

The Westminster & Baptist Confessions on God's Covenant

Westminster Confession of Faith

- 1 The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never **have any fruition of him, as their blessedness and reward**, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.
- 2 The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.
- 3 Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace: 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.
- 4 This covenant of grace is frequently set forth in the Scripture by the name of a testament, in reference to the death of Jesus Christ, the testator, and to the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it, therein bequeathed.
- 5 This covenant was **differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel**: under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all fore-signifying Christ to come, which were **for that time sufficient and efficacious**, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation, and is called the Old Testament.
- 6 Under the gospel, when Christ the substance was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed, are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity and less outward glory, yet in them it is held forth in more fulness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the New Testament. **There are not, therefore, two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations.**

1689 London Baptist Confession

- 1 The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their creator, yet they could never have **attained the reward of life** but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.
- 2 **Moreover, man having brought himself under the curse of the law by his fall**, it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace, wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.
- 3 **This covenant is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament; and it is founded in that eternal covenant transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect; and it is alone by the grace of this covenant that all the posterity of fallen Adam that ever were saved did obtain life and blessed immortality, man being now utterly incapable of acceptance with God upon those terms on which Adam stood in his state of innocency.**

Note: The *Savoy Declaration* (Congregationalist), para. 5, like the Westminster, holds to a one covenant / two administrations model: "Although **this covenant hath been differently and variously administered** in respect of ordinances and institutions in the time of the law, and since the coming of Christ in the flesh; yet for the **substance and efficacy** of it, to all its spiritual and saving ends, it is **one and the same**; upon the account of which various dispensations, it is called the Old and New Testament."

John Owen on the Newness of the New Covenant

Excerpts from Owen's comments on Hebrew 8

Not “One covenant in two administrations,” but “a new covenant.”

Suppose, then, that this new covenant of grace was extant and effectual under the old testament, so as the church was saved by virtue thereof, and the mediation of Christ therein, how could it be that there should at the same time be another covenant between God and them, of a different nature from this, accompanied with other promises, and other effects? On this consideration it is said, that the two covenants mentioned, the new and the old, were not indeed two distinct covenants, as unto their essence and substance, but only different administrations of the same covenant, called two covenants from some different outward solemnities and duties of worship attending of them. . . . By the new covenant, not the new covenant absolutely and originally, as given in the first promise, is intended; but in its complete gospel administration, when it was actually established by the death of Christ, as administered in and by the ordinances of the new testament. This, with the covenant of Sinai, were, as most say, but different administrations of the same covenant.

But on the other hand, there is such express mention made, not only in this, but in sundry other places of the Scripture also, of two distinct covenants, or testaments, and such different natures, properties, and effects, ascribed unto them, as seem to constitute two distinct covenants. This, therefore, we must inquire into. . . we may consider that the Scripture doth plainly and expressly make mention of two testaments, or covenants, and distinguish between them in such a way, as what is spoken can hardly be accommodated unto a twofold administration of the same covenant.

Wherefore we must grant two distinct covenants, rather than a twofold administration of the same covenant merely, to be intended. We must, I say, do so, provided always that the way of reconciliation and salvation was the same under both. But it will be said, —and with great pretense of reason, for it is that which is the sole foundation they all build upon who allow only a twofold administration of the same covenant, —’That this being the principal end of a divine covenant, if the way of reconciliation and salvation be the same under both, then indeed are they for the substance of them but one.’ And I grant that this would inevitably follow, if it were so equally by virtue of them both. If reconciliation and salvation by Christ were to be obtained not only under the old covenant, but by virtue thereof, then it must be the same for substance with the new. But this is not so; for no reconciliation with God nor salvation could be obtained by virtue of the old covenant, or the administration of it, as our apostle disputes at large, though all believers were reconciled, justified, and saved, by virtue of the promise, whilst they were under the covenant.

