction is argued as essential for an accurate understanding of the Noahic Covenant, where God repeatedly declares to Noah, "I *establish* (*wahāqimōtī*) My covenant with you" (Gen 6:9; cf. 6:18, 9:9,11). Thus, NCT advocates of a pre-fall

– Ephesians 2:8-9 –

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast" (NASB).

covenant insist that the usage of this construction in Genesis 6-9 implies that the Noahic covenant is an amendment, reconfirmation, or reestablishment of God's pre-fall covenant with Adam.⁴

Regardless of one's conviction on whether or not Genesis 1-2 has in view a pre-fall covenant, few dispute that the relationship between God and Adam appears to be *covenant-like* – due to the presence of many *covenantal motifs* in the creation account. **First**, the similarities between the Tabernacle, Temple, and the Garden of Eden indicate that the garden was "a non-architectural temple" where God uniquely manifested His presence.⁵ Since all other *temples of Yahweh* are connected to biblical covenants, it could be argued that the Garden of Eden must also be connected to a biblical covenant. **Secondly**, the two verbs in Genesis 2:15 which describe Adam's responsibility in paradise (NASB: "to cultivate it and to keep it") are respectively used to describe "the duties of the Levites (see Num. 3:7-8; 4:23-24, 26)" to serve God and "to guard the tabernacle."⁶ In other words, Adam fulfilled a *priestly* role in Eden, and this fact may evince that God forged a pre-fall covenant with him. Elsewhere, priests of the one true God, with the sole exception of Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20), are connected to biblical covenants.

As Jeffrey Niehaus states: "All Yahweh theophanies do in fact take place in covenantal contexts."⁷ He continues: "Four pre-Sinai theophanies have clearly Sinaitic characteristics- that is, characteristics of storm theophany. Each of these takes places in a covenantal context. The first is the avian appearance of the Spirit of God in Genesis 1:2; the second is Yahweh God's storm theophany in Genesis 3:8; the third is Yahweh's presence at the Flood (especially as reflected in Ps 29); and the fourth is Abram's theophanic visions of Yahweh in Genesis 15."⁸ The theophany of Genesis 3:8 to which Niehaus relates to the following words: "And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Interestingly, this section of the verse may also be translated in the following manner: "And they heard the voice of the LORD God moving back and forth in the garden in the wind of a storm." This particular translation evokes even more parallels with Yahweh's storm theophany at Mount Sinai.

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³The word federal is actually derived from the Latin word *foedus*, which means *covenant*.

⁴This view is undergirded by the repeated parallels between Adam and Noah; Noah in essence is a *new* Adam. Just as Adam is the progenitor of the entire human race, Noah is the father of all those living after the flood. Both were given *similar* mandates to multiply and fill the earth (Gen 1:28; 9:1-3). Just as Adam's sin in the Garden resulted in knowledge of his nakedness and the cursing of the entire human race, Noah's sin (i.e. drunkenness) in his vineyard resulted in his nakedness and the cursing of his grandson, Canaan (Gen 3; 9:20-27). Other parallels exist between Adam and Noah, but for the sake of brevity, they will not be addressed here.

⁵G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical theology of the dwelling place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 383. For other works which describe the Garden of Eden as a temple of God, see also the following works: Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1980; reprint 1999; Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations For A Covenantal Worldview*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006; Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2006.

⁶Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2006), 105.

⁷Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant & Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1995), 142.

⁸Ibid.

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sola fide: Latin for "by faith alone;" the Protestant theological maxim encapsulating the biblical truth that believers are justified before God by faith in Christ *not* by works.

(Grace of God & Departures Continued from Page 9)

The Departure from the Biblical Teaching. Departure from the biblical teaching of substitutionary atonement not only occurred in Galatia at the middle of the first century, but it has also occurred throughout church history, and it is everywhere prevalent today in all three aspects of Christ's death as an effective, penal and substitutionary sacrifice. In the 19th century, this was openly admitted by an American theologian by the name of Daniel Fisk. Concerning the penal-satisfaction view of the atonement, Fisk said in an 1861 issue of the theological periodical, "*Bibliotheca Sacra*," that it "leads, by logical necessity, either to the doctrine of a limited atonement, on the one hand, or to the doctrine of universal salvation, on the other." Fisk clearly understood that a penal-substitutionary sacrifice meant an effective or definite atonement, as it has rightly been called; yet, he rejected such an atonement because he believed that Christ died for everybody. This is characteristic of that system of theology known as Arminianism which stresses the human sovereignty of one's "free" will in choosing Christ for salvation. Believing in universal atonement, then, Fisk could not hold to Christ's death as penal substitution, for penal substitution means an effective atonement, one that definitely accomplishes redemption for all whom Christ died (Luke 1:68). Fisk believed that Christ died for everybody if they would choose Christ. But, if Christ's atonement was a penal substitution, everybody must be saved.

However, that would be universalism, and universal salvation for everybody without exception, he knew, was certainly not biblical. So he taught what enables some and not all to be saved is the exercise of one's "free" will, not God's will (but see, John 1:12-13; Jas. 1:18).

The Bible declares that the way to destruction is broad (Matt. 7:13). There will be multitudes responsibly in hell because of unbelief in Christ as a substitutionary Savior. How else could they be saved except Christ be their substitute? But if Christ died for some with a specific purpose to save them, they will come to faith in Christ and be saved. This is the doctrine of election and particular redemption or definite atonement. This is quite simply the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of Christ in Isaiah 53:10-11, which states that Christ "shall see His seed. . . . He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied" (KJV). How could this be true if God had not before determined it? How could this be true if God had not purposed to save a particular people, His seed, for whom Christ died? But He did purpose it (II Tim. 1:9).

Therefore, any departure in understanding the true nature of the atonement being a penal-sacrifice or substitution is a departure from the doctrine of the cross and will quickly result in one's denying the particular design of the atonement. History is filled with individuals (such as Daniel Fisk) as well as churches and denominations that deny the true nature of the atonement being a penal-satisfaction and that deny the particular design of the atonement, that is, that Christ died a substitutionary

atonement only for those given to Him by the Father—His elect (John 17:2) "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4; KJV). Perhaps you, dear reader, have departed from the biblical teaching of substitutionary atonement. If so, may God grant you the grace to believe that without Christ being a substitutionary Savior and dying as a sacrifice for the guilt and penalty of your sins, there can be no salvation. If you do not believe in the substitutionary death of Christ for sinners with some² degree of understanding and trust, you are lost and hell bound. You who have yet to savingly believe in Christ—may the sovereign God grant you the grace of repentance and faith to believe in Christ alone for your eternal salvation and your deliverance from this present evil age (Gal. 1:4). Do not be led astray by any teaching that knowingly or unknowingly denies or distorts the true nature and designing purpose of the cross of Jesus Christ, not even if it comes from an apostle or an angel from heaven (Gal. 1:8).

The Reason for the Departure.

There are two, inter-related, major reasons for the departure from the biblical teaching of the cross of Christ. The first one is doctrinal; the second is personal.

