

SOUTHEASTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
WAKE FOREST, NORTH CAROLINA

COVENANT AND CONSTITUTION: AN APPRAISAL OF COVENANT AS AN  
ECCLESIAL, MARITAL, AND POLITICAL IDEA

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY  
LEONARD O GOENAGA  
FEBRUARY 2018

©  
2018  
Leonard O Goenaga

This Dissertation prepared and presented to the Faculty as a part of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, North Carolina. All rights and privileges normally reserved by the author as a copyright holder are waived for the Seminary. The Seminary Library may catalog, display, and use this Dissertation in all normal ways such materials are used, for reference, and for other purposes, including electronic and other means of preservation and circulation, including on-line access and other means by which library materials are or in the future may be made available to researchers and library users.



**Southeastern**  
Baptist Theological Seminary

**Ph.D. Dissertation Approval**

Student Name: Leonard O Goenaga Student ID# 000214054

Dissertation Title:

COVENANT AND CONSTITUTION: AN APPRAISAL OF COVENANT AS AN  
ECCLESIAL, MARITAL, AND POLITICAL IDEA

This Dissertation has been approved.

Date of Defense: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Professor: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Daniel Heimbach

2<sup>nd</sup> Faculty Reader: \_\_\_\_\_

External Reader: \_\_\_\_\_

Ph.D. Director: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Charles Quarles

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ecclesial, familial, and political institutions are not things that you study in a vacuum or under a microscope. At the end of the day, they are relationships that you live. These institutions have been fundamental to inspiring my academic labor. In a very literal sense, I could not be here—nor would I be the person that I am—if it were not for a number of important relationships and institutions that have enabled this endeavor.

I am grateful for the role my family has had in enabling this project. First and foremost, I am ever-grateful for my wife. She is truly my beloved. I would write a million dissertations for her alone. She has taught me beauty, love, and empathy. This dissertation would be impossible without her great help. Second, I thank my mother, father, brother, and sister, who have taught me the values of sacrifice, passion, and hard-work. Third, I thank my four children, whose innocence, random office visits, and colorful artwork inspire me to be curious and playful.

I am grateful for the role my church has had in enabling this project. First, I am thankful for my Filipino family, Glory of God Christian Fellowship. My covenantal theology is greatly due to having had the honor to serve them as a pastor. They modeled for me hospitality, loving-kindness, and God-honoring fellowship. Second, I am thankful for the seminary that has disciplined me this past decade. In particular, I am thankful that the LORD led me to my academic mentor, Professor Daniel Heimbach. He has not only provided me a rigorous education, but has modeled and held me to the highest of standards. I am also thankful for the Seminary's Dr. Steward, whose medical ministry kept my body and mind healthy. Third, I am grateful for brothers and sisters such as Joel, Jorge, and Jay, all of whom have sharpened me with their brotherly affection.

Finally, I am grateful for the role my country has had in enabling this project. As the son of Cuban exiles who fled tyranny, I am grateful that America embraced my family and enabled our pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness. Second, I am grateful for a number of patriots who have pursued and protected these three values alongside me. I am thankful for Tami, who has invited me alongside her to serve the public square. I am grateful for Professor Boronat, who helped me discover my love of liberty and political theory. I am grateful for former employers such as Ian, Chris, and Michele, whose pursuits of happiness enabled my own. Third, I am grateful to the Acton Institute and the Liberty Fund, whose generosity and tools equipped much of this project. Finally, I am thankful for the nerds of New Haven. You have given me recreation from my labor. Your faces are the ones I picture when my Lord tells me to love my neighbors. I love you all deeply.

*Soli Deo gloria.*

## PREFACE

“Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant” (Heb 9:15).

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age’” (Matt 28:18–20).

\*\*\*

“‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (Eph 5:31–33).

“Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man’” (Gen 2:23).

\*\*\*

“Now lifted up by God to heaven,  
a name above all others given,  
this matchless name possessing.  
And so, when Jesus’ name is called,  
the knees of everyone should fall,  
wherever they’re residing.  
Then every tongue in one accord,  
will say that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
while God the Father praising” (Phil 2:9–11).

“Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor” (1 Pet 2:13–17).

