

Scripture before Paper: Exodus 40: 16-38

Introduction

The *difference* between Old and New Testament believers, according to the confessions, was not in *substance*, but *enlargement*, consisting in 1) “freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law,” 2) freedom from “the whole legal administration of the covenant of grace,” 3) “greater boldness of access to the throne of grace,” and 4) “fuller communications of the free Spirit of God.” How these benefits were *administered* under the Ceremonial Law, and how they were *enlarged* under the New Testament, make up the subject of this paper.

Let us address the subject of this paper by examining these questions:

1. How did the “ceremonial law” function as an administration of the “covenant of grace?”
2. How were the benefits of Christ’s work enjoyed under that administration?
3. What were the deficiencies of this administration
4. Why was it discontinued and how were the benefits of that administration enlarged in the New Testament?

I. How did the “ceremonial law” function as an administration of the “covenant of grace?”

A. What is an administration of the Covenant of Grace?

In this paper, the “Covenant of Grace” refers to the promise of the gospel to fallen man, first delivered in the Garden of Eden, that God would provide salvation for humankind in a redeemer to undo the work of the serpent who brought sin and curse into the world. With regard to persons of the covenant, God is the gracious initiator and provider of a redeemer. Recipients of this promise are the seed of the woman, unrighteous sinners who are altogether incapable of

salvation through obedience to good works and utterly dependent upon the promise.¹ Then there is the particular Seed-redeemer (singular, “He,”) of the woman, who would accomplish redemption through crushing the head of the serpent while suffering the bruising of his heel. The seed (plural) of the woman are in conflict with the seed of the serpent (an early allusion to the scriptural distinction between a holy seed and their oppressors). Throughout scripture, this promise is normally administered *through* a visible family, or visible church, that includes faithful and unfaithful persons who, respectively, either keep or break the terms of that covenant. These features appear *in every administration* of this redemptive plan.

What, then, do we mean by an *administration* of the Covenant of Grace? “Administration” is a good biblical word, a translation of **οἰκονομία**, from which we get the word “economy.” The word means “management,” frequently the management of a household, or “stewardship,” or “husbandry,” “arrangement,” or even “steps,” as in, “what steps have you have taken?”² Interestingly, the only occasions in Scripture of the word “dispensation,” are translations of this word. There is nothing in the word to suggest, for instance, a change of houses, but only a change in the management of the one house.³ In scripture terminology, “dispensation” is not understood as a time period for a different covenant, but simply as an *administration* of God’s grace, such as the choice that, bypassing other apostolic candidates, God would call and appoint Paul to be the “Apostle to the Gentiles” (1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25). Is there a fundamental unity in God’s redemptive program, a unity variously administered, or, on the contrary, do the various administrations preclude such a unity. The details of the various administrations will be found to be perfectly consistent with the fundamental unity.

The position taken here is that since before the world began God has had a long view of

¹ Because of their union with Adam (Rom. 5:14-19), salvation through the broken Covenant of Works is out of the question: “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

² Henry George Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1204.

³ See, for example, the contrast in Hebrews 3:5-6 between Moses, a servant over God’s house, and Christ, the owner of it: “Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son.”

the grand objective of redemption: the glory of His Son in the demonstration of His grace (Eph. 1: 3-14). He obtains that objective by a series of steps, successive redemptive actions and progressive revelations, beginning with a single guilty, ignorant, corrupt, sin-transmitting, dysfunctional family, and ending with a restored sinless cosmos, where God dwells with an innumerable company of His saints bearing His restored image. The staircase that takes us from cursed dust to heavenly glory is the Covenant of Grace and the steps are the different *administrations* of that covenant. As He took the Hebrews to the Promised Land by a long pilgrimage through the wilderness rather than directly, it is hardly surprising, given the great evil and hurt that humankind has inflicted upon itself, that God should have taken this progressive route to redeem, and teach, restore and preserve them so as to have a people prepared for dwelling with God.

The ultimate objective of the administration of the covenant delivered to Abraham is the same: restoration of the world through the promised seed (“in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed”) through his family.⁴ This regaining of Paradise is typically held forth to Abraham as the inheritance of a great land, a promise which is also held in the heart of Abraham as the hope of “a city whose builder and maker is God.” Now, this is most important—the strategy of this administration is to keep the people of God believing the gospel, looking forward to the coming of the Messiah and exercising faith in Him, and keeping them separated from the corruption of the world as they walk before the Lord, keeping His word. To fulfill His covenant with Abraham (Ex. 5: 5-7), God redeemed Israel from Egypt, that they might know Him and He might be their God and they His people.⁵ At Sinai, He gave the heirs of the promise a new administration of that

⁴ “... Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to *keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him*,”; “And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because Abraham *obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws*” (Gen. 18: 18f.; 26: 4-5, emphasis mine). Paul’s comments in Galatians 3, about the promise coming 430 years before the Law do not require that Abraham lived in some kind of private libertarianism without divinely revealed standards or obligations. God’s promise to Abraham does not preclude the requirement of the faithful performance of revealed good works as the means for the accomplishment of the divine plan any more than does the Pauline teaching of justification sola fide.

⁵ Compare Exodus 6:5-8, with Jeremiah 31:33. Something new is added, but the central promise is the same: “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” See also, Zacharias’ song at the birth of John the Baptist: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; *as he spake*

covenant which, contrary to the opinion of many, was not a *diminishing* of the promise to Abraham, but a significant “*enlargement*.”⁶

B. Ceremonial Law?

What do we mean by the “*ceremonial law*?” According to the Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, “ceremonial,” is “the performance of Divine worship with prescribed and formal actions.”⁷ Hence, we may begin our definition of ceremonial law as those formal actions God has prescribed for the performance of His worship. We must distinguish between these prescribed formal actions and other laws. As expressed by Witsius, “The foundation of the moral law, whose perpetuity and unchangeableness is an unquestionable truth, is of a quite different nature from that of the ceremonial institutions.”⁸ Theologians have quite rightly observed that the Scriptures delivered to fallen man contain (#1) some prescribed actions which have the weight of eternally binding “moral law,” i.e., things necessary to the due bearing of the image of God, things that are written on the heart of every man, to which uncorrupted conscience witnesses, which were, apparently, the things commanded in the original “covenant of works,” and (#2) other “*formal actions*” such as were positively imposed upon man by God, by design, in the accomplishment of

by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life” (Lk 1:68–75, emphasis mine).

⁶ E.g., Francis Turretin: “Before, the covenant had been restricted to certain persons and families only, but by Moses it was enlarged both objectively (since it was established with an entire and numerous nation) and subjectively, on the part of the covenant itself ratified by many solemnities, not only with the Passover and other sacraments, but with very many other things, especially with sacrifices (figures of the death of Christ) and new prophecies concerning Christ to be revealed in his own time.” *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, II:224.

⁷ F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 316.