As therefore I have showed in what sense the covenant of grace is called “the new covenant,” in this distinction and opposition, so I shall propose sundry things which relate unto the nature of the first covenant, which manifest it to have been a distinct covenant, and not a mere administration of the covenant of grace:

1. These two covenants [Old and New] differ in the circumstance of time as to their promulgation, declaration, and establishment. [promulgate = to promote or make widely known]

9 “not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD.

a. In brief, the first covenant was made at the time that God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, and took its date from the third month after their coming up from thence, Exodus 19:24. From the time of what is reported in the latter place, wherein the people give their actual consent unto the terms of it, it began its formal obligation as a covenant. And we must afterwards inquire when it was abrogated and ceased to oblige the church.

b. The new covenant was declared and made known “in the latter days,” Hebrews 1:1, 2; “in the dispensation of the fullness of times,” Ephesians 1:10.

And it took date, as a covenant formally obliging the whole church, from the death, resurrection, ascension of Christ, and sending of the Holy Ghost. I bring them all into the epocha of this covenant, because though principally it was established by the first, yet was it not absolutely obligatory as a covenant until after the last of them.

2. They differ in the circumstance of place as to their promulgation; which the Scripture also taketh notice of.

a. The first was declared on mount Sinai. Galatians 4:24-26: “These are the two covenants; the one from mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.” That is, Agar, the bondwoman whom Abraham took before the heir of promise was born, was a type of the old covenant given on Sinai, before the introduction of the new, or the covenant of promise; for so he adds: “For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth unto Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.” This mount Sinai, where the old covenant was given, and which was represented by Agar, is in Arabia, —cast quite out of the verge and confines of the church.

b. The other was declared on mount Zion. This difference, with many remarkable instances from it, our apostle insists on, And it “answereth,” or “is placed in the same series, rank, and order with Jerusalem,” namely, in the opposition of the two covenants. For as the new covenant, the covenant of promise, giving freedom and liberty, was given at Jerusalem, in the death and resurrection of Christ, with the preaching of the gospel which ensued thereon. Isaiah 2:3 [a prophecy of the Messiah’s coming]: “*Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*”

3. They differ in the manner of their promulgation and establishment.

a. The old covenant: There were two things remarkable that accompanied the solemn declaration of the first covenant: —

(1.) The dread and terror of the outward appearance on mount Sinai, which filled all the people, yea, Moses himself, with fear and trembling, Hebrews 12:18-21; Exodus 19:16, 20:18, 19. Together herewith was a spirit of fear and bondage administered unto all the people, so as that they chose to keep at a distance, and not draw nigh unto God, Deuteronomy 5:23-27.

(2.) That it was given by the ministry and “disposition of angels,” Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19. Hence the people were in a sense “put in subjection unto angels,” and they had an authoritative ministry in that covenant. The church that then was, was put into some kind of subjection unto angels, as the apostle plainly intimates, Hebrews 2:5. Hence the worshipping or adoration of angels began among that people, Colossians 2:18; which some, with an addition unto their folly and superstition, would introduce into the Christian church, wherein they have no such authoritative ministry as they had under the old covenant.

b. Things are quite otherwise in the promulgation of the new covenant. The Son of God in his own person did declare it. This he “spoke from heaven,” as the apostle observes; in opposition unto the giving of the law “on the earth,” Hebrews 12:25. Yet did he speak on the earth also; the mystery whereof himself declares, John 3:13. And he did all things that belonged unto the establishment of this covenant in a spirit of meekness and condescension, with the highest evidence of love, grace, and compassion, encouraging and inviting the weary, the burdened, the heavy and laden to come unto him. And by his Spirit he makes his disciples to carry on the same work until the covenant was fully declared, Hebrews 2:3. See John 1:17, 18. And the whole ministry of angels, in the giving of this covenant, was merely in a way of service and obedience unto Christ; and they owned themselves the “fellow-servants” only of them that have “the testimony of Jesus,” Revelation 19:10. So that this “world to come,” as it was called of old, was no way put in subjection unto them.