1) The doctrinal reason.

The doctrinal reason involves the substitutionary principle; that is, the principle of imputation—the doctrine that sin, guilt, obedience and righteousness of one can be justly reckoned to the account of another. But the actualization of this principle, the

(Continued on Page 13)

²A person must believe that he cannot save himself but that Christ, who is God, is able to save him; otherwise there is no need of a Savior. Such an understanding is a minimum which one must believe in order to be saved by Christ. In this regard, it is Christ who saves not one's purity of doctrine. But this does not mean that unsound doctrine is of no consequence. For, according to Scripture, unsound doctrine is heretical and divisive and, at best, results in a childish immaturity which causes one to be "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14). Those who sincerely and truly believe in Christ but inconsistently proclaim and teach a non-effective, non-penal, non-substitutionary atonement will likely mislead others into rejecting Christ as no Savior at all or into believing that they can be true Christians without a substitutionary Savior. But "not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven" (see Matt. 7:21-23). **This is why an effective, penal, substitutionary atonement lies at the heart of the doctrine of the cross of Christ.**

sola gratia Latin for "by grace alone;" the Protestant axiom which concisely captures the truth that God's unmerited favor (not man's will or effort) *alone* initiates, secures, & applies salvation to His elect.

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– Titus 2:11-12 –

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age" (NASB).

(Grace of God & Departures Continued from Page 12)

Bible teaches, was unique to two persons only. The first man, Adam, and the last Adam, the God-man, Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:12-21; I Cor. 15:20-28, 45, 47). The doctrine of the representative headship of the two Adams is a series of messages in itself. But for now, let it be understood that anyone who believes that Christ died for his or her sins; that is, that He died in place of the ungodly, taking the curse of God upon Himself for sinners, because of their having sinned against God's holy law revealed in them by nature and by divine covenant—that person trusts in Christ as a substitutionary Savior. But often times when that person starts to say in his or her mind—which has been polluted by sin (Isa. 64:6)—when that person starts to say, “I believe that Christ died for me and for the sins of everybody,” that one is denying substitutionary atonement. That one is either knowingly or unknowingly, in effect, denying the true nature of the atonement, that Christ's death was a penal-substitution, that Christ paid for and satisfied God's holy justice and wrath for the guilt and penalty of the sins of His people — a multitude beyond number from every tribe, tongue, people and nation (Rev. 5:9).

2) The personal reason. The personal reason for departing from the biblical teaching of the cross of Christ is due to the proud “*idol of free will*” that consciously or subconsciously resides in the breast of every morally responsible human being. The “*idol of free will*” and its out-working in self-righteous pride, by nature, causes all of us, apart from the grace of God, to desire to merit our own salvation by good works rather than the merits of Christ's righteous life and substitutionary death. To bow in submission to the Christ of Holy Scripture and renounce one's own

deluded, self-righteous ways is offensive to fallen, sinful man (Rom. 3:10-12), and it stirs up opposition against the true doctrine of the cross. It does so because the teaching of the cross tells us some very “*hard-to-swallow*” truths about ourselves when we are outside of Christ, namely, that we are sinners under the righteous judgment of God (Rom. 3:23), and that we cannot save ourselves (Eph. 2:8-9; Gal. 3:21).

“So nothing in history or in the universe cuts us down to size like the cross. All of us have inflated views of ourselves, especially in self-righteousness, until we have visited a place called Calvary. It is there, at the foot of the cross, that we shrink to our true size. And of course men do not like it. They resent the humiliation of seeing themselves as God sees them and as they really are. They prefer their comfortable illusions. So they steer clear of the cross. They construct a Christianity without the cross, which relies for salvation on their works and not on Jesus Christ's. They do not object to Christianity so long as it is not the faith of Christ crucified. But Christ crucified they detest. And if preachers preach Christ crucified, they are opposed, ridiculed, persecuted. Why? Because of the wounds which they inflict on men's pride.”³

FINIS

Here ends Part 1 of
“The Grace of God and
Departures From It” by
Gary D. Long. The second
portion of this article will be
published in the May 2015
issue of the PTSJ.



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³John R. W. Stott, *Only One Way: The Message of Galatians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1968), 179.

– 1 Timothy 2:5 –

“For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (NASB).

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(Historical Forerunners Continued from Page 3)

if you will be faithful to this principle, whereon this seems to be grounded. For the Covenant of Circumcision was not only to the next generation immediately flowing from *Abraham*, *But to thy seed after thee in their generations*: And we see in that generation in Christ's time, they were as well called *Abraham's seed*, as *Isaac* himself was, and they did call *Abraham* their father. Therefore, if the Covenant of Circumcision shall be man's pattern, we must necessarily have a Church that is national, consisting of succeeding generations for many hundred years, coming out of believing persons' loins, and so set up the partition-wall again between the natural branches and those who are wild by nature **[emphasis mine]**.⁸

Because the Gospel was so central to their theology, the first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists made every effort to protect that which is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16; NASB) from any teaching or practice which might distort it. Like these men, advocates of New Covenant Theology emphasize the faithfulness to the substance and proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, believer's baptism, and the Church as a body of confessing believers.

The Doctrines of Grace

First-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists and proponents of NCT heartily affirm the Doctrines of Grace, that is to say, a Reformed or Calvinistic soteriology. For example, John Spilsbery believed that the Doctrines of Grace were the most biblically-faithful understanding of the Gospel: “Christ presented not unto his

(Continued on Page 14)

⁸Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 81.

solo Christo Latin for “*by Christ alone*,” the Protestant axiom that concisely conveys the biblical truth that salvation is found **only** in the Lord Jesus Christ, the sole mediator between God and man.

(Historical Forerunners Continued from Page 13)

Fathers justice a satisfaction for the sins of Reprobates, and consequently not for the sins of all men....The whole doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ being delivered unto us in the Scriptures, it is a sufficient ground for us not to believe that Christ presented to his Father's justice a satisfaction for the sinnes of all men, because the Scriptures do no where declares this to be a truth."⁹ Spilsbery aggressively rejected "Arminian views of the universal provision of salvation,"¹⁰ arguing, as expressed in Article XXI of the FLBC, that Christ's death secured "salvation and reconciliation only for the elect, which were those which God the Father gave Him." Furthermore, Spilsbery firmly believed that opposition to the Calvinistic view of the atonement "which he espoused bore evil fruit."¹¹ Adherents of New Covenant Theology, like Spilsbery and his fellow first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists, unrelentingly hold to the Doctrines of Grace.

First-Generation Seventeenth-Century English Particular Baptist Teaching on the Covenants

The first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists held a view of the *divine*¹² covenants which *significantly* differed from the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) and later English Particular Baptists. These men, especially John Spilsbery,

Thomas Patient, Samuel Richardson, and Benjamin Cox, understood the 'covenant of grace' to be the New Covenant and its counterpart 'covenant of works' to be the Old Covenant. More specifically, these first-generation Particular Baptists of England described the 'covenant of grace,' that is, the New Covenant, as an absolute covenant, a gracious covenant of life, and a spiritual covenant. Contrastingly, they described the 'covenant of works' or Old Covenant with such terms as a conditional covenant, a covenant of circumcision, and a national covenant. In large part, this teaching bears resemblance to that of New Covenant Theology.