⁸ Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man: Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity*, trans. William Crookshank, vol. 2 (London: T. Tegg & Son, 1837), 378.

His redemptive plan.⁹ To paraphrase a quotation by Witsius of the Jewish commentator Maimonides, there are some laws which had they not been written down *should have been* (i.e., #1 above) and other laws which were written down but *had they not been written down* the violation of them would have been no sin (i.e., #2 above). I don't know exactly what Maimonides meant by "should have been," but I view it this way: they were laws that needed "republishing"¹⁰ because man, in millennia of self-justifying, conscience-violating, god-creating, sin-inventing ethics had done all he could to efface the law written on his heart, received from Eden, and pleaded by an accusing conscience.

II. How were the benefits of Christ's work enjoyed under that administration?

In order to appreciate the *enlargement* of the benefits of the New Covenant over the Old we must first understand those benefits under the Old.

A. The Ceremonial Law as a "Pedagogue"

1. Guardian (Galatians 3:23-4:7).

Paul says the law was our pedagogue (παιδαγωγός "guardian," "schoolmaster") to bring us to Christ.¹¹ Though the priest was the divinely appointed teacher of Israel, this word means much

⁹ There were also other "positive laws" given to pre-fallen man, such as the keeping of the seventh day *in particular*, and the restriction of the tree of knowledge. These are specifically commanded by God to Adam in the exercise of His Sovereignty over His creature, but do not fit into what necessarily arises from the commands to "love God with all your heart," and "love your neighbor as yourself" as other moral laws do.

¹⁰ "Republishing" in this sense of "publishing again" the standard of righteousness which must be a requirement for life is not to be confused with a republishing of the Covenant of Works. This, having once been broken, rendered forever lost all who were *covenantally in Adam*. The view taken here is evangelical; the republishing of the Covenant of Works view is legalistic.

¹¹ "Πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἐλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν ὑπὸ νόμον ἐρρουρούμεθα συναλειόμενοι εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι. ὥστε ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν, ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν." Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Logos Bible Software, 2009), Ga 3:23–24. 36.5 ἐπιτροπὸς, οὐ μ (derivative of ἐπιτρέπω 'to instruct,' not occurring in the NT); παιδαγωγός, οὐ μ: a person who guides, directs, and shows concern for—'guardian, leader,

more, so before getting to what it teaches us, we should take a brief look at the role of the law as “guardian.” To do this we must consider the role of what has been called the “civil” or “judicial” law because of its connection with the ceremonial.

In the production and preservation of a people prepared for bringing the Son of God into the world, God created not merely an ethnos, a genetically and religiously related people, but a civil state, with civil laws to do what civil laws are intended to do: to form the people in a unified religious-civil body politic (i.e., 12 tribes as one nation belonging to Yahweh, living according to His righteousness, trusting in His grace, looking for the Messiah), establish justice by enforcing God’s moral law in a nation of sinners, and retain God’s favor by enforcing the continuation of the ceremonial law, establishing and regulating a system of teaching and government, commerce and defense, delivering civil punishments to those who endanger that nation through apostasy, schism, and other violations of the moral and ceremonial laws. These civil laws are not only divine applications of the moral law to that people making up His redemptive nation-state,¹² they are intimately and inextricably bound up with the exercise of the ceremonial law, serving to preserve and enforce that law.

For our purposes this morning and for this conference, it is essential to remember 1) that the ceremonial law was distinguishable but never independent of the civil or judicial law; 2) that, like the ceremonial law, the objective for this church-state, this religious-political institution, with its civil regulations, is to bring Christ into the world, to bring to fruition the promise of the covenant of grace; and 3) given that the ceremonial law was always intended to be a temporary measure, as

guide.’ ἐπιτροπὸς: ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπου ἐστὶν καὶ οἰκονόμος ‘he is under the supervision of those who take care of him and manage his affairs’ Ga 4:2. παιδαγωγός: ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγός ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν ‘the Law was our guide to Christ’ or ‘... unto the time of Christ’ Ga 3:24. In classical times, a παιδαγωγός was a man, usually a slave, whose task it was to conduct a boy to and from school and to supervise and direct his general conduct.

¹² The judicial law is so obviously an application of the moral law that in his *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses, Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, John Calvin credibly expounds all the commands of the law, moral, civil and ceremonial, under the appropriate commandments from the Decalogue as “expositions” and “supplements” to those commandments.

we will see below, it is not surprising that there would be a corresponding change in the make-up and polity of the church-state, or “holy nation” with the coming of Christ.¹³

2. Teacher of the covenant of grace

The very first expression of ceremonial law was the death of beasts to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve. This was the beginning of animal sacrifice: to impress the worshipper with the deadly consequences of sin against his Creator, to teach with equal clarity the principle of the substitution of the innocent for the guilty in the exercise of the Divine clemency, to communicate the benefits of that coming substitution, and, so doing, to be the means of communion of the worshipper with his reconciled God. Likewise, circumcision was instituted as a ceremony of the covenant with Abraham. Circumcision almost certainly taught, and was understood as teaching, that man inherited a sinful nature, a native guilt and corruption, which needs removal if a man is to abide among the people of God. According to Paul, it was “a seal of the righteousness that [Abraham] had by faith” (Rom. 4:11); i.e., a religious ceremony that signified (taught) and sealed (made certain) that by faith one received gratuitous justification, and a place among them that are set apart to God. Likewise, the original Passover was a powerful lesson on the consequences of sin, the necessity of partaking of God’s provision of an atonement through blood (i.e., upon the doorposts), and the partaking of God’s delivering and nourishing grace through partaking of the slain substitute. It’s communal character, emphasizing that the redemption was not individualistic, was clear since we partake of it as a gathered household. Hence, it may be seen that the “ceremonial law” was not some brand new thing distinguishing the Law of Moses, but that under the Law of Moses it becomes enlarged, retaining its function of signifying sin, law, and the method of grace, but doing much more emphatically and elaborately.