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	XI
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Thesis Statement .....	8
Introduction to the Research Problem .....	9
Research Key Terms.....	15
Research Assumptions.....	25
Research Outline .....	28
CHAPTER 2: TRADITIONAL PROTESTANT SOCIAL THEORY AND THE PROBLEM OF PARTICULARITY & UNIVERSALITY .....	34
Survey of Traditional Protestant Social Theory.....	39
Luther’s Three Estates ( <i>oeconomia, politia, ecclesia</i> ) .....	47
Baxter’s Christian Directory ( <i>oeconomicks, ecclesiasticks, politicks</i> ) .....	49
Baptist Confessions’ Ordained Institutions (Civil Magistrate, Marriage, and Church).....	52
Kuyper’s Sovereign Spheres (State, Society, Church) .....	55
Troeltsch’s Main Social Organizations (Church, Family, State, and Economic Society).....	63
Bonhoeffer’s Four Mandates ( <i>arbeit, ehe, obrigkeit, kirche</i> ).....	70
Henry’s Supernaturally-Willed Orders (Family, Church, and State) .....	77

Political Theology and the Critical Social Question .....	80
Luther’s Political Theology: On Stations, Kingdoms, and Orders.....	81
O’Donovan’s Political Theology: On Judgment, Representation, and Communication.....	98
Survey of O’Donovan’s Criticisms and the Problem of Particularity and Universality .....	112
CHAPTER 3: AN APPRAISAL OF COVENANT AS AN ECCLESIAL IDEA .....	117
An Introduction to Ecclesial Origination.....	121
Ecclesial Covenant and Constitution in Scripture.....	132
Ecclesial Covenant and Constitution in the Old Testament.....	137
Ecclesial Covenant and Constitution in the New Testament .....	147
Ecclesial Covenant and Constitution in History .....	152
Ecclesial Covenant and Constitution in the Classical Era .....	154
Ecclesial Covenant and Constitution in the Modern Era.....	161
Covenant and Constitution and Its Significant Ecclesial Contributions.....	170
CHAPTER 4: AN APPRAISAL OF COVENANT AS A MARITAL IDEA .....	176
An Introduction to Marital Origination .....	180
Marital Covenant and Constitution in Scripture .....	193
Marital Covenant and Constitution in the Old Testament .....	194
Marital Covenant and Constitution in the New Testament.....	202
Marital Covenant and Constitution in History.....	206
Marital Covenant and Constitution in the Classical Era.....	208
Marital Covenant and Constitution in the Modern Era.....	218

Covenant and Constitution and Its Significant Marital Contributions .....	226
CHAPTER 5: AN APPRAISAL OF COVENANT AS A POLITICAL IDEA .....	234
An Introduction to Political Origination.....	240
Political Covenant and Constitution in Scripture.....	259
Political Covenant and Constitution in the Old Testament .....	264
Political Covenant and Constitution in the New Testament .....	281
Political Covenant and Constitution in History .....	292
Political Covenant and Constitution in the Classical Era .....	294
Political Covenant and Constitution in the Modern Era .....	300
Covenant and Constitution and Its Significant Political Contributions.....	321
CHAPTER 6: COVENANT AND CONSTITUTION AS AN ANSWER TO THE	
PROBLEM OF PARTICULARITY AND UNIVERSALITY .....	333
Response to O’Donovan’s Twofold Criticisms of Traditional Protestant Social Theory	
.....	343
Covenantal Constitutionalism, Political Theology, and the Critical Social Question	360
Covenantal Constitutional Political Theology: On Covenant, On Constitution, and	
Covenantal Constitutions.....	364
Appraisal of Traditional Protestant Social Theory.....	404
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION .....	409
Summary of the Findings.....	412
Implications of the Study.....	416
Closing Statements .....	422
TABLE 1: MODEL: CONQUEST, ORGANIC, AND COVENANT MODELS .....	431