4. They differ in their mediators.

a. The mediator of the first covenant was Moses. “It was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator,” Galatians 3:19. And this was no other but Moses, who was a servant in the house of God, Hebrews 3:5. And he was a mediator, as designed of God, so chosen of the people, in that dread and consternation which befell them upon the terrible promulgation of the law. For they saw that they could no way bear the immediate presence of God, nor treat with him in their own persons. Wherefore they desired that there might be an *internunci*, a mediator between God and them, and that Moses might be the person, Deuteronomy 5:24-27.

b. But the mediator of the new covenant is the Son of God himself. For “there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all,” 1 Timothy 2:5. He who is the Son, and the Lord over his own house, graciously

undertook in his own person to be the mediator of this covenant; and herein it is unspeakably preferred before the old covenant.

5. They differ in their subject-matter, both as unto precepts and promises, the advantage being still on the part of the new covenant. For, —

a. The old covenant, in the preceptive part of it, renewed the commands of the covenant of works, and that on their original terms. Sin it forbade, — that is, all and every sin, in matter and manner, — on the pain of death; and gave the promise of life unto perfect, sinless obedience only: whence the decalogue itself, which is a transcript of the law of works, is called “the covenant,” Exodus 34:28. And besides this, as we observed before, it had other precepts innumerable, accommodated unto the present condition of the people, and imposed on them with rigor. The old testament, absolutely considered, had,

(1.) No promise of grace, to communicate spiritual strength, or to assist us in obedience; nor,

(2.) Any of eternal life, no otherwise but as it was contained in the promise of the covenant of works, “The man that doeth these things shall live in them;” and,

(3.) Had promises of temporal things in the land of Canaan inseparable from it. In the new covenant all things are otherwise, as will be declared in the exposition of the ensuing verses.

b. But in the new covenant, the very first thing that is proposed, is the accomplishment and establishment of the covenant of works, both as unto its commands and sanction, in the obedience and suffering of the mediator. Hereon the commands of it, as unto the obedience of the covenanters, are not grievous; the yoke of Christ being easy, and his burden light.

6. They differ, and that principally, in the manner of their dedication and sanction. This is that which gives any thing the formal nature of a covenant or testament. There may be a promise, there may be an agreement in general, which hath not the formal nature of a covenant, or testament, — and such was the covenant of grace before the death of Christ, — but it is the solemnity and manner of the confirmation, dedication, and sanction of any promise or agreement, that give it the formal nature of a covenant or testament. And this is by a sacrifice, wherein there is both bloodshedding and death ensuing thereon.

a. Now this, in the confirmation of the old covenant, was only the sacrifice of beasts, whose blood was sprinkled on all the people, Exodus 24:5-8.

b. But the new testament was solemnly confirmed by the sacrifice and blood of Christ himself, Zechariah 9:11; Hebrews 10:29, 13:20. And the Lord Christ dying as the mediator and surety of the covenant, he purchased all good things for the church; and as a testator bequeathed them unto it. Hence he says of the sacramental cup, that it is “the new testament in his blood,” or the pledge of his bequeathing unto the church all the promises and mercies of the covenant; which is the new testament, or the disposition of his goods unto his children. But because the Hebrews 9:18-23, we must thither refer the full consideration of it.

7. They differ in the priests that were to officiate before God in the behalf of the people.

- a. In the old covenant, Aaron and his posterity alone were to discharge that office;
- b. in the new, the Son of God himself is the only priest of the church. This difference, with the advantage of the gospel-state thereon, we have handled at large in the exposition of the chapter foregoing.

8. They differ in the sacrifices whereon the peace and reconciliation with God which is tendered in them doth depend. And this also must be spoken unto in the ensuing chapter, if God permit.

9. They differ in the way and manner of their solemn writing. All covenants were of old solemnly written in tables of brass or stone, where they might be faithfully preserved for the use of the parties concerned.

a. So the old covenant, as to the principal, fundamental part of it, was “engraven in tables of stone,” which were kept in the ark, Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:10; 2 Corinthians 3:7. And God did so order it in his providence, that the first draught of them should be broken, to intimate that the covenant contained in them was not everlasting nor unalterable.

b. But the new covenant is written in the “fleshy tables of the hearts” of them that do believe 2 Corinthians 3:3; Jeremiah 31:33.