¹³ *Contra* Dispensationalism, God did not simply create a Law, the Law of Moses, and then simply decide to scrap the whole thing with the coming of Christ. There are various, distinct, interconnected parts which have a purpose for being and, as we will see, a possibility for continuing, discontinuing or changing according to the purpose of the Law Giver. The annulment of the entire system (i.e., the Sinaiatic administration, “the Law”) as a system does not at all disqualify some part of it (e.g., the moral law) from having a role in the new administration (e.g., the law written on the hearts of New Covenant believers).

a) *Revealer of the glory and dominion of God*

What does the ceremonial law teach us? First, it reveals to us the glory and dominion of God. I am thinking here of the ceremonial law in general, and the tabernacle in particular. This tabernacle was not only constructed according to the pattern received on the mount, but was a continuation of the august revelation of the divine majesty that was manifested there. The tabernacle was the cosmos in microcosm with the King enthroned within. Its origin, its design, its construction, its location in the center of the camp, the gravity and solemnity of the ceremonies performed there, etc., all said, “Yahweh is the glorious God of heaven and of earth and of us; our creator and redeemer, our owner, our provider, our protector, our observer and judge and dwelling place.” The ceremonial law in every part says, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty. The whole earth is full of His glory,” and “From Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things.” Apart from this conviction, the remainder of the Law, ceremonial, moral, and civil, might have no more power on the conscience than the Code of Hammurabi or a thousand “tweets” with empty moralisms of modern secularists. In every New Testament approach to the evangelism of pagans there had to be some kind of “pre-evangelism,” making clear to them these fundamental theistic truths that were preached every day to Israel in the ceremonial law.

b) *The character of and penalty of sin.*

Next, it reveals to us, in vivid, unmistakable terms, the character of sin and the consequences of breaking the moral law. The moral law revealed in the 10 commandments and in the case laws that follow remind all men who come under its thunderous sound that they and all men are, apart from some graciously given redemption, violators, condemned already, dead men walking, in need of a Savior.

If this is what the moral law does, what more is done by the ceremonial law? The moral law quite objectively reveals to humankind the *criteria* of righteousness, but the ceremonial law says, “Come here and look at this. Look at it every day. Look at it when you wake up, when you put on your clothes, when you eat, when you go about every part of your daily affairs, when you go out and when you come in, when you worship, and when your loved ones die. Everywhere you

turn your eye, in public and in private – Behold! – the filthy character and dreadful consequences of the sin that pervades every part of your being.” No wonder it called “a ministry of condemnation.”

c) *The extent of sin.*

The striking thing about the ceremonial law of the Lord is that it is so pervasive, so extensive, and so intensive in its instruction. Here we learn of the radical distinction between good and evil. In this it is altogether opposed to the relativism that pervades the ethics of our age. There are no gray areas. In this fallen and complicated world, it may be difficult for sinners to discern between good and evil, but here we are reminded over and over again that good and evil are realities, that God makes the distinction, and that our failure to make the distinction has dire consequences. So, God sets before His people laws which require them to observe the distinction between clean and unclean. Secondly, it is not only necessary to observe that God makes the distinction, but I must *act* on that distinction. I must eat only clean foods, I must wear unmixed clothing, I must keep my fields sown with only one kind of seed and, most difficult of all, must touch nothing unclean; there must be no corruption, no confusion, no syncretism. Thirdly, it teaches that uncleanness is *everywhere*; it is inescapable! Why, because it is my native state. Everything that comes out of me is unclean: feces must be buried outside the camp, “lest the Lord see anything indecent among you and turn against you;” seminal emissions, whether from lawful intercourse or nocturnal emissions do not merely call for hygienic cleansing but make an individual *ceremonially* unclean, i.e., religiously *unfit to be in God’s presence*; the perfectly natural periodic menses, or its alternative, giving birth, or even *being* born (!) make one ceremonially unclean. So does touching a dead body, a bone, or even a grave (Lev. 15:16-24, 32ff.; Deut. 23:10-14; Num. 19). As Jonathan Edwards put it, “Hereby they were taught that they were depraved, sinful creatures, that they had sinful natures and were always a-committing sins for which God might justly be angry with them.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Jonathan Edwards, “The Sacrifice of Christ Acceptable,” in *Sermons and Discourses, 1723–1729*, ed. Harry S. Stout and Kenneth P. Minkema, vol. 14, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1997), 447.

d) *The character of sin*

Sin has its own active transforming power, a little going a long way, represented by the leavening power of yeast. It is ruinous, like mildew and leprosy, benumbing, leading to wasting away and crippling. Sin contaminates, so that when a person, clothing, dwelling, chair, couch, vessel or any other object touches an unclean thing it becomes unclean. It is repulsive, always represented by and compared to that which is odious, foul, putrid, and disgusting; rendering whatever it touches repulsive, to be cast away, cleansed or destroyed. Wickedness in a land, such as unpunished murder, sexual perversion or idolatry renders the entire land “unclean,” requiring the performance of an atonement even for the land. Unatoned and unmortified wickedness among the population results in the inhabitants of the land, pagan or Israelite, being vomited out of that land.

e) *The consequences of sin*

The ceremonial law shows us the consequences of sin. “In the day you eat of it you will die.” “The wages of sin is death.” It is one thing to hear this as so many do today. It is repeated with no sense of trembling dread, as if it were a mere opinion, or a theological construct, with no power to move their hearts to fear. Under the Law of Moses, however, the wages of sin was *always* before the eyes. Let us just pause a little to consider the most vivid reminder – the animal sacrifice, that violent repulsive parade of daily sacrifices, weekly sacrifices, annual sacrifices and countless occasional sacrifices: the sounds of bleating sheep, and bellowing bovines, the smells of steamy gallons of blood, the hot raw meat and offal, and the choking plumes of black and oily smoke ascending from the roaring holocausts of meat and fat being reduced to ash. Unless one could view the scene with the eyes of faith, it was a horrible glut of death that was, nevertheless, *never*, in its own right, enough to “make the guilty conscience clean or wash away the stain.”

There was no mistaking that this punishment of death was more than the mere peaceful cessation of physical life. This death was violent, by the shedding of blood, to convey the

conviction that the bearer was under a curse.¹⁵ The significance of it was seen in the penalty visited upon the still living. The sinner coming under punishment was “cut off” from the fellowship of the saints, an expression with clear and dreadful eschatological fulfillment: sinners “shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous.” In the words of Jonathan Edwards:

They were taught the necessity of justice being satisfied by a suffering of the penalty. They saw that without shedding of blood, there was no remission (Heb. 9:22). By the sufferings of those beasts there being slain, they were put in mind that the wages of sin was death; and by their being burnt in the fire, they were taught how they deserved to suffer God’s fiery wrath for their sins, and that God would not pardon sin without suffering, without its being punished.

This put them in mind of the evil nature of sin and taught them the holy jealousy of God, and how that he would in no wise clear the guilty. And so this type and shadow, together with God’s declarations of his being a holy and jealous God that would in no wise clear the guilty, secured the honor of God’s jealousy and justice, and tended to bring off the sinner from a trust in his own righteousness. It taught him the strictness of the law, that sin must be suffered for notwithstanding all that he could do to make amends¹⁶

3. Finally, and most importantly, the ceremonial law taught us Christ and the way of salvation in Him.

This was the principal part of the ceremonial law. There is no difficulty in proving that the exposition of the work of Christ in the accomplishment and application of redemption is the objective of all the ceremonial law, for, as He says, every part of it points to Him. Everything else is subsidiary to that end. Just as it made the straightforward condemnation of the moral law into something that pressed upon the eyes and ears with inescapable severity, so it likewise took the bare word of the promise of a redeemer and gave it vivid color and palpable substance. Like the New Testament elements of the Lord’s Supper, here was a help to faith that could be touched and tasted, seen, smelled heard and handled. Here was gospel, inescapably woven into the warp and

¹⁵ Not to mention the civil capital punishments which could include the razing of entire pagan cities and the wholesale community stoning of rebellious children, etc.

