

The Concise Marrow of Theology

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(1633-1698)

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On the Economy of the Covenant of Grace under the Gospel

I. Jesus Was Required to Be Proclaimed to the World: The Gospel

Jesus the Mediator, Prophet, Priest, and King, was required to be proclaimed to the world. For “there is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as the price of redemption, as a testimony for His own times” (1 Tim. 2:5–6). This testimony comes in the name gospel (Ἐυαγγελίου) par excellence (κατ’ ἔξοχήν), which is defined as the joyous announcement of the new covenant and testament of grace whereby through and on account of Christ manifested in the flesh He suffered, died, was resurrected, and glorified. Under the condition of repentance and faith and of rightly giving the same, consummate remission of sins, adoption, freedom, peace, regeneration of the Spirit, and eternal life are promised and given. It was proclaimed by the forerunner of Jesus, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ Himself, the apostles, and witnesses of Christ’s resurrection.¹

II. Christ Is Proclaimed as Mediator of the New Testament: The New Testament

Jesus Christ is proclaimed in the gospel as “Mediator of a better and New Testament, enacted on better promises” (Heb. 8:6; Matt. 26:28). But the New Testament is that part of the plan of God which He, having abolished those things that were added to the promise until the time of correction, willed to become known in the new dedication and confirmation of the eternal testament of grace through the blood of Christ. Finally, it became known in the giving of better promises to execute in the last time in Israel and through the proclamation of the gospel in the world. This is not that typical old (but true and eternal) testament of grace, yet in regard to economy new. For it succeeded the old typical one as pure, purged from types and the law, and was newly dedicated. God spoke about this: “Behold, the day will come,

1. *Medulla*, I–VI.

says Jehovah, and I shall cut a new covenant (חִדְשָׁה בְּרִית) with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,... This is the covenant that I shall cut with the house of Israel after those days, says Jehovah. I will give the law in their midst, I will write it upon their hearts, I will be as God for them, and they will be My people." (Jer. 31:31-35). "I will establish an everlasting covenant for you. You will remember your ways and hide in view of shame when you receive your elder sisters for the younger. I will give them to you as daughters and not from your covenant. I will establish My covenant with you, and you will know that I am Jehovah" (Ezek. 16:60-61).²

III. The Economy of the New Testament: Its Law Is the Law of Faith

The New Testament has a peculiar economy, administered in the "fullness of times" (Eph. 1:10), "at the end of the ages" (1 Cor. 10:11), and "at the last hour" (1 John 2:18). Its law is the law of "obedience to the confession in the gospel of Christ" (2 Cor. 9:13), which the apostle calls the "obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5). This is not commanded in a new law but in a new testimony, to which the law itself fittingly commands belief from the one to whom it has been revealed. That confession is "in the gospel of Christ" because in it alone is the "love and goodness of God toward men" revealed. There are three foundations of this: the pure *wisdom* of the gospel, because in the proclamation of the gospel "the grace of God abounds in all wisdom and *prudence*" (Eph. 1:8); *agreement with the prophetic Scriptures*; and *piety and its fruits*. For "the saving grace of God shined forth on all men, teaching us to live temperately, righteously, and piously in this age, having denied all impiety and impure desires" (Titus 2:11-12).³ *Revelation is unto piety.*

IV. It Is not a Law of Works, nor Does It Command Counsels of Evangelical Perfection, Monastic Vows

Therefore, the law of the gospel is not properly a law of *works*, nor does it even command *counsels* of evangelical perfection from the commands of faith or works, distinguished and demonstrated, not commanded; mandated, not commended. *The For if the gospel is taken properly, it does not exist except in the doctrine of faith. Gospel properly* Or if it is taken broadly, it does not command counsels of faith or necessary precepts of morals. Add to that that the counsels either pertain to the perfection of the love of God or do not pertain to it. If they do pertain to it, it is understood that they are commanded, not demonstrated, and mandated, not commended. If they do not pertain to it, they are neither good works nor praiseworthy, but must be rejected (ἀπόβλητα). Above all of this sort are monastic vows, the apex of counsels, which disagree much with the gospel and much more with its perfection.⁴

2. *Medulla*, VI-X.

3. *Medulla*, X-XVI.

4. *Medulla*, XVI-XX.

