

INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

I. VIABILITY AND METHOD

Problem 1: a single book for a whole-of-Scripture debate?

Problem 2: an Old Testament book for a new-covenant debate?

- (1) 'Give thanks...' new-covenant formula¹
- (2) Correlation between Isaiah 40-55 and parts of Books 4 and 5
- (3) Definitive solution to the problem of the Babylonian exile
- (4) Introductory and programmatic Psalm 2

Problem 3: a recent consensus in Psalms scholarship?

Cf. Appendix

Our key line of attack

Our key presuppositions

Primacy of the Masoretic Text

Post-exilic dating for the psalter

Placement in the Writings

II. THE COVENANT-RELATIONSHIPS SPECTRUM

Model 1: Westminster covenantalism/classical Presbyterianism (Calvin, Robertson)

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 foreshadowing 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.²

Under the gospel dispensation, 'Christ, the substance, was exhibited,' but '[t]here are not ... two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations.'³

'the new covenant, promised by Israel's prophets, does not appear as a distinctive covenantal unit unrelated to God's previous administrations;'

¹ J. Hely Hutchinson (2005), 'A New-Covenant Slogan in the Old Testament', in J. A. Grant, A. I. Wilson (eds.), *The God of Covenant: Biblical, Theological and Contemporary Perspectives* (Leicester: Apollos), 100-121.

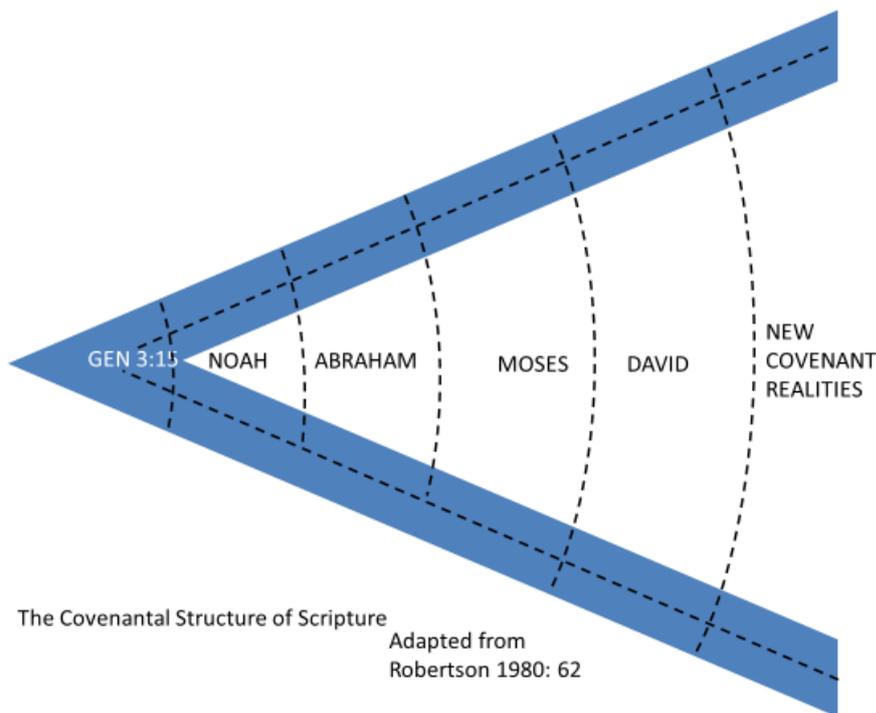
² *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647), ch. 7.

³ *Ibid.*

[The] organic relation of the new covenant to the covenants of Abraham, Moses, and David finds explicit development both in the Old Testament prophecies concerning the covenant and in the New Testament realizations of this consummating covenant. From either perspective, the new covenant may be understood in no other way than as a realization of the prophetic projections found in the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants.⁴

Latter three covenants together as ‘the old covenant’⁵ : ‘...a clear line of continuity must be seen in the relationship of the old covenant to the new. While the new covenant will be at radical variance with the old covenant with respect to its effectiveness in accomplishing its goal, the substance of the two covenants in terms of their redemptive intention is *identical*.’⁶

Diagram: ‘each successive covenant expands on previous administrations.’⁷



‘The Return of Exiled Israel to the Land of Promise;’ ‘Full Restoration of God’s Blessing on the Land of Promise;’ ‘Divine Fulfillment of Previous Covenantal Commitments;’ ‘Internal Renewal by the Work of God’s Holy Spirit;’ ‘The Full Forgiveness of Sins;’ ‘The Union of Israel and Judah;’ ‘The Everlasting Character of the New Covenant’⁸

Law ‘essentially the same’ as that of the old covenant⁹

Antitype the once-for-all sacrifice¹⁰

⁴ O. P. Robertson (1980), *The Christ of the Covenants*, Phillipsburg [New Jersey]: Presbyterian and Reformed, 41.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 281.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 282 (our emphasis).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 274-278.