¹⁶ Jonathan Edwards, *ibid.*

woof of a religion that pressed upon every facet of life. Let us mention the main categories and then look at some few of the many details. The principle lessons regarding the Covenant of Grace were 1) That a God-provided, equipped, and appointed mediator would 2) through the making and application of a God-provided means of atonement, 3) provide redemption from the guilt of sin, and reconciliation with God; and 4) the enjoyment of a life of blessedness, the benefits of fellowship with God.

a) *Showing us the Person of the Mediator*

While the three-fold office of mediator certainly includes the necessary function of authoritative revealer to, and provident ruler over, God's people (i.e., Prophet and King), the office of Priest is especially ordained and expounded in the Ceremonial Law to deal with the necessary redemption from sin. The Levitical priesthood is fully inaugurated in the book of Exodus, and Leviticus their handbook, an exposition of all their duties, responsibilities and the responsibilities of the people of God toward them.

The priest as a mediator represents men to God and God to men. Everything about the priest is designed to enable God's people to see this. First, this mediator must be called to his office by God from among his brethren. No man takes this role upon himself, as it is a provision of the God of grace, it is at His Sovereign disposal. He is called to represent their persons to God as one of them. All the time he is engaged in priestly duties he is wearing upon his breastplate, i.e., over his heart, the names of the tribes of Israel engraved upon distinct stones for each tribe. These names, then, are present where he is present, the persons they represent are dear to him, and they and their persons (names) are brought into the presence of God by this priest, the God who accepts *them* on account of *him*. This representation is not formal but real. The priest must participate in the struggles and temptation common to his brethren, if his representation is to be genuine, and if the people are to have assurance that their priests, who bear the great responsibility of representing them to God, can do so with due sympathy. As is clear from the exposition in Hebrews, the priest's job is also to "succor" the people, for which he needs their faith in his sympathy for them.

Secondly, here is a figure who is most importantly – holy! From the uppermost part of his clothing, to its fabric, even to the fact that he must wear underpants lest his private parts be exposed to the steps he ascends to the altar, to the elaborate pains taken to cleanse him from sin and anoint him with the symbol of the Holy Spirit (“from head to toe” as it were) before his installation into office, to the rules which protected him at all times from every kind of ceremonial/ethical compromise afterwards, he acts in “Holiness Unto the Lord.” Not only does he represent holiness to the Lord, but the holiness of the Lord, and holiness from the Lord. Everything about the priest’s person and work is holiness. He is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” as he must be. A great deal of the ceremonial law is devoted to making this point. The reason for this is clear, “You shall be holy unto me, for I, the LORD, am holy.”

Not only in representing them to God as the fulfiller of covenant obligation, but as the head of His people he also represents them as the recipient of covenant blessing. This is represented in the following ways: 1) In his access to God, he is admitted to the highest possible of privileges, he enters the Holy of Holies, the most near access possible to the God of heaven on earth. He receives “anointing;” the holy anointing oil, poured upon his head, running down his beard and to the uttermost parts of his garment, represent first the fullness of the Spirit anointing the representative of the people, and by extension the outpouring of the Spirit upon all the people themselves.

b) Showing us the work of the mediator in offering up himself as a sacrifice.

Since God is the Holy One, salvation requires the removal of sin. Since sin is depicted as defilement, salvation is through cleansing. Not just any cleansing will do, however, but a cleansing that teaches the true method of sin’s removal, expiation through imputation and sacrifice. The ceremonial law is much devoted to the ways the priest “sanctifies” the persons and offerings of a sinful people.

The most fundamental lesson to be learned by the ceremonies of cleansing is that God, from the very beginning, has saved sinners through the sacrifice, i.e., the sin-bearing death of a substitute. This principle of *substitutionary atonement* is made inescapably clear in the ceremonial

law. While the particular animals for sacrifice may vary, and there may be some variation in the disposition of the meat and blood of the sacrificed animal, the general pattern of atoning sacrifice went like this: The worshipper will freely bring a male animal without blemish, denoting an innocent man, to the door of the tabernacle courtyard. Then, “he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.” This act, performed with the confession of sin, denotes an identification with the sin-bearing substitute and is thus, if rightly performed, an act of faith in God’s provision. Then, “he shall kill the [sacrifice] before the LORD,” denoting personal responsibility for the death of the substitute, even though it is God’s provision. At this point, a number of different actions may be taken with the meat, depending on the purpose of the sacrifice, but all or part of it will be placed upon the altar and totally consumed. Likewise, the animal’s blood was variously used. Some of it might be sprinkled “round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.” Hereby, the blood is said to make atonement: and its application signifies the application of the atonement obtained by its shedding. How is it applied? In the case of the blood of the Passover lamb it was brushed on the lintels and posts of the door of the house to indicate application to all within. Otherwise, in the Law of Moses, it was sprinkled from the fingers, sprinkled with a brush of hyssop, or poured out. The main thing is it was applied to “practically everything” and everyone, all the furniture of the tabernacle, all the priests, all the people, even to the book of the covenant itself (Heb. 9: 18-22).

God says, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” It is not *blood* per se that makes atonement, it is the *death*. The sprinkled blood is proof of death; the blood which was in the flesh is now on the altar. It has been shed; it must be applied. This subsequent application signifies that the sinner has received the benefits of the sacrifice being made. One further cleansing element was water mixed with the ashes of a red heifer which had been consumed in the sin offering. Again, the violent, penal death of the substitute, entirely consumed by the fire, is the source of the ashes. The apparent “active ingredient” in the water of purification was the atoning sacrifice, and its application by sprinkling was the means for benefit.

This connection between sacrifice and expiation is illustrated in the ceremony of the Day

of Atonement, when two goats were symbolically to bear the sins of the people. One was led into the wilderness, illustrating the taking away of sin. The other goat was sacrificed, showing the efficient cause of the expiation illustrated by the other goat, the death of the substitute. By making satisfaction for sin, sin, as an enmity-creating factor, is taken away or “expiated” God, as the offended party, is “propitiated,” the sinner, now regarded as righteous, is “justified.” and the enmity for sin being taken away, and the sinner believing that God is satisfied, they are at peace with one another, i.e., “reconciliation” has taken place.

In addition to expiation and propitiation, the death of Christ accomplishes *redemption*. Because of the curse, humanity had become captive to a fallen nature, the devil, and a world under the dominion of the devil and fallen nature. He needed redemption *from this* if he was to have freedom in a fellowship with God. While, initially, *redemption* might appear to be merely accomplished by force (being accomplished by “an outstretched arm”) like a military action, it soon becomes apparent that this redemption, though possibly accompanied with a show of force, is release upon the payment of a price. For example, God says,

Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. And when in time to come your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall say to him, ‘By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.’