TABLE 2: MODEL: VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL COVENANT PASSAGES ..	432
TABLE 3: SYMBOL: FOUNDING FATHER’S FREQUENCY OF CITATION BY TYPE (1760–1805) .....	434
TABLE 4: SYMBOL: FOUNDING FATHER’S FREQUENCY OF CITATION BY THINKERS (1760–1805) .....	435
TABLE 5: SYMBOL: FOUNDING FATHER’S RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION.....	436
TABLE 6: SYMBOL: AMERICA’S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE (1776), THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT (1620), AND THEIR BIBLICAL SYMBOLS...	437
TABLE 7: SYMBOL: AMERICA’S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE (1776) AND ITS BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES.....	441
TABLE 8: SYMBOL: AMERICA’S CONSTITUTION (1787) AND ITS BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES .....	445
TABLE 9: SYMBOL: AMERICA’S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, AND MAYHEW’S “A DISCOURSE CONCERNING UNLIMITED SUBMISSION AND NON-RESISTANCE TO THE HIGHER POWERS” .....	451
APPENDIX 1: OUTLINE: CHIASTIC ARGUMENTATIVE STRUCTURE .....	453
APPENDIX 2: OUTLINE: COVENANTAL APPRAISAL ANSWER OUTLINE TO O’DONOVAN’S CRITICISMS OF TRADITIONAL PROTESTANT SOCIAL THEORY .....	454
APPENDIX 3: MODEL: RGB COLOR MODEL OF INDIVIDUALS IN COVENANTAL CONSTITUTIONALISM (MODEL OF STATION AND VOCATION) .....	459

APPENDIX 4: MODEL: PRISM MODEL OF COMMUNICATIONS IN COVENANTAL CONSTITUTIONALISM (MODEL OF COVENANTS, CONSTITUTIONS, INSTITUTIONS, ORDERS, SOCIETIES, CIVILIZATIONS, AND CREATION)..... 460

APPENDIX 5: MODEL: HTML MODEL OF ORIGINATION AND CONSTITUTED FORM AND FUNCTION ..... 476

APPENDIX 6: PRAXIS: ECCLESIAL COVENANT & CONSTITUTION ..... 477

APPENDIX 7: PRAXIS: MARITAL COVENANT & CONSTITUTION ..... 481

APPENDIX 8: PRAXIS: POLITICAL COVENANT & CONSTITUTION..... 485

APPENDIX 9: SYMBOL: AMERICA’S JEFFERSON DRAFT OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WITH CONGRESS’ EDITORIAL CHANGES..... 490

APPENDIX 10: SYMBOL: AMERICA’S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND ITS COVENANTAL STRUCTURE ..... 492

APPENDIX 11: SYMBOL: AMERICA’S EARLY POLITICAL SERMONS..... 495

APPENDIX 12: SYMBOL: AMERICA’S FIRST PRAYER OF CONGRESS (1774). 499

APPENDIX 13: SYMBOL: AMERICA’S SEAL AND DIVINE PROVIDENCE (AMERICA’S SYMBOL OF POLITICAL *CHUPPAH*)..... 502

BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... 507

## ABSTRACT

Two of the foundational questions that social humanity can ask itself is at what point our social institutions originate, and with what form should they take? When does a church become a church, a family become a family, and a state become a state? Furthermore, how should these social institutions constitute power and authority? These questions formulate the preliminary foundation of social and political theories, and thinkers have traditionally posited conquest, organic, and contract theories to explain the origin and form of social institutions. Often overlooked in the exchange is the socio-politico-theological idea of covenant, which in comparison provides a unique theological contribution to the traditional discussion of social institutions, as well as contains an apologetic value that helps postmodern Western society better understand itself and its symbols.

This dissertation attempts to appraise covenant as an ecclesial, marital, and political idea, and in doing so address any implications for the development of social and political theologies. In particular, the dissertation introduces traditional Protestant social theory's three-fold understanding of social institutions, and how it manifests itself into a political theology. As a contemporary master of the field, Oliver O'Donovan provides a pivotal figure that links traditional and contemporary political theologies, yet criticizes the traditional Protestant social theory as superficial. O'Donovan raises two critiques against the theory: (1) it is not biblically warranted and doctrinally supported, and (2) it

does not sufficiently answer the problem of the particularity and universality of social institutions. The major questions the dissertation asks is whether O'Donovan's criticisms against traditional Protestant social theory are warranted. The dissertation responds that they are not, and suggests the social-political-theological concept of covenant—which both O'Donovan and his peers acknowledge is relatively missing from his work—sufficiently answers O'Donovan's two-fold criticisms of traditional Protestant social theory. Furthermore, a covenantal constitutional political theology that augments the traditional theory seems to also effectively address the critical social question of particularity and universality.