The Westminster Confession of Faith's View of the Covenants.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to briefly outline how the authors of the WCF understood the terms 'covenant of grace' and 'covenant of works' in order to fully appreciate the difference between their use of these terms and that of the first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists. *First*, to be considered is the 'covenant of works.' Article 2 of Chapter 7 of the WCF states: "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."¹³ In other words, the 'covenant of works,' as defined by the WCF and Reformed theologians, is a pre-fall covenant between God and Adam, whereby God 'promised' our progenitor life¹⁴ if he would remain perfectly obedient. *Second*, Article 3,

Chapter 7 of the WCF declares that because fallen Adam "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." Articles 5 and 6 of the same chapter state that this 'covenant of grace' was "differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel....There are not, therefore, two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations." In other words, the 'covenant of grace' is *one over-arching* post-fall covenant which God forged with Christ, the Last Adam, and of which all subsequent biblical covenants are outworkings.

Two Covenants Set Forth in Scripture. Like the Westminster Divines, first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists believed that the Scriptures set forth two covenants: a 'covenant of works' and a 'covenant of grace.' However, they understood the 'covenant of grace' to be the New Covenant, an absolute covenant, and the 'covenant of works' to be the Old Covenant, a conditional covenant. As Patient wrote: "Now if any please but to search these Scriptures [Heb. 8:6-7] **it will appear that there [are] two real distinct Covenants or Testaments, the**

⁹John Spilsbery, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawful Subject of Baptism* (London: 1643), 40-43, in Thomas J. Nettles, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity*, vol. 1 (Geanies House, Scotland: Mentor Imprint, 2005; reprint 2008), 123.

¹⁰Nettles, *The Baptists*, 121.

¹¹Nettles, *The Baptists*, 124.

¹²A *divine covenant* is a God-established, Sovereignly-imposed, solemn arrangement of stipulations, instituted in time, whereby the Lord freely and graciously condescends to and communes with unglorified man.

¹³John H. Leith, *Creeds of the Churches* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1973), 202.

¹⁴Although the WCF does not *explicitly* state that Adam would receive eternal life for perfect obedience, this is how this statement has been generally understood. See also Robert C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 1992), 73. Sproul, a Covenant Theologian, writes: "The original covenant between God and humankind was a covenant of works. In this covenant, God required perfect and total obedience to His rule. He promised **eternal** life as the blessing of obedience, but threatened mankind with death for disobeying God's law" [emphasis mine].

soli deo gloria Latin for "to God alone be the glory;" the Protestant maxim which denotes that everything that man does should be done for the express purpose of bringing glory to God **not** himself.

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– Romans 11:34-36 –

"For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." (NASB).

(Historical Forerunners Continued from Page 14)

one of Grace, and the other of works, the one conditional, the other absolute [emphasis mine].¹⁵ Interestingly, Patient was also convinced that the ‘covenant of grace’ was “obscurely and darkly revealed” to Adam and Eve in the ‘protoevangelion’ promise of Genesis 3:15. He writes: “And further I shall make it appear, That this Covenant of Grace to eternal life, was first more obscurely and darkly revealed to our first parents, God directing His speech to the *Devil* in *Gen.* 3.15 for the greater terror of the Devil and the greater comfort of his Elect, God saith, *I will put enmity between thy seed and the seed of the woman, it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel.*”¹⁶ Like the first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists, proponents of New Covenant Theology identify both the ‘covenant of grace’ as the New Covenant and the Old Covenant as a ‘covenant of works.’ However, unlike those Particular Baptists, a rising number of New Covenant Theology advocates believe that God forged a pre-fall covenant as well as a post-fall covenant with Adam.¹⁷

A Redemptive-Historical Approach to the Biblical Covenants.

The first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists also approached the Old and New Covenants from a more redemptive-historical viewpoint than did their Westminster

contemporaries. They recognized that the Old Covenant was abolished and replaced by the New Covenant. This approach differs from the Westminster Divines and the second generation¹⁸ seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists who viewed the Old and New Covenants as two distinct outworkings of the one over-arching ‘covenant of grace,’ thus flattening the redemptive-historical distinctiveness of both covenants. Consider the following words from Spilsbery:

And of the Scriptures speaking of the disannulling and abolishing the old Covenant, and making a new, is to be understood of the Period from *Moses* to Christ, and not of that from *Abraham* to *Moses*. This also in part I confess, but not the whole; because...the abolishing of the old Covenant or Testament, reached unto all the outward form of worship, under any type of shadow, by which the people professed their faith and obedience to God.¹⁹

Not only did Spilsbery teach that the Old Covenant was abolished and replaced by the New Covenant, but he also *biblically* defined the operative time period of the Old Covenant: “the Period from *Moses* to Christ, and not of that from *Abraham* to *Moses*.” Such views, including both their acknowledgement of one ‘elect’ people throughout redemptive-history and their view of the Old Covenant as being

‘typical’ of the New Covenant, indicates that these English Particular Baptists employed a more redemptive-historical approach to Scripture. In this regard, these first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists may be considered forerunners of New Covenant Theology, since they seemingly recognized elements of both continuity and discontinuity with regard to the biblical covenants.

The Law of God

Unlike their Westminster counterparts, the first-generation English Particular Baptists did not believe that the Ten Commandments constituted the transcovenantal, moral law of God. Rather, they rightly understood that Christ as the Lawgiver of the New Covenant issued a *new* system of covenantal law, according to which all New Covenant believers must conform their lives. For example, Spilsbery states, “But as there is a new King, *so there must be a new Law*, and as a new covenant, so a new subject; a new Church²⁰ must have a new state, must have a new state, and a new ordinance, a new commandment, so that as all things are become new, even so must all be of God, whose will is to be obeyed in whatsoever He commands, which is the only ground of all mans obedience” [emphasis mine].²¹ It is also likely that Benjamin Cox’s description of New Covenant law in his Appendix to the

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¹⁵Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 30. The identification of the ‘covenant of grace’ as “the new and everlasting covenant of grace” appears as an appositional phrase further explaining the meaning of the new covenant in Article 10 of the 1644 edition and 1646 edition of the FLBC. But the term “covenant of grace” never occurs in any edition of the FLBC. However, the term “new covenant” is mentioned two times in Article 29 and once in Article 30 of the 1644 and 1646 editions of the FLBC, including the 1651 edition and two printings—one in London in 1652 and one in Scotland in 1653.

¹⁶Ibid., 37. Aside from this statement by Thomas Patient, there is virtually no discussion of a pre-fall covenant and post-fall covenant in the writings of the first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists. This contrasts with those proponents of New Covenant Theology today who uphold the existence of not only a pre-fall covenant but also a post-fall covenant.