Firstborn males, human and animal, must be redeemed by a price, because Israel was redeemed from Egypt through the killing of the firstborn of Egypt and the sparing, through Passover, of the firstborn of Israel. Likewise, land, homes and slaves, i.e., things that have been lost, shall be “redeemed” (Lev. 25). All the firstborn of Israel were to be devoted to the Lord; except they were redeemed by their substitution by the tribe of Levi, and, since there were more of them than Levites, by money, whereas the firstborn of cattle and sheep were to be slain and their blood poured out upon the altar (Numbers 3). The Psalmist understands the connection between sin bringing forth trouble and redemption bringing release: “Draw near to my soul, redeem me; ransom me because of my enemies” (Psalm 69:18). Redemption is a part of the covenant: “He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever,” (Psalm 111:9), and the

fruit of love: “O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities” (Psalm 130). Iniquities bring captivity and slavery, but the Lord redeems, bringing about reconciliation and peace.

b) Showing us the results of redemption.

The goal of the Covenant of Grace as originally given, dimly expressed in the first promise of the destruction of the serpent, and as brilliantly expressed in the closing chapters of Revelation is a return to Paradise.

And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes (Rev. 7:14-17).

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God (Re 21:3).

The *partial* experience of this ultimate return to Paradise is rightly understood in the theology of the Christian life as participation in an “inaugurated eschatology,” or “the already and the not yet.” Yet it should be observed that Sinai is also an expression of this, inaugurated by the coming of God with Moses into Egypt. Redemption, cleansing in the blood of the Lamb, serving in His temple, God tabernacling among men, being their God and they being His people, His flock, with Him leading and feeding them, protecting them from the burning sun, delivering them from enemies and from the diseases which characterized the former condition of life so that they remember it no more—these are all the life offered through the Ceremonial Law. This should be born in mind when considering the many promises related to “the land,” and later to Zion. The short and long-range aim of all those promises is living with God—fulfilled first in the New Testament Christian church experience and finally and perfectly fulfilled in the eternal state.

B. The Ceremonial Law as a Participation in the Blessings of the Covenant of Grace.

All the promises and benefits of the Covenant of Grace are secured for and applied to the Israelite through the blood of the atonement. Observing this from the general to the particular, they are, first, ratification of the covenant, and the sprinkling of the book, demonstrating that the entire scheme of redemption hangs upon the performance of this atonement. Second, there was the sanctification of the tabernacle and its furnishings by the sprinkled blood. Certainly as the artifice of sinful men it needed to be sanctified, but could this also be demonstrating something about the entire world? Everything that had been subjected to man and everything that man could touch -- was corrupted by man's sin and rendered unfit for a dwelling place for God, apart from an atonement that would make it holy once more. Other sacrifices depicted various dimensions of the Christian life, such as the grateful offering of the believer's entire redeemed person, or the acknowledgment that all his substance was given by God. There were sacrifices that were eaten by the worshipper and his family, in the presence of God, signifying that God was the head of His family, in whom He delighted.

The Old Testament believer who entrusts himself to the God who reveals His grace through the ceremonial law, receives the promised justification and other benefits related thereto. This is illustrated in the example of the Publican in the Lord's parable, who "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." His plea was based upon the principle revealed so frequently in the ceremonial law, that God would be appeased, would be propitiated, by the sin-offering, the "ἱλασμός." So, he prayed, "ἰλάσθητί μοι," or "be propitious to me because of the blood upon the altar which you have given as an atonement for my soul."¹⁷ Consequently, according to the Great Judge of all men and hearts, "this man went down to his house *justified*" (emphasis mine). Likewise, in the great exposition of Old

¹⁷ I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. καὶ ἐγὼ δέδωκα αὐτὸ ὑμῖν ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου ἐξιλάσασθαι περὶ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν, נְתַתִּיו לְכֶם עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְכַפֵּר עַל־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם כִּי־הֵדֵם הוּא בְנִפְשֵׁי כַפֵּר

Testament justification by faith given in Romans 4, Paul quotes David as saying, “Μακάριοι ὧν ἀφέθησαν αἱ ἀνομίαι καὶ ὧν ἐπεκαλύφθησαν αἱ ἁμαρτίαι, μακάριος ἀνὴρ οὗ οὐ μὴ λογίσηται Κύριος ἁμαρτίαν,” “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.” Notice, the important terms are expressive of the truths taught in the Ceremonial Law, such as the idea of lawlessness being, like the scapegoat, sent away (ὧν ἀφέθησαν αἱ ἀνομίαι), sin being covered, and sin being not imputed, (μὴ λογίσηται), to the sinner.

The redemption of Israel from Egypt, clearly associated with the Ceremonial Law by its tie with the first and perpetual observation of the Passover sacrifice and meal, was not merely a *type*, but an *actual* redemption, (like *all* Old Testament redemptive actions are both actual and typical), by Christ. It was a redemption of God’s people not merely from the slavery of Egypt, but, more importantly, from its spiritual darkness, the dominion of Satan and Satan’s seed, to a place where God was present to impart life and liberty. “Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon?” (Isa. 51:9f.)¹⁸

Does the Ceremonial Law in any way *produce* holiness? Yes, in at least two ways. First, in cooperation with the moral and civil components of the law it is the means of producing and maintaining an external personal and national holiness. This separation from the world, this godly atmosphere, is not to be despised. Second, however, the ceremonial law is God’s means for producing personal, spiritual holiness.

The Psalms afford many examples of this. It is, no doubt, part of that “law of the Lord,” which, according to Psalm 1, is to be the righteous man’s daily meditation and delight, making him steadfast and fruitful. It works “reviving the soul; ... making wise the simple; ... rejoicing the heart; ... enlightening the eyes” (Ps. 19). The godly, who the Lord has “set apart for Himself” are to “offer right sacrifices” (Ps. 3), and the groaning saint prepares his sacrifice and waits upon the Lord (Ps. 4), which is a great means of spiritual strength. The Psalmist is not despising the

¹⁸ The connection between Egypt and the Servant of Yahweh in this “Servant Song” bears out the point being made here.

ceremonial law when he prays, “For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering,” but demonstrating that he has learned their lesson: “the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Ps 51:16–17). He has actually come to understand the deeper and intended meaning which was so often forgotten by those who offer a mere external service. No, his is a circumcision of the heart. He shows in the same Psalm that the spiritual lessons of the ceremonial law are not lost on him. While God will not be pleased with burnt offering as such, yet the true application of it to his own soul is clear:

- 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice.
- 9 Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.
- 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
- 11 Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
- 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit (Ps 51:7–12).

His iniquity, transgression and sin must be cleansed and blotted out by the blood if he is to have access to God and fellowship with the Holy Spirit. These things are both the longing of his soul and the object of his faith and hope; a spiritual longing and hope have been wrought by the Holy Spirit not through the command of the Decalogue but through the means of the Ceremonial, which teaches not only the cleansing through the blood, but creates a hunger and thirst for “the presence.”