⁹ The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (ch. 19) embraces a tripartite division for the Law of Moses, specifying the abrogation of the ceremonial and judicial laws and the binding nature of the moral law (the latter consisting of the Ten Commandments).

¹⁰ Robertson, *op. cit.*, 282-284.

Need for a mediatorial office¹¹

Davidic covenant annulled,¹² yet ‘the substance of blessing which [the covenant] promises remains,’¹³ and the fact that ‘the “root of Jesse” rules as the hope of the Gentiles, in accord with the covenant with David’ testifies to the ‘continuing significance of ... [this covenant] into the present.’¹⁴

New-covenant people of God ‘the actualized realization of a typological form’¹⁵

The old covenant ‘serpent of brass’ typologically anticipated the new covenant Christ cursed on the cross. The old covenant tabernacle typologically anticipated the new covenant dwelling of God in the midst of his people. The old covenant nation of Israel typologically anticipated the new covenant reality of the chosen people of God assembled as a nation consecrated to God.¹⁶

Model 2: 1689 Federalism (Denault, M. Renihan, S. Renihan, Barcellos)¹⁷

‘If the Westminster federalism can be summarized in *one covenant under two administrations*, that of the 2LCF would be *one covenant revealed progressively and concluded formally under the New Covenant*.’¹⁸

Yet ‘[p]roper weight must be given to the *newness* of the *New Covenant* by seeing it as something that has not yet come about from the perspective of the Old Testament. This is not merely a scale in which the New Covenant is “more of the same.” It is not merely quantitatively different from the Old Covenant. It is something qualitatively different.’¹⁹

By virtue of its being ‘made and sealed in the blood of Christ and ... revealed in Christ ...’, the New Covenant is different in substance from all the Old Testament covenants.²⁰ Spirit/ heart circumcision/ faith

‘Although it is not accomplished in history until Christ comes, we see the gathering in of the elect who believe in Christ from the fall onwards.’²¹

‘...[T]he Mosaic Covenant cannot be divided or disconnected from the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, and thus all three combine to form the Old Covenant...’²²

‘...[T]he Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic Covenants were national, temporary, and typological covenants...’²³

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 293-297.

¹² *Ibid.*, 284-286.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 285.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 289.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 289.

¹⁷ See the diagrams at <http://www.1689federalism.com/> (accessed 7th November 2017).

¹⁸ P. Denault, ‘By Farther Steps: A Seventeenth-Century Particular Baptist Covenant Theology’, in R. C. Barcellos (ed.), *Recovering a Covenantal Heritage: Essays in Baptist Covenant Theology* (Palmdale, California: RBAP, 2014), 86 (italics original). ‘2LCF’ designates the *Second London Baptist Confession of Faith*.

¹⁹ M. and S. Renihan, ‘Reformed Baptist Covenant Theology and Biblical Theology’, in *op. cit.*, 499.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 500.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 477.

²² *Ibid.*, 482.

²³ *Ibid.*, 483.

'The condition of the Abrahamic Covenant was clarified and codified in the Mosaic Covenant'²⁴ ; 'the Mosaic Covenant controls both the Abrahamic and the Davidic Covenants.'²⁵

'The Davidic Covenant brings all of the Abrahamic promises to consummation and focuses the Mosaic Covenant into one person.'²⁶ 'Every single part' of it typologically reveals the new covenant²⁷

The law of Moses has 'abiding moral validity under the New Covenant,'²⁸ the Decalogue in particular, as 'the basic, fundamental law of the New Covenant,'²⁹ being 'binding'³⁰ on the believer

Model 3: progressive covenantalism (Gentry, Wellum)

New covenant fulfils what the prior covenants 'revealed, anticipated, and even predicted through various patterns, types and instruction'³¹

Christ as 'David's greater son, who rules the nations and the entire creation as King of kings and Lord of lords.'³²

Tension created by the combination of unconditionality and conditionality in the biblical covenants (including in the Davidic) resolved in Christ³³

Davidic covenant is 'a subset of the old covenant (for the Davidic king was under Torah as a covenant), and ... the representative, sonship role of Israel is now supremely narrowed in the king as the corporate representative of the people;'³⁴ also 'organically related' to (1) Abrahamic covenant ('the Davidic covenant serves to identify the promised line of "seed" that will mediate blessings to all nations');³⁵(2) Adamic covenant³⁶ ('the Davidic king also inherits the role of Adam and Israel as "son of God" to humanity as a whole,' the Davidic covenant being 'the charter by which humanity will be directed,' cf. Kaiser on 2 Samuel 7:19b)³⁷

Under the Davidic king, the Abrahamic promise of the great nation and the great name come together. In this sense, the ultimate fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant coincides with the ultimate fulfilment of the Davidic covenant. The Abrahamic blessings, linked back to Adam and creation, will be ultimately realized only through the Davidic son. Indeed, the final fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise of blessing in a Promised Land will take place under the

²⁴ J. D. Johnson, 'The Fatal Flaw of Infant Baptism: The Dichotomous Nature of the Abrahamic Covenant', in *op. cit.*, 249.