10. They differ in their ends [purposes].

a. The principal end of the first covenant was to discover sin, to condemn it, and to set bounds unto it. So saith the apostle, “It was added because of transgressions.” And this it did several ways: —

(1) By conviction: for “by the law is the knowledge of sin;” it convinced sinners, and caused every mouth to be stopped before God.

(2) By condemning the sinner, in an application of the sanction of the law unto his conscience.

(3) By the judgments and punishments wherewith on all occasions it was accompanied. In all it manifested and represented the justice and severity of God.

b. The end of the new covenant is, to declare the love, grace, and mercy of God; and therewith to give repentance, remission of sin, and life eternal.

11. They differed in their effects.

a. For the first covenant being the “ministration of death” and “condemnation,” it brought the minds and spirits of them that were under it into servitude and bondage; whereas spiritual liberty is the immediate effect of the new testament. And there is no one thing wherein the Spirit of God doth more frequently give us an account of the difference between these two covenants, than in this of the liberty of the one and the bondage of the other. See Romans 8:15; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 4:1-7, 24, 26, 30, 31; Hebrews 2:14, 15. This, therefore, we must a little explain. Wherefore the bondage which was the effect of the old covenant arose from several causes concurring unto the effecting of it: —

(1.) The renovation of the terms and sanction of the covenant of works contributed much thereunto. For the people saw not how the commands of that covenant could be observed, nor how its curse could be avoided. They saw it not, I say, by any thing in the covenant of Sinai; which therefore “gendered unto bondage.” All the prospect they had of deliverance was from the promise.

(2.) It arose from the manner of the delivery of the law, and God’s entering thereon into covenant with them. This was ordered on purpose to fill them with dread and fear. And it could not but do so, whenever they called it to remembrance.

(3.) From the severity of the penalties annexed unto the transgression of the law. And God had taken upon himself, that where punishment was not exacted according to the law, he himself would “cut them off.” This kept them always anxious and solicitous, not knowing when they were safe or secure.

(4.) From the nature of the whole ministry of the law, which was the “ministration of death” and “condemnation,” 2 Corinthians 3:7, 9; which declared the desert of every sin to be death, and denounced death unto every sinner, administering by itself no relief unto the minds and consciences of men. So was it the “letter that killed” them that were under its power.

(5.) From the darkness of their own minds, in the means, ways, and causes of deliverance from all these things. It is true, they had a promise before of life and salvation, which was not abolished by this covenant, even the promise made unto Abraham; but this belonged not unto this covenant, and the way of its accomplishment, by the incarnation and mediation of the Son of God, was much hidden from them, —yea, from the prophets themselves who yet foretold them. This left them under much bondage. For the principal cause and means of the liberty of believers under the gospel, ariseth from the clear light they have into the mystery of the love and grace of God in Christ. This knowledge and faith of his incarnation, humiliation, sufferings, and sacrifice, whereby he made atonement for sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness, is that which gives them liberty and boldness in their obedience, 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18. Whilst they of old were in the dark as unto these things, they must needs have been kept under much bondage.

(6.) It was increased by the yoke of a multitude of laws, rites, and ceremonies, imposed on them; which made the whole of their worship a burden unto them, and insupportable, Acts 15:10. In and by all these ways and means there was a spirit of bondage and fear administered unto them. And this God did, thus he dealt with them, to the end that they might not rest in that state, but continually look out after deliverance.

b. On the other hand, the new covenant gives liberty and boldness, the liberty and boldness of children, unto all believers. It is the Spirit of the Son in it that makes us free, or gives us universally all that liberty which is any way needful for us or useful unto us. For “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;” namely, to serve God, “not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit.” And it is declared that this was the great end of bringing in the new covenant, in the accomplishment of the promise made unto Abraham, namely, “that

we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve God without fear all the days of our life,” Luke 1:72-75. And we may briefly consider wherein this deliverance and liberty by the new covenant doth consist, which it doth in the things ensuing: —

(1.) In our freedom from the commanding power of the law, as to sinless, perfect obedience, in order unto righteousness and justification before God. Its commands we are still subject unto, but not in order unto life and salvation; for unto these ends it is fulfilled in and by the mediator of the new covenant, who is “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,” Romans 10:4.