Again, ceremonial exclusion and restoration is more than a physical separation, it carries with it, if received rightly, the dreaded spiritual sense of being separated from God, even cast away. Conversely, the one rightly responding to the promises of the ceremonial law has solid reason to rejoice in the uplifted countenance of God.

One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. 5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. 6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD” (Ps 27:4–6).

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee (Ps 84: 1–12).

These sentiments, like other expressions of faith in the Lord who is “enthroned in Zion,” every cry to Him,¹⁹ every confidence in Him, praises to Him, returning to Him, are all the product of the ceremonial law being experienced by the regenerate heart. The Lord is there.

III. What were the deficiencies of this administration that resulted in its being discontinued, and how, with respect to these, did the New Covenant enlarge upon the Old?

One of the truly odd criticisms made by Dispensationalists against Covenant Theology is that in its focus on the unity between the testaments Covenant Theology does not give due regard to the difference between them. This criticism flies in the face of every major Reformed exposition of the differences between the two, including confessional statements such as our present chapter

¹⁹ See, for examples, the prayer of Solomon, esp., 1 Kings 8:29-53, and Jonah 2:4-9, “Then I said, ‘I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple... O LORD my God, When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple... I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!’”

of the Savoy.²⁰ Let us briefly consider the reasons given in scripture for the Old Testament's removal.

A. Putting off the Yoke of Slavery

The first of these reasons is that it was a burdensome yoke of slavery. In Acts 15, the issue being debated at the first synod of the New Testament church was whether new Gentile converts were to be circumcised, as had previously been the practice. In his answer, Peter asks,

Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they (Ac 15:7–11).

In itself, circumcision would hardly be an unbearable yoke; an intense pain for a few days, but not a yoke of slavery. Rather, it was understood at this period under the Mosaic legal system that circumcision was *an introduction into that entire system*. Hence, Paul argues, against the acceptance of circumcision:

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. *I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law* (Ga 5:1–3, emphasis mine).

So, according to Paul, the acceptance of circumcision is the terrible exchange of freedom in Christ for enslavement to the entire Mosaic administration. But what, we ask, is so bad about this administration? Was it not, “sweeter than honey, and the honeycomb?” What made Peter and Paul describe it here as an excessively heavy yoke, and a yoke of bondage? Consider this summary by Owen:

A little view also of the multiplicity of these precepts, and the scrupulous observances required about them and their circumstances, will give light into that

²⁰ E.g., John Calvin, *Institutes* II:11; Heinrich Bullinger, *Decades* III: Sermon 8, “*Of the Use or Effect of the Law of God and of the Fulfilling and Abrogating of the Same: Of the Likeness and Difference of both the Testaments and People, the Old and the New*”; Richard Sibbes, “The Excellency of the Gospel above the Law,” in *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes*, ed. Alexander Balloch Grosart, vol. 4 (Edinburgh; London; Dublin: James Nichol; James Nisbet and Co.; W. Robertson, 1863); Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* II:12:viii.; 202; Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, Book IV: Chapters 13-15.

of another apostle, Acts 15:10, calling the law “a yoke which neither their fathers nor themselves were able to bear.” For although the weight of this yoke did principally consist in the matter of it, and the performance of duties required in it, yet it was greatly increased and aggravated by that multitude of commands wherein it consisted; whence our apostle calls it “the law of commandments contained in ordinances,” Eph. 2:15, consisting of an endless number of commands, concerning which their minds could never attain any comfortable satisfaction whether they had answered their duty aright in them or no.²¹

John Owen summarizes the burdensome nature of the ceremonial law by pointing out a number of burdensome features: 1) its “matter,” 2) its “multitude” of commands, and, consequently, its 3) inability to provide mental satisfaction. In all these respects and others, the Ceremonial Law proved to be defective.

1. Its “matter” and its “multitude of commands.”

The *matter* of the ceremonial was more oriented around death than life. It was overwhelmingly expressed in terms of the duties it required and enforced (*with the most extreme penalties!*), than to the grace it conveyed. Though usually more painstakingly expressed,²² the nut of grace was encased in a very thick and hard shell of law. As Narnia was “always winter and never Christmas,” the old covenant was kind of like “always Good Friday and never Resurrection Day.” The *dying*, like the smoke of the holocaust, was always before the people, the *glory*, the heavenly experience of “the presence,” was hidden away, behind the thick curtain. Even the ever-burning light from the gold covered lampstand, turning clouds of incense into a sweet and brilliant golden ether, was only for the priests within the holy place. The ceremonial law was very involved, its commanded tasks often physically difficult, very numerous, flesh-defying, apparently excessive, guilt-producing, wrath threatening, religious exercises. If one may make their evangelical Christian disciplines into a religious treadmill, and get into a “rut” of mere lifeless

²¹ John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. W. H. Goold, vol. 18, *Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1854), 498–499.

²² It is this feature of the Mosaic administration that has been the cause of seemingly endless debate over its legality, and whether it is a covenant of works or of grace or a double covenant or a third type of covenant, etc. I am trying to simplify it here to accommodate the time restraints, but for further reading see Appendix 1 and the references given there.

routine performance, much more could one see the ceremonial law turn into a burdensome yoke. Nevertheless, surprisingly, like the Pharisees of Jesus' day, (or it would be surprising if it were not for man's colossal pride, which invents ways to put God in its debt), rather than humbling himself under that law to receive the grace of it, he devises ways to satisfy himself that his righteousness, his moralistic righteousness or his religious ceremonial righteousness, is more than enough. When he ought to say, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" he says, "I've got this."

B. It was carnal.

⁹ Which *was* a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; ¹⁰ Which *stood* only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed *on them* until the time of reformation. Heb 9:9–10.

⁵ And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, ¹⁶ Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. Heb 7:15–16.

The point here is not that it is *evil*, but that it was so very *physical*. This is not Platonism, as if physical meant evil,²³ it is simply that these actions, these "carnal ordinances," though they teach spiritual truths, are all performed with respect to, and in the power of, the physical body. They are external actions, performed naturally, with no need of the energies of the Holy Spirit, advantageous to this present life, with no *intrinsic* advantage to the human spirit, and no *ex opere operato* effect on the *conscience*, and ineffectual in their own strength for any spiritual good. The people "continued not in it," for it was not yet put into their mind, and written in their hearts (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10). As Paul says of man-empowered measures, even measures to keep the Law, "These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are *of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh* (Col 2:23, emphasis mine). Likewise, the appointment to the priesthood,

²³ O. Palmer Robertson demonstrate just the opposite. To paraphrase: in its stress on the literal *physical* interpretation of Old Testament promises, Dispensationalism is *separating* the spiritual and physical rather than duly recognizing the much greater redemption of the physical pictured in the symbolic and typical interpretation.

for all the symbolism thereof, was, in fact, objectively, a mere matter of physical descent (Heb. 7:16). *Unlike the priesthood that was to replace it, there was nothing intrinsic to the Levitical priesthood to give it redemptive value.* It was *virtual reality*, which was effectual, but not *at all* in its own intrinsic power. Its effectiveness was all “borrowed capital” from the redemption to come.