After the first chapter's introduction of the thesis, major question, and examination of the field, the project's second chapter orients the reader towards understanding what is meant by traditional Protestant social theory. It conducts a survey of influential Protestant theologians whose social theories reveal a three-fold pattern of emphasizing the church, the family, and the state as society's foundational social institutions. The remainder of the chapter provides in-depth surveys of Luther and O'Donovan's political theologies, which serve as contrasting examples of a traditional and a contemporary Protestant social theory. O'Donovan's criticisms against the traditional Protestant approach are then explored towards the end of the chapter.

The bulk of the dissertation responds to O'Donovan's criticisms by appraising covenant as an ecclesial, marital, and political idea in chapters three through five. Each chapter begins with a guide whose theological, sociological, or theoretical work helps orient the questions and concerns pertinent to surveying the covenantal idea. The chapters then appraise covenantalism in the Bible's Old and New Testaments. After the biblical

analysis, the chapter examines episodes of covenantalism in classical and modern historical periods. Each chapter then closes with an exploration of the significant contributions the appraisal makes to the institution and the broader thesis.

By exposing its scriptural origins, its historical actualization, and its political-theological significance, the project's sixth chapter rehearses the observations to conclude that O'Donovan's criticisms of traditional Protestant social theory are not warranted because applying the idea of covenant to social life is scripturally and doctrinally supported, and better able to address the problem of particularity and universality. The chapter then builds off this conclusion by proposing Covenantal Constitutionalism as a viable political theology that augments the traditional Protestant approach, and provides a compelling contribution to understanding the social symbols of individuals, institutions, orders, societies, civilizations, and Creation. The dissertation comes to a close with its seventh chapter, which observes that within today's postmodernist moral and social frontier, the appraised covenantal constitutional model contains tremendous explanatory and apologetic power to understanding the particularity, universality, origination, and constitution of humanity's ecclesial, familial, and political institutions.

Dedicated to the Lord of lords, and to the church, family, and country He has called me to serve through hearkening the Covenant and covenants with loving-kindness.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

One hundred and seventy-four million dead citizens. That is not the projected casualties of a worldwide nuclear catastrophe. Rather, that was the last estimate given by the late political scientist R. J. Rummel of the number of individuals killed by their own governments during the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> It is an extraordinarily large—and nearly unbelievable—number. The leading cause of unnatural death in the last one hundred years was to be killed by the very government who was supposed to shield its citizens from violence. The total of democide murders was six times higher than the estimates of those who died fighting in any of the century’s foreign or civil wars. If the bodies were laid out from head to toe, and averaged five feet in height, they would circle the globe ten times. Rummel’s primary contribution to the field of political science was to revive and redefine the term “democide” to describe those individuals murdered by their own governments through violence, forced starvation, genocide, negligence, and overall

---

<sup>1</sup> R. J. Rummel, “Freedom, Democide, War,” *Freedom, Democracy, Peace; Power, Democide, and War*, February 27, 2018, <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/>. See also R. J. Rummel, *Statistics of Democide: Genocide and Mass Murder since 1900* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers Rutgers University, 1998). The estimates of the number of individuals murdered by democide vary, however regardless of the range, it is at minimum in the remarkably high tens of millions. In the foreword of Stephane Courtois, *Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), x, Martin Malia notes the sheer scale of this carnage from Communism alone, writing, “This factual approach puts Communism in what is, after all, its basic human perspective. For it was in truth a ‘tragedy of planetary dimensions’ ... with a grand total of victims variously estimated by contributors to the volume at between 85 million and 100 million. Either way, the Communist record offers the most colossal case of political carnage in history.”

abuse.<sup>2</sup> Rummel's passion for recording this number was simple. He agreed not only with Lord Acton's famous saying that "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely," but also believed that "power kills, and absolute power kills absolutely."<sup>3</sup> The violence and degeneration of the twentieth century supports Rummel's conviction.