(2.) In our freedom from the condemning power of the law, and the sanction of it in the curse. This being undergone and answered by him who was “made a curse for us,” we are freed from it, Romans 7:6; Galatians 3:13, 14. And therein also are we “delivered from the fear of death,” Hebrews 2:15, as it was penal and an entrance into judgment or condemnation, John 5:24.

(3.) In our freedom from conscience of sin, Hebrews 10:2, — that is, conscience disquieting, perplexing, and condemning our persons; the hearts of all that believe being “sprinkled from an evil conscience” by the blood of Christ.

(4.) In our freedom from the whole system of Mosaical worship, in all the rites, and ceremonies, and ordinances of it; which what a burden it was the apostles do declare, Acts 15, and our apostle at large in his epistle to the Galatians.

(5.) From all the laws of men in things appertaining unto the worship of God, 1 Corinthians 7:23. And by all these, and the like instances of spiritual liberty, doth the gospel free believers from that “spirit of bondage unto fear,” which was administered under the old covenant.

It remains only that we point out the heads of those ways whereby this liberty is communicated unto us under the new covenant. And it is done, —

(1.) Principally by the grant and communication of the Spirit of the Son as a Spirit of adoption, giving the freedom, boldness, and liberty of children, John 1:12; Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:6, 7. From hence the apostle lays it down as a certain rule, that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” 2 Corinthians 3:17. Let men pretend what they will, let them boast of the freedom of their outward condition in this world, and of the inward liberty or freedom of their wills, there is indeed no true liberty where the Spirit of God is not. The ways whereby he giveth freedom, power, a sound mind, spiritual boldness, courage, contempt of the cross, holy confidence before God, a readiness for obedience, and enlargedness of heart in duties, with all other things wherein true liberty doth consist, or which any way belong unto it, I must not here divert to declare. The world judges that there is no bondage but where the Spirit of God is; for that gives that conscientious fear of sin, that awe of God in all our thoughts, actions, and ways, that careful and circumspect walking, that temperance in things lawful, that abstinence from all appearance of evil, wherein they judge the greatest bondage on the earth to consist. But those who have

received him, do know that the whole world doth lie in evil, and that all those unto whom spiritual liberty is a bondage are the servants and slaves of Satan.

(2.) It is obtained by the evidence of our justification before God, and the causes of it. This men were greatly in the dark unto under the first covenant, although all stable peace with God doth depend thereon; for it is in the gospel that “the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith,” Romans 1:17. Indeed “the righteousness of God without the law is witnessed by the law and the prophets,” Romans 3:21; that is, testimony is given to it in legal institutions and the promises recorded in the prophets. But these things were obscure unto them, who were to seek for what was intended under the veils and shadows of priests and sacrifices, atonements and expiations. But our justification before God, in all the causes of it, being now fully revealed and made manifest, it hath a great influence into spiritual liberty and boldness.

(3.) By the spiritual light which is given to believers into the mystery of God in Christ. This the apostle affirms to have been “hid in God from the beginning of the world,” Ephesians 3:9. It was contrived and prepared in the counsel and wisdom of God from all eternity. Some intimation was given of it in the first promise, and it was afterwards shadowed out by sundry legal institutions; but the depth, the glory, the beauty and fullness of it, were “hid in God,” in his mind and will, until it was fully revealed in the gospel. The saints under the old testament believed that they should be delivered by the promised Seed, that they should be saved for the Lord’s sake, that the Angel of the covenant would save them, yea, that the Lord himself would come to his temple; and they diligently inquired into what was foreshadowed concerning “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” But all this while their thoughts and conceptions were exceedingly in the dark as to those glorious things which are made so plain in the new covenant, concerning the incarnation, mediation, sufferings, and sacrifice of the Son of God, —concerning the way of God’s being in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Now as darkness gives fear, so light gives liberty.