¹⁷A rising number of New Covenant theologians believe that God forged both a pre-fall and a post-fall covenant with Adam in the Garden of Eden, insisting that God has never communed with man outside of a covenantal relationship. However, such individuals do not define these covenants as do Covenant Theologians. More will be said later about these two covenants, as understood by certain proponents of New Covenant Theology.

¹⁸The second generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists encompass the time period of ca. 1650-1690 A.D.

¹⁹Spilsbery, *Lawful Subject of Baptism*, 1.

²⁰Although the first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists held that the Church existed in the Old Testament, proponents of New Covenant Theology differ, teaching that the Church, which is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18, 24), did *not* exist prior to Pentecost and should, therefore, not be read back into the Old Testament. Rather, the body of Christ, which is the Church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col 1:18, 24) was *first* formed as a redemptive-historical entity when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon believers at Pentecost in Acts 2 and its apostolic extensions in Acts 8, 10, and 19 (cf. John 7:39; 14:17). Furthermore, proponents of New Covenant Theology teach that Spirit Baptism, like the atonement, retroactively reached back to include all Old Testament believers in the Church, the Body of Christ. See Gary D. Long, *Context! Evangelical Views On The Millennium Examined* (Charleston, SC: Createspace.com an Amazon.com company, 2001; reprint 2002, 2011), 344.

²¹Spilsbery, *Lawful Subject of Baptism*, 22.

(Historical Forerunners Continued from Page 15)

1646 FLBC is derived from the Anabaptists as well. Recall that the “Swiss and South German Anabaptists” considered “the New Testament, in particular the life and teachings of Christ” to be “the final authority for the Christian life and the faith and order of the church.”²² In Article 9 of his appendix to the 1646 FLBC, Benjamin Cox describes how the law relates to the New Covenant believer:

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,” I Cor. 9:21.** The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a law, or commanding rule unto us; whereby, and in obedience where unto, 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, I Tim. 1:10,11 [emphasis mine].²³

He continues in 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 [emphasis mine].²⁴

Although the first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists believed that the Decalogue applied to them as New Covenant believers, they did not believe that it applied to them in the same sense “as it was in the hand of Moses” but as it was “delivered” to them from Christ in the New Covenant.

“...the Law of Christ, which all New Covenant believers are obligated to obey, is the *covenantal* outworking of the *absolute law* of God, that is to say, the two greatest commandments, in the New Covenant.”

These innovative concepts regarding biblical law which appear in seed form in the writings of the first-generation seventeenth-century English Particular

Baptists have both germinated and begun to blossom in New Covenant Theology. *First*, New Covenant Theology divides biblical law into two distinct categories: *the absolute law of God* and *the covenantal law of God*. Regarding the absolute law of God, Gary D. Long writes “*God’s absolute law – individually and personally binds all mankind by virtue of their being moral creatures of God regardless of dispensational and covenantal distinctions.*” He continues, “In its absolute sense, then, God’s law is ethically and morally binding upon all mankind as individuals forever – whether Jew or Gentile (Rom. 2:12-15), whether living in the Old or New dispensation era (Matt. 22:36-40).” The absolute law of God is eternal and consists of the love of God and love of neighbor; the two commands upon which *all covenantal* law is based. Concerning God’s covenantal law, Long states: “God’s covenant law corporately and covenantally binds only those who are in the covenant community according to the terms of the covenant in force at a specified time within redemptive history.” Later, he notes: “in its covenantal sense, God’s law is only binding upon a covenant community so long as that specified covenant is in force. The law of Moses as covenant law was binding upon the physical seed of Abraham under the Old Covenant dispensation. The law of Christ is binding upon the spiritual seed of Abraham under the New Covenant dispensation.”²⁵ Thus, the Law of Christ, which all New Covenant believers are obligated to obey, is the *covenantal* outworking of the *absolute law* of God, that is to say, the two greatest commandments, in the New Covenant.

(Continued on Page 17)

²²Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 22.

²³Benjamin Cox, *Appendix to the 1646 First London Baptist Confession of Faith – A More Full Declaration of the Faith and Judgment of Baptized Believers* (London: 1646), Article IX. See also *The First London Confession of Faith 1646 Edition with an Appendix by Benjamin Cox, reprint ed. with historical background in a preface by Gary D. Long* (Charleston, SC: www.CreateSpace.com; an Amazon Co., 2004).

²⁴Ibid., Article X.

²⁵Gary D. Long, *Biblical Law and Ethics: Absolute and Covenantal: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Matthew 5:17-20* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2008), 86.

solo Spiritus Latin for “by the Spirit alone;” a maxim summarizing the biblical truth that the Spirit alone illuminates believers to truly understand God’s Word & empowers believers to live godly lives in Christ Jesus.

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– Ezekiel 36:27 –

“And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances” (NASB).

(Historical Forerunners Continued from Page 16)

Second, although advocates of New Covenant Theology do not believe that the Law of Moses, including the Decalogue, comprises the Law of Christ in the New Covenant, 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). Tom 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. The caterpillar [i.e. the Ten Commandments, Law of Moses] has been transformed. He now looks *very* different. The caterpillar was a promise, the butterfly [i.e. the Law of Christ] its fulfillment. How so? He now looks like Jesus.²⁶

The Law of Moses, which was the *covenantal law* of the Old Covenant, has been *radically* transformed by Christ and *incorporated* into the Law of Christ, the *covenantal law* of the New Covenant. Wells later 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.”²⁷ John 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.’ However, that is an entirely different

statement from, ‘The tables of the covenant given to Israel and the rule of life for Christians today.’ We do not in any way demean Moses when we insist that the tablets of stone are only a dim shadow when compared to the words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, any more than we demean Aaron when we insist that he and his ministry are finished because Christ has replaced Aaron as High Priest. Why would we refuse to send men

**“...the Law of Moses,
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Covenant.”**

back to Aaron and his ministry, and then insist on sending back to Moses and his ministry? Does Christ not equally fulfill both the prophecy concerning a new and greater prophet who would arise to replace Moses (Deut 18:15-19), and the prophecy of the establishment of a priesthood that would replace Aaron’s?²⁸

Like Benjamin Cox, proponents of New Covenant Theology believe that the Law of Moses, including the Ten Commandments, has been *radically transformed* by Christ and subsequently handed to us as a component of the Law of Christ. An accurate definition of the Law of Christ appears in A. Blake White’s *The Law of Christ: A Theological Proposal*. White, a New Covenant theologian, defines the Law of Christ in the following manner: “It is the law of love, the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, the teaching of Jesus, the teaching of the New Testament, and finally the whole canon interpreted in light of the Christ event.”²⁹

FINIS

Here ends Part 2 of
“Historical Forerunners
of New Covenant
Theology” by Zachary
S. Maxcey. The third
portion of this article
will be published in the
May 2015 issue of the
PTSJ.



²⁶Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2002), 184-85.

²⁷Ibid., 189.

²⁸John G. Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone & the History of Redemption* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2004), 115. See also John G. Reisinger, *In Defense of Jesus, the New Lawgiver* (Frederick: New Covenant Media, 2008), 103-105.