V. Christ Added No New Commandments to the Law

Nor also did Christ under the gospel introduce new commandments not comprehended in the law of Moses. For nothing more perfect is given than the law of Moses, and "He did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it" (Matt. 5:17). Nor did He add some to all the commands of God for perfection and pertaining to the angelic worship of God under the New Testament for the same reason.⁵

VI. The Promises of the Gospel

The gospel above all has excellent promises into which the very law of faith is brought to apply them, announced with the joyous proclamation to the one who believes. In this sense the law of faith, since it is brought into those more excellent promises, is proper to the economy of the gospel and the New Testament. Furthermore, those are most excellent promises. They are the greatest and costly promises (*Μέγιστα καὶ τίμια ἐπαγγέλματα*) that "the divine power bestowed" on us "in the knowledge of Him who calls" (2 Peter 1:3). "He is the Mediator of a better testament which is enacted with better promises" (Heb. 8:6).⁶

VII. Rules for Understanding the Promises

There are two rules to understand the promises of the New Testament. *First*, Scripture reckons diverse benefits of the covenant of grace equally to the economy of the New Testament. If they did not fall on the sons of God in the Old Testament, although they did, it was because they did not fall on them in the same degree, measure, and perfection. Therefore, those benefits ought not to be understood simply but economically, not in regard to the thing (τὸ ὅν) but in regard to the manner (τὸ ποῖον) of the thing. *Second*, Scripture attributes to the New Testament the consummation of Christ and the faithful. For as Christ "was made perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10), so the faithful "were made perfect as one" (John 17:21, 23).⁷

VIII. The Difference between the Promises of the Gospel from Those Made before Christ

It is a consequence that the benefits proper to the New Testament, such as the display of righteousness, redemption, justification, remission of sins, the Spirit of promise and adoption, revelation, wisdom, trust, love, fear of God, freedom, peace, the inheritance of the Gentiles and communion with heaven, joy, even external worship and its ministry, and the seal of grace may be said to differ from those that, under the promise either pure or mixed with legal servitude,

5. *Medulla*, XX.

6. *Medulla*, XXI.

7. *Medulla*, XXII.

the people of old enjoyed on the earth. Those alone could not obtain perfection (τελειώσιν) that had not yet been perfected through the sufferings of Christ. For “the law perfected nothing but the introduction of a better hope, through which we draw near to God” (Heb. 7:19).⁸

IX. The Times of the Economy of Grace under the Gospel

The economy of the covenant of grace under the gospel had “its own times” (1 Tim. 2:6). These were of preparation, hence beginning from Christ, or of ratification, made in the death of Christ, or of deadly execution, joined with the case of the republic of Israel. Hence, the Scriptures begin the kingdom of heaven only from John the Baptist (Matt. 11:12–13) by reason of preparation, only from the resurrection of Christ (Matt. 26:29) by reason of ratification, and only from the cutting off of the Jews (Luke 9:27) by reason of execution. Concerning the boundaries of each economy a certain mixture of each prevails.⁹

X. The Proclamation of the Evangelists

In all those times the proclamation of the evangelists prevailed. For witnesses and heralds of the words and deeds of Christ, above all of His death and resurrection, clothed with strength from on high, were necessary to discharge that testimony wisely. These are evangelists, heralds of Christ present and about to die or having died and in heaven, sitting at the right hand of God. The apostle establishes that this sort ought to have been sent (Rom. 10:13–17) with a twofold testimony of Scripture: one of Joel, “And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved” (Joel 2:32), and another of Isaiah, “How beautiful in the mountains are the feet of those proclaiming peace, proclaiming goods (תֹּבוֹת), who make them to hear salvation, who say, ‘Your God has been made King’” (Isa. 52:7). And already earlier David said, “The Lord gives speech (first he announces the gospel by dying and what was done). Good heralds are many armies” (Ps. 68:11).¹⁰

XI. The First Herald: John the Baptist

The first herald of the gospel after the prophets fell silent was John the Baptist: the “messenger will make the way free before the Lord coming to His temple” (Mal. 3:1), “Elijah (in the spirit of Elijah)...to convert the hearts of the fathers to their sons and the sons to their fathers” (Mal. 4:5–6), “a voice of one crying out in the wilderness” (Isa. 40:3–6).¹¹

8. *Medulla*, XXII–XLI.

9. *Medulla*, XLI.

10. *Medulla*, XLII.

11. *Medulla*, XLIII.