C. It was “wanting” i.e., unable to provide mental satisfaction

This was as true in sense, as it was in fact. With regard to the priesthood, the priests were mortal, their priesthood limited to the duration of their lives. Their sacrifices were intrinsically insufficient. How can the death of an animal atone for the sins of a man? It cannot. They were ceremonies, intrinsically sufficient for *ceremonial* uncleanness, but not for real atonement.²⁴ There was always the glaring reality, “this animal is dying for me,” but it took faith to look beyond what was visible, to the promised coming redeemer, a man who really *could* be “wounded for *our* transgressions,” as “the Lamb of God.” The atonement secured by the Ceremonial Law is only borrowed from the death to come on Calvary. This would be stated with brilliant explicitness in the prophecy of Isaiah 53, for example, and then in the New Testament.

D. It was intended *to be understood* as passing away for something better (Col. 2:17; Heb. 8:5; Heb. 10:1)

The main reason for the replacement of this administration was that *it was always intended to be replaced*. Remembering that the old covenant’s peculiar, distinguishing features, were

²⁴ For further biblical proof consider 1) the fact that the ceremonies are often given a subordinate place to the “weightier matters” of the law, “obedience is better than sacrifice,” etc., which would not be so if they were intrinsically equal to the value of Christ’s atonement. 2) Paul’s explanation that the atonement of Christ does something that was wanting under the law: “This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins” (Ro 3:25). 3) The contrast drawn out in Hebrews 9:11-14: “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” This is addressed quite well by Witsius and Turretin.

specifically created to prepare a particular people, and through them the world, for the coming of the Savior, the coming of the Savior renders those features null and void, unworthy to be compared with the reality that superseded them. Most importantly, *their continuation becomes now contradictory to their original intent, leading away from Christ rather than to Him, so now not merely unessential, retrograde, and misleading but positively dangerous to true faith.*

Why the replacement? There are two reasons given for this. The first was what we might call the change in the status of the Redeemer of the elect, and the second was the resultant change in the status of the Redeemed. For the first, all the ceremonial law is predicated upon a promised Redeemer, providing a provisional, certain, but not-yet-accomplished redemption. The accomplishment of that redemption by the incarnate, obedient, crucified, resurrected, exalted Christ changes everything. Secondly, subsequent to the Redeemer's exaltation, and according to their union with Him, their surety and head, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the people of God brings them out of their state of minority, *needing a pedagogue*, to one of fully adult sons. This *also* changes everything.

1. Perfect Priest/Perfect Sacrifice/Perfect Intercession/Full Salvation

This is the great argument of the book of Hebrews: the priesthood was destined for replacement, and its covenant with it. Jesus is the fulfillment of Psalm 110:4 "The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." The change to a new and never ending, non-Levitical priesthood in the person of the promised Messiah requires a new covenant. You can no longer be saved by means of the older one, all its Levitical-priest related activities are superseded by Christ-priest activities. He with His sacrifice and intercession become the object of faith and hope, even if that means going with Him, "outside the gate." Those old covenant activities served to illuminate what those Christ-priest related activities would be, and they served as temporary provisions for enjoying the benefits of the redemption he would accomplish, but when He comes, *the ultimate priest, offering the ultimate sacrifice*, fully accomplishing *EVERYTHING* depicted in the ministrations of the Levitical priest, most of them are eliminated altogether because they revealed what *is more clearly* revealed by their fulfillment, or because they were provisional. They have no continuing purpose. And some are retained but

transformed into ceremonies that more suitably reflect the new Christ-centered reality (e.g., Passover and circumcision to Lord's Supper and baptism). *Everything* about the New Covenant in contrast to the Old shouts "BETTER!" and "GREATER!" Why? So that "in all things Christ might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).²⁵ The substance MUST be greater than the shadow, type MUST wither and blow away like chaff before reality, or the great preeminence of Christ would not appear; and its appearance was, after all, the purpose of the Father before the creation of the world.

2. "Because you are sons ..."

Paul brings out the pedagogical role of the Law for the purpose of showing why it has been discontinued. Due to the change in the status of the Redeemer, there has come a change in the status of the Redeemed. They, in Him, have been translated out of the state of minority to the state of full sons, and the ramifications of that change are all pervasive for the individual Christian life

²⁵ See Owen, "So great was the glory of heavenly ministration in the mediation of Jesus Christ, as that God would not at once bring it forth in the church, until he had prepared the minds of men, by types, shadows, examples, and representations of it.—This was the end of all legal institutions of divine worship and service. And herein the wisdom of God provided in these to cases that were necessary. (1.) He filled them with glory and beauty, that they might affect the minds of men with an admiration and expectation of that greater glory which they represented and pointed unto. And this they did among all them who truly believed; so that they continually looked and longed after the coming of Him, the glory of whose ministry was represented in them. In these two things did their faith principally act itself: [1.] In a diligent inquiry into the mediation and ministry of Christ, with the glory which it was to be accompanied withal, 1 Pet. 1:10, 11. [2.] In earnest desire after the enjoyment of what they saw afar off, and which was obscurely represented unto them, Cant. 2:17, 4:6. From both these arose that fervent love unto, zeal for, and delight in those ordinances of worship, which did so lead them unto these things that were so glorious; which in the Scripture are everywhere expressed, and which were so well-pleasing unto God. (2.) On the other hand, because these institutions were to be so glorious, that they might be shadows of heavenly things, and the people unto whom they were given were carnal, and given to rest themselves in present outward appearances, God was pleased to intermix with them many services that were hard to be borne, and many laws with penalties severe and dreadful. This provision was laid in by divine wisdom, that they might not rest in what he designed only to prepare their minds for the introduction of that which was far more glorious. And well is it for us if we have a due apprehension of the glory of the heavenly ministration of Christ, now it is introduced. It is too evident that with many, yea, with most that are called Christians, it is far otherwise; for they are still seeking after the outward glory of a carnal worship, as though they had no view of the spiritual glory of the heavenly ministration of the gospel in the hand of Jesus Christ, our high priest. Nor will it be otherwise with any of us, unless we are enabled by faith to look within the veil, and see the beauty of the appearance of Christ at the right hand of God. The apostle tells us, that "the ministration of the law was glorious; yet had it no glory in comparison of that which doth excel." But if we are not able to discern this more excellent glory, and satisfy ourselves therein, it is a great sign that we ourselves are carnal, and therefore are delighted with those things that are so."

and for the entire family of God.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God (Gal. 4:4-7).