²⁹A. Blake White, *The Law of Christ: A Theological Proposal* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2010), 154.

– Hebrews 12:2 –

“...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (NASB).

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solo cruce Latin for “by the cross alone;” the Protestant theological maxim which encapsulates the biblical truth that salvation is *only* found in Christ’s penal substitutionary death on the cross.

The Doctrine of Salvation

- Part 2 -

by William W. Sasser¹

Regeneration involves a complete change of nature, a new heart. The Spirit of God, as it were, performs heart surgery. He does not merely do a couple of arterial bypasses, or replace a few faulty heart valves. He completely removes the old stony heart, replacing it with a heart of flesh. By "heart of flesh" is meant a new nature, that is, one spiritually alive, zealous for the Lord, spiritually fruitful, and sensitive to the leading of the Lord's Word and Spirit. My friend, do you have a new heart?

The Results of Regeneration

Regeneration results in conversion. Regeneration is the cause, while conversion is the result. Whereas regeneration is inward, conversion is an evident, overt, outward change. Regeneration involves a change of nature, while conversion involves a change of life style. Regeneration is the root, while conversion is the fruit. Being regenerated and not converted is impossible. For whereas regeneration is life, conversion is life manifesting or expressing itself.

Many teachers and preachers imply that a change in one's eternal state and destiny does not necessarily mean a change in one's life; that one may have the righteousness of Christ imputed, but not the righteousness of Christ imparted. But the Word of God warns us not to let anyone deceive us in this matter. As John

¹William W. Sasser currently serves as Pastor of Grace Church in Franklin, TN.

²All Scripture citations are from the King James Version (KJV) unless otherwise indicated.

says, "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous...In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother (1 John 3:7,10).

John says that it is not one's talk so much as one's walk that evidences salvation. It is possible for one to learn the theology of grace, and agree that the Bible teaches salvation by grace, and yet not do righteousness. But is not possible for one to be a new creature in Christ and not live in a new way. If one is indeed righteous within, because of the imputed righteousness of Christ, one will love righteousness. If one loves righteousness, one will follow after righteousness (Heb. 12:14). One who belongs to the Holy Spirit, will love holiness. And if one has been delivered from the family of the devil, one will want to live like he is a member of Christ's family. In other words, where there is regeneration there will be conversion.

Regeneration results in an instantaneous change. Just as we would say that there is no lack of time between the bullet and the hole, in like manner, when regeneration takes place, conversion takes place. It is true that there is such a thing as growing in the grace and knowledge of God. We do not speak here of growth, however, but of passing from one state into another. Growing in Christ is gradual, but being alive because of regeneration is instantaneous.

Perhaps an illustration would help clarify the issue. In Genesis 1:3 we read, "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (KJV). Before God spake there was no light, but the instant that God commanded light, light began to exist. When God spoke, there was an instantaneous change in the status of things. In like manner, the natural state of man is without form, void of any spiritual

light. But when the Spirit of God moves and God speaks, there is an immediate change that takes place, viz., the dead nature is passed from death unto life.

When Saul of Tarus made his way toward Damascus, he had but one thing in mind - to bind all who called upon the name of Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 9:1-2). But when he was confronted with the resurrected Christ, he was immediately changed in his nature. Rather than curse the name of Jesus he asked, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Further, he was instructed and baptized by a gentile believer, and he began to preach and teach Jesus Christ (Acts 9:10-20). In other words, he was instantaneously changed.

A second result of regeneration is that one is pleasing to God. The Scripture is abundantly clear that, before one is saved, one cannot please God. The unregenerate mind is enmity against God because it is carnal; and because it is carnal, it is not subject to God, nor is it able to subject itself unto Him (Rom. 8:7). Further, the unregenerate mind is said to be a mind of flesh, i.e., it follows and is only interested in pleasing and satisfying the flesh. Hence, one who possesses such a mind cannot please God (Rom. 8:8).

By the power of the Spirit of God, who changes the heart and mind through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, one is born again. The effect of regeneration is conversion, viz., one is turned to God, and turned away from the love and practice of sin. Rather than serve self, the converted one seeks to serve Christ and to glorify Him. Rather than walk after the flesh, the converted one seeks to mortify the flesh and walk after the Spirit. Rather than delighting in carnality, the converted one delights in spirituality, and earnestly desires to be conformed to to the image of the Savior (Rom. 1:1-14).

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solo evangelio: Latin for "by the gospel alone;" the Protestant axiom that concisely conveys that the Gospel **alone** is the power of God unto salvation and that it is the duty & honor of every believer to share the Gospel in life, word, and deed.

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Yes, conversion is a turning: a mighty turning, a radical turning, a holy turning, a life changing turning. And with such a turning God is well pleased. As 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). The Lord God may say of every converted soul, “*This is my beloved child in whom I am well pleased.*”

A third result of regeneration is that **one can subject himself or herself to the will of God**. Since the fall of the first man, Adam, the will of man has been “dead set” against the will of God. Why is this? Simply because *deicide* is of the essence of sin, i.e., *deicide* is the murder of God. To put it another way, the essence of sin is the death of God.

You will remember what Satan suggested to Eve? He declared the reason God did not want her or Adam to eat of the forbidden fruit was because, said he, “God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil (Gen. 3:5). Satan suggested nothing less than that “self will” would cause the deity of man and the death of God. Man would become God, and God would, for all practical purposes, be dead, because His will would have been overthrown. In other words, if God does not have the power to carry out His will, if we cannot say, “Thy will be done,” knowing that indeed it shall be done, God is as good as dead. God is no longer God.

Of course, rebellion against the will of God does not mean the death of God, but the death of man. Self will - refusal to submit in faith and trust to the revealed

will of God - is an expression of the carnal mind, which is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). As Paul wrote, in Romans 8:7, “*the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*” Loving submission to the will of God is an evidence of spiritual life in the inner man. In regeneration, the enmity of the natural man is subdued and subsequently he is converted to Christ. It is only the converted person who desires in all things to subject his or her will to the will of God. As David said, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power (Ps. 110:3).

The Signs of Regeneration

There are at least four signs of regeneration. **The first sign is repentance and faith**. One may be surprised to learn that faith and repentance are evidences, or signs, or regeneration, rather than causes. However, this is exactly what the Scriptures teach. Both faith and repentance are gifts of God, i.e., not naturally possessed by every individual (Eph. 2:8-9). We know that the Word of God teaches that every person is dead in trespasses and sins before they are regenerated (Eph. 2:1-2). And common sense ought to tell us that no dead thing can give itself life. It is therefore necessary that spiritual life be present **before** one can perform spiritual acts, two of which are repentance and receiving Christ.

Observing how the creation of the world took place might illustrate this truth. The Word of God tells us that the earth was without form, empty, and completely engrossed in darkness (Gen. 1:2). But what happened next? Did the earth get itself together, and by an act of “mother-earth-will” give itself life? Of course not, God had to do something: “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” And what happened next? “God said, Let there be light: and there

was light” (vs. 3) And then? “And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness” (vs. 4).