²⁵ M. and S. Renihan, 'Reformed Baptist Covenant Theology and Biblical Theology', in *op. cit.*, p. 482.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 481.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 482.

²⁸ R. C. Barcellos (2001), *In Defense of the Decalogue: A Critique of New Covenant Theology*, Enumclaw [Washington]: Winepress, 61. This volume predates the emergence of 1689 Federalism as an identifiable school but anticipates it.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 86.

³¹ P. J. Gentry and S. J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, Wheaton: Crossway, 2012, 604.

³² *Ibid.*, 604.

³³ *Ibid.*, 608-611.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 641.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 641.

³⁶ Gentry and Wellum prefer to speak of 'the covenant with creation as mediated through Adam' (*ibid.*, 641).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 641, citing W. C. Kaiser, Jr. (1974), 'The Blessing of David: The Charter for Humanity', in J. H. Skilton (ed.), *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis*, (s.l.: Presbyterian and Reformed), 298-318.

rulership of the Davidic king. In this important sense, the Davidic king becomes the mediator of covenant blessing, tied back to Abraham, ultimately tied back to Adam as head of the human race.³⁸

New covenant contrasted with Sinaitic³⁹

Change of covenant community as between mixed (made up of believers and unbelievers) and regenerate⁴⁰

New-covenant believers not 'under ... previous covenants *as covenants*.'⁴¹

New-covenant believer's ethical life not governed by Mosaic law, yet it 'has continuing relevance as an *indirect* guide...'⁴²

Model 4: new covenant theology (White, Wells, Zaspel)

Progressive covenantalism 'a species of "new covenant theology"'⁴³ but...⁴⁴

'...[D]enial of the Decalogue as the eternal moral law of God.'⁴⁵

That Christians are 'no longer subject to the temporary Mosaic law-covenant'⁴⁶ is a significant theme in Blake White's presentation of the new covenant as 'fundamentally and radically *new*.'⁴⁷

Progressive covenantalism rejects new covenant theology's holding 'little instructive place for the Mosaic law in the church's life...'⁴⁸

Model 5: progressive dispensationalism (Blaising)⁴⁹

New covenant replaces Sinaitic covenant⁵⁰ and 'is the form in which Abrahamic-covenant blessing will be fulfilled.'⁵¹

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 641.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 646; cf. 635, n. 79.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 646-650.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 605 (italics original).

⁴² J. C. Meyer (2016), 'The Mosaic Law, Theological Systems, and the Glory of Christ', in S. J. Wellum, B. E. Parker (eds.), *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies* (Nashville [Tennessee]: B&H Academic), 93-94.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 24, n. 6.

⁴⁵ A. B. White (2008), *The Newness of the New Covenant*, Frederick [Maryland]: New Covenant Media, 56, n. 141.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1 (emphasis original); see pp. 7-53.

⁴⁸ Wellum and Parker (eds.) (2016), 3.

⁴⁹ C. A. Blaising, dans C. A. Blaising, D. L. Bock, (eds.) (1993), *Progressive Dispensationalism*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993, ch. 5, 128-173, esp. 169-171.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 155, 169.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 170.

'[N]ew covenant blessing will be mediated by the Davidic king.'⁵² For the Abrahamic blessing 'comes upon the king'⁵³ who mediates it to 'the Israel of faith – that remnant of physical Israel which trusts in God – and to all those of the nations who trust in God through this king...'⁵⁴

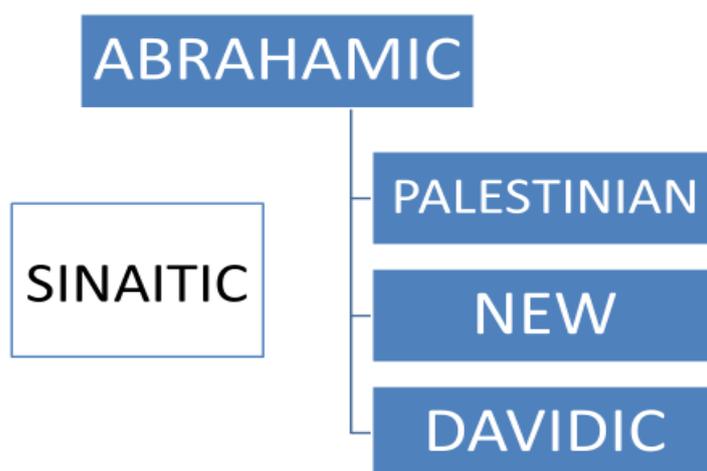
'The king ... greatly surpasses in character, power, and length of reign both David and Solomon, the greatest of Israel's former kings.'⁵⁵ 'There should be no doubt that the Melchizedekian priesthood is part of the Davidic covenant.'⁵⁶