Beyond marking the brutality of the twentieth century, one hundred and seventy-four million also serves as another important symbol. It signals the end of the project called modernity. The modernist effort of secularism, humanism, and scientism arose in part as a reaction to the religious violence experienced during the Thirty Years' War. The project was birthed by the optimism of the Enlightenment, and it sought to chart a course for human flourishing that was grounded in a faith of man's collective reason. At the peak of its idealism, the pursuit was put to a grinding halt by two unexpected enemies: humanity and science. Secularized man sought to replace the alleged opium of religion, with a cocktail of mustard gas, firebombs, and atomic fallout. The very image of the peak of man's greatest scientific achievement in the twentieth century also became a symbol of

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Rummel defined democide as "the intentional killing of an unarmed or disarmed person by government agents acting in their authoritative capacity and pursuant to government policy or high command (as in the Nazi gassing of the Jews). It is also democide if these deaths were the result of such authoritative government actions carried out with reckless and wanton disregard for the lives of those affected (as putting people in concentration camps in which the forced labor and starvation rations were such as to cause the death of inmates). It is democide if government promoted or turned a blind eye to these deaths even though they were murders carried out 'unofficially' or by private groups (as by death squads in Guatemala or El Salvador). And these deaths also may be democide if high government officials purposely allowed conditions to continue that were causing mass deaths and issued no public warning (as in the Ethiopian famines of the 1970s). All extra-judicial or summary executions comprise democide. Even judicial executions may be democide, as in the Soviet show trials of the late 1930s. Judicial executions for 'crimes' internationally considered trivial or non-capital, as of peasants picking up grain at the edge of a collective's fields, of a worker for telling an anti-government joke, or of an engineer for a miscalculation, are also democide."

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

the fall of modernism, and of humanity's terrible propensity for degenerative violence—the rocket propelled atomic bomb.

The former century proved that social ideas and symbols matter. Whether in the image of a swastika, or a hammer and sickle, humans inspired their ethnicities and nations to participate in the most unimaginable atrocities of human history. One of the most influential political theorists of the twentieth century who recognized the importance of symbols, and challenged modernity's secularist dominion over political science, was Eric Voegelin. On the political importance of symbols, Voegelin's groundbreaking *The New Science of Politics* argued that “when political science begins, it does not begin with a *tabula rasa* on which it can inscribe its concepts; it will inevitably start from the rich body of self-interpretation of a society and proceed by critical clarification of socially pre-existent symbols.”<sup>4</sup> Voegelin challenged mainstream academia's longstanding prohibition against considering transcendent values to understand political societies.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Voegelin argued that the spirit of modernity

---

<sup>4</sup> Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), 28.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 27. Voegelin's thesis was that political societies were social and political microcosms which defied the scientific and systematic approaches of modernist political scientists. The mainstream models sought to force statistical, psychological, and sociological approaches to studying polities. Voegelin's argument was that it undermined the very endeavor of political science. Rather, Voegelin argued for studying polities and societies by examining the symbols they make for themselves; regardless of whether these symbols were secular or sacred. He explains his industry-shaking approach, where he writes, “Human society is not merely a fact, or an event, in the external world to be studied by an observer like a natural phenomenon. Though it has externality as one of its important components, it is as a whole a little world, a *cosmion*, illuminated with meaning from within by the human beings who continuously create and bear it as the mode and condition of their self-realization. It is illuminated through an elaborate symbolism, in various degrees of compactness and differentiation—from rite, through myth, to theory—and this symbolism illuminates it with meaning in so far as the symbols make the internal structure of such a *cosmion*, the relations between its members and groups of members, as well as its existence as a whole, transparent for the mystery of human existence. The self-illumination of society through symbols is an integral part of social reality, and one may even say its essential part, for through such symbolization the

was itself religious, and that it in fact championed a Gnosticism that was corrosive to order and civilization.<sup>6</sup>

The symbols of the twentieth century also verify Voegelin's thesis. Supported by the magnitude of symbol-sanctioned atrocities, Voegelin's proposal breached mainstream academia, and opened a gap for a return to studying political man's immanent and transcendent values. The impact of his proposal ushered in a generation of political theorists, theologians, and historians who sought to revive and broaden the political discipline by re-examining the Judeo-Christian influences that shaped many of Western Civilization's most foundational social and political values. Within this generation, and within the field of contemporary political theology, few theologians have been as helpful, innovative, and controversial as Oliver O'Donovan.

O'Donovan's work sought to provide an evangelically informed and eschatologically oriented contribution to a field of political theory that suffers from problems related to identifying an objective authority. According to O'Donovan, "Western civilization finds itself the heir of political institutions and traditions which it

---

members of a society experience it as more than an accident or a convenience; they experience it as of their human essence."