XII. Parts of His Ministry; Proclamation of Repentance, etc.

The parts of the ministry of John were the proclamation of repentance, testimony concerning Christ, and baptism. Indeed, before all was his *proclamation of repentance*, “turning the hearts of the fathers to their sons and the sons to their fathers” (Mal. 4:6). Moreover, it was efficient, lest He “shame Abraham” and others of his “sons” (Isa. 29:22). He was saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near (be converted from false righteousness to true, from evil works to good, to the promised King...and bear fruit worthy of repentance” (Matt. 3:2, 8). Such presented his *testimony concerning Christ*: “This is the one about whom I was speaking, who comes after me but was made before me because He was before me” ($\pi\rho\omega\tau\circ\varsigma\ \mu\circ\upsilon$) (John 1:15). “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29). He sealed both his proclamation of repentance and his testimony concerning Christ with *baptism*. “He appeared baptizing in the wilderness and preaching baptism for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4). Christ also wished to be baptized with this baptism to “fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15).¹²

XIII. Christ the Herald of the Gospel

After John, Christ was the same herald of the gospel, who is its Lord. For God “spoke in His Son in the last days” (Heb. 1:1). “Salvation began to be declared by the Lord” (Heb. 2:3). His advent itself was the Word of existing salvation. On the cross He shouted, “It is finished” (John 19:30), and brought back from death, He conversed with His disciples about the gospel.¹³

XIV. The Apostles Heralds of the Gospel; Their Inauguration ^{All pre-ordained and arranged}

From the same *apostles* appeared heralds of the gospel who were sent out. Christ deliberately chose these, future allies, companions, ministers, witnesses of His words and deeds, above all of His resurrection from the dead. “But God raised Him on the third day and gave Him to appear not to all people but to witnesses chosen by divine foreordination ($\pi\rho\kappa\epsilon\chi\epsilon\rho\tau\circ\varsigma\eta\mu\epsilon\nu\circ\varsigma$) for us, who ate and drank together with Him after He rose from the dead. They commanded us to preach to the people that He has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 10:40–42). Hence Saint Peter defines an apostle as “a witness of the resurrection” (Acts 1:22), and Saint Paul would prove his apostleship by saying, “Am I not an apostle? Did I not see Jesus Christ our Lord?” (1 Cor. 9:1). They were sent in order to preach this gospel “to every creature” (Mark 16:15) but in their order, and to discharge that office of herald happily, “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). Moreover, they were required to be

12. *Medulla*, XLIV–XLIX.

13. *Medulla*, XLIX.

just as the Head had to be bapt. also with the Spirit
anointed with sacred oil, or the Spirit of their Head. This anointing came in the name "of the baptism of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5) and followed in the feast of Pentecost when, with the symbol of flaming tongues seizing them, the gift of tongues and wisdom to utter the great things of God followed (Acts 2:1-4).¹⁴

XV. The Prerogatives of the Apostles

The prerogatives of the apostles, baptizers of the Holy Spirit, were not few nor to be disdained. The principal prerogative was that they were witnesses of the death and resurrection of Christ, universal heralds of the gospel, and infallible in public proclamation and writing. "The Holy Spirit will teach you, and He will make you to remember all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). "He will lead you into all truth" (John 16:13). "It will be given to you in that hour what you shall speak. For it is not you who are speaking but the Spirit of the Father who speaks in you" (Matt. 10:19; Luke 12:12). The accessories were the following: the keys of the kingdom of heaven were promised to them in a singular manner (Matt. 16:18, 19; John 20:23), they bestowed the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands (Acts 8:19; 19:6); accomplished signs for punishment of the faithful and unfaithful even by coming with a rod (1 Cor. 4:21; 5:3, 5); preached efficaciously as always having the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:41); were affixed to no place, although to a certain "canon and line" (2 Cor. 10:13-16); and were without successors (ἀδιάδοχοι). Finally, the apostleship had signs: "patience, signs, wonders, and virtues" (2 Cor. 12:12).¹⁵

XVI. The Seventy Disciples; Prophets; Evangelists; Pastors and Teachers

After the apostles were established, other heralds of the gospel were also sent, such as the "seventy disciples" (Luke 10:1-2). To them it was as equally said as to the apostles: "The one who hears you hears Me" (Luke 10:16). There were evangelical "prophets" (Eph. 4:11) who, although not apostles, nevertheless had common gifts among them, so that they could explain the prophecies and relate hidden things (1 Cor. 14:1). There were "evangelists" (Eph. 4:11) who expounded the history of Christ and the apostles, endowed with singular gift and grace, either in speech or writing or in both, either as eyewitnesses (αὐτόπται) or those who "pursued all things above accurately" from other eyewitnesses (αὐτόπταις). There were "pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11) about which we speak below.¹⁶

14. *Medulla*, L-LIII.

15. *Medulla*, LIII-LVIII.

16. *Medulla*, LVIIIff.