There it is, redemption is not only from the curse, but *from* being *under* the law and *to* being sons, full-grown heirs who are “free indeed.” Of course, this does not refer to the Ceremonial Law only, but to the entire Mosaic administration of which it was a part. The point here is that the *expected* and *intended* accomplishment of redemption by Christ brought an end to the ceremonial law with something better. That “better” would mean the end of the law as a pedagogue, and a participation in the grace of Christ which was no longer encrusted by the legal forms of the ceremonial law, but joined to Christ, indwelt by the “spirit of life in Christ,” raised up with Him and coming under the “powers of the world to come.”

Let us conclude this portion by observing the transformation this makes on two features of the Ceremonial law, its teaching of grace and its participation of grace.

3. “They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest.”

First, *a superior teaching has come*. Concerning the *matter* of the teaching, do I need to see the glory and dominion of God? What compares with the gospel, the incarnation, the life of Christ, his exercised authority, his miracles, his teachings, his death, resurrection, ascension, Pentecost, the spread of the gospel into the world, the life of the Spirit-filled congregation? What about the revelation of the sinfulness of sin, and the judgment of God against it? I now stand not before the death of a bullock, or watch as a goat is led away into the wilderness, but I see the Lamb of God, driven outside the city, see Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted; hear the well pleasing beloved chosen servant of Yahweh crying, “My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?” hear the fountain of life groaning, “I thirst,” hold the elements of his broken body and shed blood in my hands and I know— this rending asunder of flesh and blood is because “the LORD has laid on Him the iniquities of us all.” This, more than the fires of a hundred thousand bullocks

shows me the nature and desert of my sin, and the wisdom and righteousness and grace of God.

What about the *efficacy* of the teaching? The new covenant ministry so greatly surpasses the glory of the ministry of Moses (the ceremonial law) because of the Spirit's present ministry. Pentecost, according to Sinclair B. Ferguson, is God's answer to Moses' prayer, "would God that all the LORD's people were prophets, *and* that the LORD would put his spirit upon them (Numbers 11:29)! It is the fulfillment of the promise, "And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest" (Heb. 8:11). Paul summarizes it thus:

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit... (2 Co 3:12-18).

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Co 4:4-6).

The Holy Spirit, who has been poured out upon the church in abundance, who convinces the world of sin, righteousness and judgment to come, opens the eyes of my understanding, and hence my appreciation of the sinfulness of my sin, the blood of the sacrifice and the excellence of the ever living High priest. Does that mean the ceremonial law does me no good anymore, and that I need not study Leviticus? No, just the opposite, for now when I read Leviticus, I see the sufferings of Christ and understand faith in him even more clearly there than I ever could have done when standing before the sons of Aaron. So, I hear the voice of that Prophet greater than Moses, that

wisdom greater than Solomon's, speaking not from Mt. Sinai but from heaven itself.²⁶

Second, the coming of the expected new priesthood brings a *superior participation in the benefits of grace*. For all believers there now such an enlargement in experience of the Holy One that the least in the kingdom of heaven is "greater," i.e., in this regard, than the greatest in the Old Testament (Matt. 11:11). The temple to come has a greater glory than Solomon's (Haggai 2:7).

²⁶ As explained by John Owen: "We have also declared how God, in his wisdom and sovereignty, restrained the promise unto Abraham and his posterity, shadowing out among them the accomplishment of it in Mosaical rites and institutions; and these also received manifold explications by the succeeding prophets. From the whole, a system of worship and doctrine did arise, which turned wholly on this hinge of the promised Messiah, relating in all things to the salvation to be wrought by him. But yet the will and mind of God was in this whole dispensation so folded and wrapped up in types, so veiled and shadowed by carnal ordinances, so obscured and hid in allegorical expressions, that the bringing of it forth unto light, the removal of the clouds and shades that were cast upon it, with a declaration of the nature, reason, and use of all those institutions, was a work no less glorious than the very first revelation of the promise itself. This was that which was reserved for the great prophet, the Messiah; for that God would prescribe ordinances and institutions unto his church, whose full nature, use, and end, should be everlastingly unknown unto them, is unreasonable to imagine. Now, this is done in the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ. The spiritual end, use, and nature, of all those sacrifices and typical institutions,—which, unto them who were conversant only with their outside, servile performance, were an insupportable yoke of bondage, as the Jews find them unto this day, being never able to satisfy themselves in their most scrupulous attendance unto them,—are all made evident and plain, and all that was taught by them accomplished. This was the work of the prophet like unto Moses. He fulfilled the end and unveiled the mind of God in all those institutions. And he hath done it so fully, that whoever looks upon them through his declaration of them cannot but be amazed at the blindness and stupidity of the Jews, who, rejecting the revelation of the counsel of God by him, adhere pertinaciously unto that whereof they understand aright no one tittle or syllable; for there is not the meanest Christian, who is instructed in the doctrine of the gospel, but can give a better account of the nature, use, and end, of Mosaical institutions, than all the profound rabbins in the world either can or ever could do, he that is least in the kingdom of God being greater in his light and knowledge than John Baptist himself, who yet was not behind any of the prophets that went before him. This, I say, is that which the promised prophet was to do; and, moreover, he was to add the institutions of his own immediate revelation, even as Moses had given them the law of ordinances of old. And in this super-institution of new ordinances of worship, thereby superseding those instituted by Moses, was he like unto him, as was foretold."

The believer's experience of God is not a distant beholding of the fiery cloud that arose from and hovered above the tabernacle, while he accepts by faith that his high priest serves in the immediate presence of God, once a year entering into the most holy place to appear before God enthroned between the cherubim. No, with the curtain torn from top to bottom, all God's kingdom of priests have an entrance, not into an earthly Holy of Holies, but into heaven itself, beholding, through the never failing energies of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the soul transforming glory of God in the face of Christ. They have not come to Sinai, nor to an earthly Zion, but to the "heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel" (Heb 12:22–24). This blood is not the blood of beasts that says, "Put your trust in God's promise of a mediator to come someday," but the blood of God incarnate, the well-pleasing servant of Yahweh, that says, "According to a promise made before the world began, I have purchased them and all they need." Here is a priest who does not merely come out of the tabernacle on the Day of Atonement and pronouncing a blessing, but one who in fulfillment of Psalm 68 mounts up to heaven itself (not after laying down the law on Sinai but after laying down His law-fulfilling life on Calvary), and pours out the Gift He has received from the Father, the greatest blessing of all, His own Holy Spirit (Eph. 4: 7-13), who gifts us and seals us and keeps us and leads us as sons and will dwell in us until he has subdued all His and our enemies and quickened our mortal bodies to raise us up to be with Himself forever (Rom. 8).

IV. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to demonstrate the accuracy of the confessional statement concerning the benefits of redemption under the Old Testament and their enlargement in the New. More importantly, however, it is hoped that the readers of it will expound these truths with the aim that their hearers will be built up in their own understanding of the amazing person and work of our Redeemer.