Do you see the parallel? We were dead in sin, i.e., in darkness, empty and without spiritual form, and totally unable to do anything about it. But the Spirit of God moved upon our deadness, spoke light, viz., life, and separated us from darkness. Result? We began to show signs of life. Once God had moved upon the earth, brought light and separated the light from the darkness, the earth began to show signs of life. When God moves upon one dead in sin, then, and only then, does that person begin to show signs of life. Then and only then does one repent of sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith and repentance are signs of regeneration. I mention them together because they are inseparable. Where there is faith there is repentance, and where there is repentance there is faith. Repentance, from *metanoeo*, literally meaning, “to perceive afterward,” that is, to change because of what is perceived, is turning from sin and self trust. Faith, from *pistis*, refers to a firm persuasion or conviction based upon hearing, which is expressed in trust in Christ. Repentance relates to a change of mind and life regarding sin and self, while faith concerns a change of heart and life regarding Christ. One cannot turn from sin and self without turning to Christ, and one cannot trust Christ without turning from sin and self. They are two sides of the same coin, and where one or the other is missing, one has a counterfeit coin.

Much of what is called ‘gospel preaching’ only emphasizes faith. The hearer is bombarded with “Believe! Believe! Believe!” but absolutely nothing is said about repentance. Thus, many

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total depravity: the biblical doctrine teaching that fallen man (1) is guilty of Adam’s first sin, (2) desperately corrupted his *entire* being in Adam, and (3) is wholly unable to do anything that pleases God.

– Romans 5:12 –

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned” [in Adam] (NASB).

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are led to a faith that has not and will not do business with sin and self. And faith that is not striving against sin is faith that will not save. Faith that does not desire to follow after holiness, is faith that will not see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). Repentance accompanies biblical faith. Spurious or false faith has no repentance. Where there is no repentance, there is no faith; and where there is no faith there is no regeneration. And where there is no regeneration, there is no salvation.

Prayer is a sign of regeneration.

Said William Gurnall, *“Praying is the same to the new creature as crying is to the natural. The child is not learned by art or example to cry, but instructed by nature; it comes into the world crying. Praying is not a lesson got by forms and rules of art, but flowing from principles of new life itself.”* In other words, just as it is natural for a child to cry, so it is natural for one who is a child of God to cry to Him who is his Heavenly Father.

Perhaps Saul of Tarsus will serve as an example. While on the road to Damascus, to persecute Christians, he was confronted by the resurrected Christ. In an instant, Saul of Tarsus became *Paul, the bondsman of Jesus Christ* (Acts 9:1-9). Meanwhile, the Lord called a disciple named Ananias to go to the former Pharisee, recover his sight, show him what he must suffer for the sake of Christ, and baptize him. And how did the Lord describe the newly converted Pharisee to Ananias? “Behold, he prayeth” (vs. 11).

The soul that is without prayer is without life. The soul that is not in communion with the God of salvation is the soul to whom God has not sent salvation. Is it possible that a child can be born and not cry? It may be, but it is not possible that one can be born of the Spirit, and not moved of that Spirit to cry to the God whose spirit it is. Prayer is a sign of

spiritual life, an evidence of having been born from above.

Holiness of life is a sign of

regeneration. The writer to the Hebrews said, *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord* (Heb. 12:14). In regeneration, one is given a new nature. The Spirit of the Lord creates this new nature, in the image of Him that created it (Col. 3:10). In other words, the Holy Lord, by His Holy Spirit, begets a holy nature in all of His sons and daughters. It is impossible but that the child receives its nature from its father. From our earthly father we received a sinful nature, which is corrupt and filled with deceitful lusts. This sinful nature is called “the old man” by New Testament writers (Eph. 4:22). From our Heavenly Father we received a nature created in righteousness and true holiness. This nature is called “the new man” (4:24), and the “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17).

Just as the *old man* expressed himself through the body, the *new man* will also. In regeneration, *i.e.*, the creating of a new nature, those principles and characteristics which make up the new nature will manifest themselves in the life of the regenerated one. Since like begets like and life begets life, the imparting of a holy nature will beget practical holiness.

Obedience to Christ’s revealed will is a sign of regeneration.

According to Hebrews 5:9, Christ, *“became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.”* The very designation, “Christian,” means “little, Christ.” That is, a Christian is one in whom the Spirit of Christ resides, who, in some measure, however imperfect, manifests the spirit and attitude of the Lord Jesus. And what was the demeanor of Christ? Was it not one of submission and obedience to the Father’s will?

One may ask, “How far does

obedience go? To what degree must one obey Christ?” Such a question only reflects a heart that really does not want to obey. Would one ask one’s wife or husband how much they should love them? Would one ask one’s employee how little one could do and still get paid? Christ cannot be loved too much or obeyed too strictly. He merits our dearest and our best. The issue is not about how much obedience should be rendered to the Redeemer, or how far obedience is to go. The issue is whether or not one truly loves Christ. One who is regenerated loves Christ and wants to please Him. Love for Christ will express itself in obedience to Christ, for that is what pleases Him. The following passages verify the necessity of obedience to Christ:

“Not every one that saith unto Me, ‘Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the Will of My Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).

“And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:3-4).

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, ‘If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed” (John 8:31).

“Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14).

- Conversion -

Conversion and Salvation

Conversion is a central element of the doctrine of salvation. Our Lord Jesus

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- Acts 13:48 -

“And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the Word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed” (NASB).

unconditional election: the biblical doctrine that God in eternity past freely chose a particular number of people (for His Son) to receive salvation *not* because of foreknown merit or choices but *solely* as a result of His free, sovereign choice.

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Christ said, “except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3). The Apostle Peter, on the day of Pentecost, said, “Repent ye, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19). And the Apostle James declared, “He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins (Jas. 5:20).”

Salvation and *conversion* are often used interchangeably by Bible teachers and students. One may speak of conversion when teaching about salvation, or vice versa. Although both salvation and conversion are in the same family, and possessing one without the other is not possible, it is possible to distinguish one from the other. In the first place, they may think of conversion as a fruit of salvation. That is, salvation produces conversion. God does not save one after he or she converts, but rather, God converts through salvation. Salvation is the vine and conversion is the fruit of the vine. One might say that salvation is the cause and conversion is the effect.

In the second place, we may distinguish *salvation* and *conversion* from each other as to scope. Salvation encompasses everything from election to conviction to justification to ultimate glorification - since it began in eternity past and will consummate in eternity future. Conversion, however, emphasizes repentance, faith, and obedience, *viz.*, a changed life. Theologically speaking, we may think of salvation as legal, but conversion as experiential. Salvation is professed with the mouth, but conversion is expressed through the life. One may profess salvation but not really be converted, but if one is converted one is saved.

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Which Comes First?