(4.) We obtain this liberty by the opening of the way into the holiest, and the entrance we have thereby with boldness unto the throne of grace. This also the apostle insists upon peculiarly in sundry places of his ensuing discourses, as Hebrews 9:8, 10:19-22: where it must be spoken to, if God permit, at large; for a great part of the liberty of the new testament doth consist herein.

(5.) By all the ordinances of gospel-worship, How the ordinances of worship under the old testament did lead the people into bondage hath been declared; but those of the new testament, through their plainness in signification, their immediate respect unto the Lord Christ, with their use and efficacy to guide believers in their communion with God, do all conduce unto our evangelical liberty. And of such importance is our liberty in this instance of it, that when the apostles saw it necessary, for the avoiding of offense and scandal, to continue the observance of one or two legal institutions, in abstinence from some things in themselves indifferent, they did it only for a season, and declared that it was only in case of

scandal that they would allow this temporary abridgment of the liberty given us by the gospel.

12. They differ greatly with respect unto the dispensation and grant of the Holy Spirit. It is certain that God did grant the gift of the Holy Spirit under the old testament, and his operations during that season; but it is no less certain, that there was always a promise of his more signal effusion upon the confirmation and establishment of the new covenant. See in particular that great promise to this purpose, Joel 2:28, 29, as applied and expounded by the apostle Peter, Acts 2:16-18.

a. The old covenant. Yea, so sparing was the communication of the Holy Ghost under the old testament, compared with his effusion under the new, as that the evangelist affirms that “the Holy Ghost was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified,” John 7:39; that is, he was not yet given in that manner as he was to be given upon the confirmation of the new covenant. And those of the church of the Hebrews who had received the doctrine of John, yet affirmed that “they had not so much as heard whether there were any Holy Ghost” or no, Acts 19:2; that is, any such gift and communication of him as was then proposed as the chief privilege of the gospel.

b. The new covenant. Neither doth this concern only the plentiful effusion of him with respect unto those miraculous gifts and operations wherewith the doctrine and establishment of the new covenant was testified unto and confirmed: however, that also gave a signal difference between the two covenants; for the first covenant was confirmed by dreadful appearances and operations, effected by the ministry of angels, but the new by the immediate operation of the Holy Ghost himself. But this difference principally consists herein, that under the new testament the Holy Ghost hath graciously condescended to bear the office of the comforter of the church. That this unspeakable privilege is peculiar unto the new testament, is evident from all the promises of his being sent as a comforter made by our Savior, John 14-16.; especially by that wherein he assures his disciples that “unless he went away” (in which going away he confirmed the new covenant) “the Comforter would not come; but if he so went away, he would send him from the Father,” John 16:7. And the difference between the two covenants which ensued hereon is inexpressible.

13. They differ in the declaration made in them of the kingdom of God. It is the observation of Augustine, that the very name of “the kingdom of heaven” is peculiar unto the new testament.

a. The old covenant: It is true, God reigned in and over the church under the old testament; but his rule was such, and had such a relation unto secular things, especially with respect unto the land of Canaan, and the flourishing condition of the people therein, as that it had an appearance of a kingdom of this world. And that it was so, and was so to be, consisting in empire, power, victory, wealth, and peace, was so deeply fixed on the minds of the generality of the people, that the disciples of Christ themselves could not free themselves of that apprehension, until the new testament was fully established.

b. But now in the gospel [new covenant], the nature of the kingdom of God, where it is, and wherein it consists, is plainly and evidently declared, unto the unspeakable consolation of

believers. For whereas it is now known and experienced to be internal, spiritual, and heavenly, they have no less assured interest in it and advantage by it, in all the troubles which they may undergo in this world, than they could have in the fullest possession of all earthly enjoyments.