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 126. The second major challenge proposed in Voegelin's work was to argue "the essence of modernity as the growth of Gnosticism." Voegelin argued that this Gnosticism sought to overcome "the uncertainty of faith by receding from transcendence and endowing man with his intramundane range of action with the meaning of eschatological fulfilment, civilizational activity became a mystical work of self-salvation. The spiritual strength of the soul which in Christianity was devoted to the sanctification of life could now be diverted into the more appealing, more tangible, and, above all, so much easier creation of the terrestrial paradise" (p. 129). The result was an intellectual Gnosticism that was guilty of giving rise to the type of ideological totalitarianism that ultimately undermined modernity's original project. Thus, Voegelin concludes, "A civilization can, indeed, advance and decline at the same time—but not forever. There is a limit toward which this ambiguous process moves; the limit is reached when an activist sect which represents the Gnostic truth organizes the civilization into an empire under its rule. Totalitarianism, defined as the existential rule of Gnostic activists, is the end form of progressive civilization" (p. 132).

values without any clear idea why, or to what extent, it values them.”<sup>7</sup> O’Donovan likewise notes that “Christian political thought has also acquired a secondary value in the circumstances of our time, which may, however, be no less important: it has an apologetic force when addressed to a world where the intelligibility of political institutions and traditions is seriously threatened.”<sup>8</sup>

This apologetic force leads O’Donovan to closely link the disciplines of political theology and ecclesiology. According to O’Donovan, political theology “is an intellectual enquiry located on the horizon of the theology of the church. Every aspect of theology is a pursuit of the church; but theology also has a self-descriptive moment when it speaks about the church, ‘ecclesiology.’”<sup>9</sup> This moment of self-description leads to a missional horizon where “the church encounters the ‘other’ that is summoned into the church, the world that God is redeeming. It is on this missionary horizon that political theology arises.”<sup>10</sup> Political theology becomes a “description of the world as it appears on this horizon, prepared for the church’s mission by the Holy Spirit that runs ahead of the church.”<sup>11</sup>

With a myriad of popular debates centering on notions of “mission” and “kingdom” in theology, it is interesting that contemporary Christian thinkers do not echo O’Donovan’s political theological approach.<sup>12</sup> The Bible seems deeply political. It

---

<sup>7</sup> Oliver O’Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), xiii.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., xii. Also O’Donovan writes, “The work of political theology is to shed light from the Christian faith upon the intricate challenge of thinking about living in late-modern Western society” (p. x).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> A popular example of the type of back and forth dialogue within the Evangelical community on what is meant by “mission” is well represented in Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*,

utilizes a number of important political symbols and vocabularies in its missional address.<sup>13</sup> With politics occurring at the Church's missional horizon, what contributions can a political theological approach make to the study of politics and society? What can be learned about important social institutions such as the church, the family, and the state by addressing them at this missional horizon? What insights can such an approach bring to areas in ecclesial, social, and political theory? In particular, what can a political theological approach contribute to the important question of the origins and forms of the institutions of church, family, and state? Finally, what can the fruit of such theological research contribute to O'Donovan's original concern of providing Western civilization with an intelligibility of the political institutions and traditions it has inherited?

Throughout the history of Protestant theology, a common approach was taken to navigating these social questions. Society was considered to be primarily made up of three important social institutions: church, family, and state.<sup>14</sup> Whether in the language of spheres, kingdoms, or orders, there seemed to arise a general consensus among important Protestant theologians, from a wide array of traditions, that this three-fold approach formulated the major institutional categories of a society. Even as the traditions branched out and developed over the next couple hundred years, the social theoretical approach seemed to deepen, with some of its most articulate and comprehensive developments

---

*A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), and Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Scripture makes abundant references and symbolic usage of political terms such as kings (Deut 17:15), kingdoms (Matt 6:33), princes (Dan 9:25), laws (Ps 19:7), commandments (Exod 20:1–17), assemblies (Heb 12:23), covenants (Ezek 17:13), people (Prov 14:28), swords (Rom 13:3), and many other political-heavy terms.

occurring among groups as theologically and historically distinct as 17<sup>th</sup> century federalist puritans and 20<sup>th</sup> century neo-orthodox theologians.

For these reasons, the criticisms and alternative proposal from a figure such as Oliver O'Donovan becomes noteworthy. O'Donovan is a master theologian; his social and political sensitivities empower an academic project that births a major corpus of political theological works. O'Donovan sees the field of political theology generally lacking a comprehensive understanding of the breadth and depth of the church's historical political theological insights. To answer this deficit, he produced important academic works—such as the sourcebook *From Irenaeus to Grotius*—and helped give an academic field the tools and challenges needed to embolden and empower political theological reflection.