Which comes first, regeneration or conversion? In theological circles it is controverted about whether conversion is in order to regeneration, or regeneration is in order to conversion. Without question the scriptures teach that regeneration must occur first. We must also note, however, that this is logically speaking, and not chronologically. As for human experience, there is no time separation between regeneration and conversion, just as there can be no time separation between the bullet and the hole. If asked which comes first, the bullet or the hole, I would have to state that logically the bullet comes first, but not chronologically.

The following are some reasons why regeneration logically must come first, and in reality does come first. Conversion involves turning from sin, and the natural man is unable to do so (Jer. 13:23). Conversion is pleasing to God, but the natural man cannot please God (Rom. 8:8). Conversion involves subjecting self to the will of God, and this is impossible for the natural man (Rom. 8:7). Conversion is a good thing, but no good thing can come from the heart of an unregenerate individual (Rom. 7:17). Conversion involves receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, which is a spiritual act, something an unregenerate person cannot and will not do (1 Cor. 2:14). Conversion involves coming to Christ, something the natural man has no interest in doing (John 6:44,65). Finally, conversion results from a spiritual resurrection, but the unconverted person is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1, 4-6). **Conclusion:** *regeneration is in order to conversion; regeneration comes first.*

The Constituents of Conversion

Having shown that regeneration precedes conversion, let us now consider, in more detail, the constituents of

conversion.

Conversion involves **turning from sin**. According to Jeremiah 13:23, a human being can no more spiritually convert himself than the Ethiopian can literally change his skin, or the leopard his spots. In fact, the heart is fully set to do evil (Ecc. 8:11) This is why David called upon God to turn him, and the people of Israel, unto the Lord. He knew that, left to themselves, they would never convert themselves unto God (Ps. 85:4; Lam. 5:21). It is only when God draws the soul, that it will run after Him (Song of Solomon 1:4); it is only when the Spirit of God turns the soul to Himself, that it will convert (Jer. 31:18).

But when the Lord does convert the soul, there will be a turning from sin, because the love, and thus the power, of sin will have been broken (Rom. 6:1-4). The converted one is enabled, by the power of the resurrected Christ, to yield the bodily members unto Christ, rather than unto sin (vs. 12-13). Sin will no longer be served as master because sin will no longer have dominion. Christ shall be Lord (vs. 4-6,14). This is the first mark of conversion, turning from sin.

Subjection unto the will of God is a constituent of conversion. According to Psalm 110:3, the people of God are willing to submit to the Lord because of the power of the Lord upon them. That is, the willingness of God's people is a result of the regenerating power of God, which power has converted them. To put it another way, God's power is the cause, and the willingness to submit is the effect. If, then, one has been converted by the regenerating power of God, it is impossible but that there will be a spirit and attitude of submission to the will of God.

To the contrary, if one has not been regenerated, it is impossible but that one will possess a spirit of resistance and

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Limited atonement: the biblical doctrine that Christ's penal substitutionary atonement is fully efficacious for the *particular* people whom God freely & sovereignly elected to salvation. In other words, the atonement is limited with respect to its extent (i.e. those individuals saved) but not its effectiveness (i.e. the quality of the salvation itself).

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enmity to the will of God. In the eighth chapter of Romans we learn that subjection to the will of God is an impossible task for the unregenerate man. Paul tells us, that “*the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God*” (vs. 7-8; KJV). By “carnal mind” is meant unspiritual or unregenerate mind. If the mind is not subject to the will of God, one is said to be “in the flesh,” and they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Notice that the unregenerate mind **cannot** be subject to the will of God because it is in submission to the will of the flesh. Conversion is evidenced when the flesh submits to the will of God. In regeneration the enmity of the natural man is subdued and subsequently he is converted to Christ. Loving submission to the will of God is an evidence of conversion.

Receiving Jesus Christ as both Lord and Savior is a constituent of conversion. That is, an unconverted individual cannot receive Christ, but must first be converted by the Spirit of God. For example, receiving Jesus as the Christ, and bowing to Him as Sovereign Lord, is pleasing to God the Father; but the Bible plainly declares that the unconverted person cannot do anything that is pleasing to God (Rom. 8:8). Again, receiving Jesus as Savior and Lord is without a doubt, a good thing. But the Word of God informs us that no good thing can come from an unconverted person (Rom. 3:12). Finally, receiving Christ is a spiritual act. But the Word of God tells us that the unconverted man not only cannot *perform* a spiritual act, but he or she cannot *receive* anything from God (1 Cor. 2:14).

Until one is converted one is said to be a *natural man*. A “natural man” is one not indwelt by the Spirit of God. One in

irresistible grace: the biblical doctrine that the special inward call, whereby the Holy Spirit regenerates & enables individuals to voluntarily and willingly come to Christ, *invincibly* secures salvation for those whom God has freely, sovereignly, and particularly chosen from eternity past.

whom God’s Spirit dwells is a spiritual man (1 Cor. 2:14). Quite obviously, because the Spirit of God does not possess the unconverted person, he or she is not a spiritual person. Such a person is unable to perform any spiritual act, or receive anything spiritual from God. This means that the “natural man,” *i.e.*, the unconverted person, cannot receive, believe on, or submit unto Jesus Christ, because such an act is essentially a spiritual one. In his gospel the Apostle John tells us, “He came unto his own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:11-13; KJV). And Paul declares, in his first Corinthian letter, “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (12:3; KJV). John emphasizes the necessity of conversion by the sovereign will of God before one can receive Christ. Paul emphasizes conversion by the sovereign Spirit of God before one can truthfully bow to Christ as Lord.

The final constituents of conversion, which we shall consider, are **spiritual resurrection**, and **coming to Christ**. Of course, both are directly related. Christ is life, and one who is dead in trespasses and sins cannot come to Christ until he is first resurrected from the dead. In Ephesians, Paul rejoices that the saints are they who have been made alive from the dead. Being made alive, they have come to Christ and have been gloriously saved (Eph. 2:1-6).

In a resurrection, the impartation of life must precede the manifestation of life. It is in regeneration that life is imparted, and in conversion that life is manifested. This bears witness to the fact that a spiritual resurrection has taken place. That one who is a child of God is

indeed resurrected from the dead, is taught by our Lord in John 5:24-25: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.” Note: one who believes has already passed from death to life. Observe also, that although the resurrection of the body from the grave is yet future, the hour when sinners shall hear Christ’s voice and come forth from the dead is **now!**

At the risk of being redundant, let it again be mentioned that no individual can come to Christ before he or she is resurrected from the state of spiritual death. Our Lord Himself said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him (John 6:44; KJV).” In regeneration, one is resurrected from his spiritual grave. In conversion, one comes to Christ in faith. Have you heard the voice of Christ? If so, you have come to Him in faith?

The Elements of Conversion

The elements of conversion are repentance and faith. Repentance is the negative element and faith is the positive element. We may see these two elements of conversion in our Lord’s commission to Saul of Tarsus, when he was converted on the road to Damascus. He was “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:18; KJV). The element of repentance is seen in turning the Gentiles from darkness and from the power of Satan. The element of faith is seen in turning the Gentiles to light and unto God.