14. They differ in their substance and end [purpose].

a. The old covenant was typical, shadowy, and removable, Hebrews 10:1. Now, consider the old covenant comparatively with the new, and this part of its nature, that it was typical and shadowy, is a great debasement of it.

b. The new covenant is substantial and permanent, as containing the body, which is Christ. But consider it absolutely, and the things wherein it was so were its greatest glory and excellency; for in these things alone was it a token and pledge of the love and grace of God. For those things in the old covenant which had most of bondage in their use and practice, had most of light and grace in their signification. This was the design of God in all the ordinances of worship belonging unto that covenant, namely, to typify, shadow, and represent the heaven]y, substantial things of the new covenant, or the Lord Christ and the work of his mediation. This the tabernacle, ark, altar, priests, and sacrifices did do; and it was their glory that so they did. However, compared with the substance in the new covenant, they have no glory.

15. They differ in the extent of their administration, according unto the will of God.

a. The first [covenant] was confined unto the posterity of Abraham according to the flesh, and unto them especially in the land of Canaan, Deuteronomy 5:3, with some few proselytes that were joined unto them, excluding all others from the participation of the benefits of it. And hence it was, that whereas the personal ministry of our Savior himself, in preaching of the gospel, was to precede the introduction of the new covenant, it was confined unto the people of Israel, Matthew 15:24. And he was the “minister of the circumcision,” Romans 15:8. Such narrow bounds and limits had the administration of this covenant affixed unto it by the will and pleasure of God, Psalm 147:19, 20.

b. But the administration of the new covenant is extended unto all nations under heaven; none being excluded, on the account of tongue, language, family, nation, or place of habitation. All have an equal interest in the rising Sun. The partition wall is broken down, and the gates of the new Jerusalem are set open unto all comers upon the gospel invitation. This is frequently taken notice of in the Scripture. See Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; John 11:51, 52, 12:32; Acts 11:18, 17:30; Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 2:11-16, 118 3:8-10; Colossians; 3:10, 11; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 5:9. This is the grand charter of the poor wandering Gentiles. Having willfully fallen off from God, he was pleased, in his holiness and severity, to leave all our ancestors for many generations to serve and worship the devil. And the mystery of our recovery was “hid in God from the beginning of the world,” Ephesians 3:8-10. And although it was so foretold, so prophesied of, so promised under the old testament, yet, such was the pride, blindness, and obstinacy, of the greatest part of the church of the Jews, that its accomplishment was one great part of that stumbling-block whereat they fell; yea, the greatness and glory of this mystery was such, that the disciples of Christ themselves comprehended it not, until it was testified

unto them by the pouring out of the Holy Ghost, the great promise of the new covenant, upon some of those poor Gentiles, Acts 11:18.

16. They differ in their efficacy; for the old covenant “made nothing perfect,” it could effect none of the things it did represent, nor introduce that perfect or complete state which God had designed for the church. But this we have at large insisted on in our exposition of the foregoing chapter.

17. Lastly, They differ in their duration: for the one was to be removed, and the other to abide for ever; which must be declared on the ensuing verses.

Conclusion. It may be other things of an alike nature may be added unto these that we have mentioned, wherein the difference between the two covenants doth consist; but these instances are sufficient unto our purpose. For some, when they hear that the covenant of grace was always one and the same, of the same nature and efficacy under both testaments, —that the way of salvation by Christ was always one and the same, —are ready to think that there was no such great difference between their state and ours as is pretended. But we see that on this supposition, that covenant which God brought the people into at Sinai, and under the yoke whereof they were to abide until the new covenant was established, had all the disadvantages attending it which we have insisted on. And those who understand not how excellent and glorious those privileges are which are added unto the covenant of grace, as to the administration of it, by the introduction and establishment of the new covenant, are utterly unacquainted with the nature of spiritual and heavenly things.