Blessing envisaged by the new covenant is permanent and may be summarized as 'the renewal and sanctification of the human heart by the indwelling Holy Spirit, along with resurrection from the dead and everlasting life.'⁵⁷ The Davidic covenant, which consists of 'promises concerning the establishment of David's house and the promises concerning the intimate relationship between God and David's descendant,'⁵⁸ is unconditional, but 'a continuous, uninterrupted reign is ... conditioned upon the faithfulness of the Davidic kings.'⁵⁹

Two covenants clearly distinct but converge in their fulfilment

New-covenant law replace Mosaic law⁶⁰

Model 6: classical dispensationalism (Pentecost)



Five major covenants, four of which are gracious and eternal⁶¹

⁵² *Ibid.*, 170.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 159-162.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 194-199.

⁶¹ J. D. Pentecost (1958/1964), *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 67-71.

'[T]he [Abrahamic] seed promises are developed in the Davidic covenant, and the [Abrahamic] blessing promises are developed in the new covenant.'⁶²

David and new covenants unconditional,⁶³ the only element of conditionality in the Davidic covenant concerning the ongoing presence of a Davidic king on the throne ('[d]isobedience might bring about chastening, but never abrogate the covenant').⁶⁴

The two covenants must be understood in literal terms,⁶⁵ which implies that a physical temple will be built in Jerusalem at the time of the restoration of the Israelite kingdom. Indeed, since the new-covenant partner is the Jewish people, its fulfilment will take place for the benefit of this people when the Davidic throne is established, in the millennium.⁶⁶ Thus these two covenants, though having little in common other than their anchorage in Genesis 12, converge in their fulfilment.

New covenant: 'This covenant ... has to do with the regeneration, forgiveness, and justification of Israel, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with His subsequent ministries, Israel's regathering and restoration to the place of blessing, all founded on the blood of Jesus Christ.'⁶⁷

Possibility of non-Jews benefitting from this covenant ahead of the millennium, but 'the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 must and can be fulfilled only by the nation Israel and not by the church... [T]his was a literal covenant made with the physical seed of Abraham.'⁶⁸

III. WHAT'S AT STAKE PRACTICALLY

⁶² *Ibid.*, 71-72.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 103-104, 118-119.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 105-111, 118-119.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 114-115, 119-128.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 124-125.

APPENDIX: HIERARCHY⁶⁹ OF KEY INDICATORS OF PSALTER SHAPE/SHAPING

1. Ps. 72:20 (explanatory note)
2. Ps. 89:53 (closing doxology necessarily more tied to Book 3 than to the psalm)
3. The five-book division
4. Pss 146-150 ('Final *Hallel*')
5. Pss 120-134 (Songs of Ascents)
6. Chain linking ('concatenation') across Psalms 134, 135 and 136
7. Pss 105-106 ('twins')
8. Pss 103-107
9. Pss 96-99
10. Pss 93-100
11. Pss 25; 34 (acrostics whose irregularities are similar)
12. Pss 111-112 ("twin" acrostics)
13. Pss 9-10; 32-33
14. Entire first book explicitly Davidic (once links in 13 assumed)
15. Pss 1-2 as introduction
16. Pss 42-43; 70-71 (which links imply an absence of 'orphan'⁷⁰ psalms' in Book 2)
17. Predominance of the historical David in Book 2
18. Book 1 republications in Book 2: Pss 14 and 53; Pss 40:14-18 and 70
19. Extremities of Book 3: the theme of crisis
 - Turnaround in Ps. 73 mirrored by turnaround in Ps. 89
 - Complementary perspectives of psalms adjacent to extremities (74 and 88)
 - The role of the Babylonian exile in giving rise to the crisis
20. The same anguished questioning in the middle of Book 3
21. The rhetorical effect of the end of Ps. 89
22. The change of tone in the last two books
23. Book 4 as 'Moses book'
24. The sin-wrath-intercession frame of Book 4, and the links between Pss 90 and 103
25. The structure of Book 5 (several groupings)
26. Composite psalms in Book 5 (notably 108, 144)
27. The conclusion of Ps. 144 (double 'Amen', cf. Pss 1-2)

⁶⁹ The hierarchy proper applies to the first fifteen indicators; thereafter I simply follow psalter order.

⁷⁰ = without a title.