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These two elements of conversion may be compared to the two sides of a coin. To be legitimate, a coin must have two sides, heads and tails. Likewise, conversion, to be spiritually legitimate, must involve both faith and repentance. To repent, from the Greek word, *metanoeo*, is to turn, to change directions, to do an “about face.” Repentance is a change of heart and a change of mind which results in a change of life. Whereas repentance is a turning from self, faith is a turning to Christ. Repentance is turning from self and self-will, and faith is turning to Christ and His will. Separating repentance and faith is analogous to a counterfeit coin. One who is converted must possess them both. One who does not turn from self cannot really turn to Christ. To profess salvation by the Lord Jesus, while holding on to self, is to try to serve two masters, something Jesus Himself said could not be done (Matt. 6:24). Thus, when our Lord Jesus preached He said, *repent ye, and believe the gospel* (Mark 1:15; KJV).

Repentance, the Negative Element

As we have seen, the negative element of conversion is *repentance*. Repentance includes three constituents: the intellect, the emotions, and the will.

The **intellect** is a constituent of repentance. A **change of view** regarding sin, self and God is necessary. Rather than excuse sin, or excuse oneself from the responsibility of sin, the repentant individual accepts personal guilt for sin, and takes the blame before God. When the prodigal son came to himself, he said, “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants” (Luke 15:18-19; KJV). When David repented,

– **Philippians 1:6** –

“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (NASB).

he said, “For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me” (Ps. 51:3; KJV).

The **emotions** are also involved in repentance, in that there is a **change of feeling** toward sin, God and self. The English word, “repent,” comes from the Latin word, *repenitere*, meaning, “to be sorry again.” Sorrow for sin and desire for pardon are aspects of repentance. David is an example of this aspect of repentance. He recognized his sin as being against God, particularly the benevolence and loving kindness of God: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions...Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest (Ps. 51:1,4; KJV).”

The third and final constituent of repentance is **the will**. In conversion, the will is changed and the disposition altered, so that the repentant **one turns from sin**. As we have seen, repentance is translated from the Greek word, *metanoia*, whose meaning includes the idea of a change of mind. The prodigal son said, “I will arise and go to my father...and will say unto Him...I have sinned (Luke 15:18; KJV).” David said, “I acknowledge my transgressions (Ps. 51:3; KJV).” In repentance the human will is made willing to bow to the sovereign will of God. As it is written, concerning all who are the children of God, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power...(Ps. 110:3; KJV).”

My friend, have you repented? If so, God has, by His grace and power, granted you a change of feeling, view and will regarding sin, self and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the desire of your soul to submit willingly, lovingly and completely to the will of your Redeemer. You can say sincerely and truthfully, “not my will, but Thine be done.” Lord, grant us repentance.

Faith, the Positive Element

Faith is the positive element of conversion. When given the gift of faith, a change of view, a change of feeling, and a change of purpose manifests itself in a turning to Christ. As in repentance, the intellect, the emotions, and the will are involved.

The **intellect** is involved in faith. The Bible is believed to be the Word of God, Christ is believed to be the Savior of men, and God is believed to be the Rewarder of all who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

The **emotions** are involved in saving faith, evidenced in a joyful reception of the revelation of grace in Jesus Christ, and a happy embracing of the Atonement of Christ by which one is saved. Paul said, “...we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement” (Rom. 5:11; KJV). Peter said, “Whom having not seen, ye love; in Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet. 1:8; KJV). By faith which works by love, the believer sees Christ as altogether lovely (Song 5:16; Gal. 5:6). With great joy the believer sees the glory of God in the face of Christ (Job 33:26; 2 Cor. 4:3-6).

The **will** is also involved in faith. This is seen in Paul’s words to young Timothy concerning his personal faith in Christ: “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12; KJV). One cannot *commit* himself to anything or anyone apart from a willingness to do so.

Faith and the Will

The volitional element of conversion, the will, is primarily the exercise of faith. The Scriptures describe this volitional act in a variety of ways,

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perseverance of the saints: the biblical doctrine that teaches (1) that God preserves to the end all those who are truly saved and (2) those who persevere to the end are truly saved.

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using a variety of terminology. For example, John the Baptist speaks of faith as looking unto Christ (John 1:29). The apostle John talks of receiving Christ (John 1:12). Our Lord Himself taught that one must come to Him (John 6:37). Such an act of the will is both an intelligent and a uniting act. It is an **intelligent act** of faith in that it is far more than a mere leap in the dark. Faith is born and given power by an inward discovery and reality of heavenly and spiritual light. Jesus Christ said that God will teach every child of God, and that all who are taught of God will to come to Him in faith (John 6:45). The apostle Paul said that God will give all of His children “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him...also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:17-18; KJV). Thus, faith is an intelligent act based upon knowledge.

The volitional act of the will in faith is also a **uniting act**. Through faith Christ and the believer become one in union. This union bears three characteristics: spirituality, vitality and eternity. It is spiritual because “he who unites himself with the Lord is one with Him in spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17). It is vital because, apart from union with Christ, no spiritual life exists. Our Lord said, “Because I live, ye shall live also,” and again, “Abide in Me, and I in you (John 14:19; 15:4; KJV).” It is eternal because it will never be terminated: “I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish” (John 10:28; KJV).

Evidences of Conversion

Conversion is like an expectant mother; it tells on itself. What are the evidences of conversion? There are at least five fundamental evidences of

genuine conversion: a filial fear of God, love for God, knowledge of Christ, delight in the people of God, and a hatred of sin.

A filial fear of God evidences conversion. By nature every unsaved individual has a slavish, or servile, fear of God. When one is converted, slavish fear is cast out by love and replaced with filial fear (1 John 4:18). Filial fear is the dread of disappointing and displeasing the Lord. It is the fear that a child has of not wanting to disappoint its father. David said, “But as for me, I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple” (Ps. 5:7; KJV).

Love for God evidences conversion. This love is superior concerning God, and is inferior with reference to the things of the world. As the Apostle John said, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15; KJV).

A knowledge of Christ evidences conversion. Our Lord 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; KJV). The pivotal point and motivating power of conversion is centered in a knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Delight in the people of God evidences conversion. The converted person loves to converse and fellowship with those who are of his spiritual family, his brothers and sisters in Christ. The Lord Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35; KJV). John wrote, in 1 John 3:14, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (KJV).

A detestation of sin, and a continuous struggle against it,

evidences conversion. Converted persons hate sin because it is against God, His goodness, and government. Sin is God’s enemy, it is that single thing which ruined the creation, caused the fall of the human race, and necessitated the death of God’s only begotten Son. Jesus Christ came to save His people “from their sins” (Matt. 1:21; KJV). Thus the converted person is saved from the penalty, power, and love of sin.

FINIS

Here ends Part 2 of
“The Doctrine of Salvation”
by William W. Sasser. The
second portion of this
article will be published in
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coram Deo Latin for “in the Presence of God;” the Protestant maxim summarizing the biblical truth that a believer’s life is to glorify and honor God in **all** things and at **all** times.

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– 1 Corinthians 10:31 –
“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God”
(NASB).

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