In other words, O'Donovan is as far from ignorant as possible on the Church's social and political questions. He even clearly articulates his Evangelical and Protestant commitments. For these reasons, when he critiques a traditional Protestant approach to social theory, proponents of political theology ought to stop and listen. What criticisms does O'Donovan have to make? What alternative does he offer? Is it convincing? Finally, and perhaps most important, where can this line of questioning take the field by appraising the traditional approach, and potentially furthering the Church's theological understanding of society and its institutions?

---

<sup>14</sup> While this project will explore this tradition in more detail in Chapter 2, it is worth noting that a fourth is sometimes found among the traditional Protestant proposals: the marketplace.

## Thesis Statement

On the traditional Protestant social theory, O'Donovan writes,

A well-established pattern of social theory in Protestant theology identifies three or four key spheres of communication: church, state, household, and sometimes industry. Luther has his doctrine of the three 'estates,' *oeconomia, politia, ecclesia*, from which Bonhoeffer drew his four 'mandates,' *Arbeit, Ehe, Obrigkeit, and Kirche*. The Puritans promoted similar schemata: Baxter's *Christian Directory* (1673) is organized into 'Christian Ethicks' (on private duties), 'Christian Oeconomicks,' 'Christian Ecclesiasticks,' and 'Christian Politicks.'<sup>15</sup>

O'Donovan claims that this traditional pattern leaves him unsatisfied. He writes that the Protestant configuration has what he calls a "superficially evident weakness," claiming,

[I]t appears to be based on nothing stronger than intuition, with no exegetical or doctrinal argument to support it; but this is true of many great insights, and is not fatal. In this case there is a deeper weakness, which is that it ranges the church among a number of elementary social forms.<sup>16</sup>

He identifies his critique further, bringing about two central charges against the traditional approach: First, "From the point of view of the church, this seems to undermine ecclesiology by ignoring both the historical identity of the church as the church of Jesus and the eschatological identity of the church as the heavenly city," and second "From the point of view of the social spheres, government, household, etc., they

---

<sup>15</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 254–255.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 254–255. As the dissertation develops, the opposite argument will be made per O'Donovan's alleged "deeper weakness." When appraised in the light of the covenantal insights, the traditional Protestant approach actually does the opposite of simply ranging the church among a number of elementary institutions. Rather—and in the very spirit of his approach of the Church conducting political theology as a missional and apologetic reflection to the other at the worldly horizon—the covenantal approach to those institutions actually explains both their particularity and universality. It does not belittle the church, but rather adds substantial moral meaning to each of the institutions. Rather than the church be confused or reduced before the other institutions, the view actually appraises the institutions in a manner that redemptively points to their objective intent. It establishes a real and operating morale framework that maintains the particularity and universality of the institutions, while capturing the spirit of O'Donovan's *Resurrection and Moral Order*.

are not envisaged concretely, as this government or this household. They are therefore liable to assume improper universal overtones.”<sup>17</sup>

At the core of this dissertation is answering the question, “is O’Donovan’s criticism against traditional Protestant social theory warranted?” As noted above, O’Donovan directs two criticisms against the traditional Protestant approach, arguing that it both lacks biblical and doctrinal support, and fails to answer the fundamental social theoretical question of the particularity and universality of social institutions. This dissertation will argue the thesis that O’Donovan’s criticism of traditional Protestant social theory is not warranted because applying the idea of covenant to social life is both scripturally and doctrinally supported, and better able to address the problem of particularity and universality.

### **Introduction to the Research Problem**

O’Donovan’s notion of the apologetic beauty and force of a rich political theology has immense practicality and relevance towards this dissertation’s contemporary setting.

Many young evangelicals, especially within Baptist circles, are exhausted from the

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 254–255. Second to his criticism of lacking Biblical support, this is what the paper refers to when it mentions O’Donovan’s two-fold criticism of traditional Protestant social theory. This quote in particular represents what the dissertation refers to as the problem of particularity and universality. O’Donovan’s concern that social spheres inappropriately adopt universal overtones is admirable, and well received. Especially for individuals like Thielicke, who hold views of a more negative role of the state in society, the threat of exaggerated power and authority is real. This threat has given birth to authoritarian and totalitarian ideologies. One could probably even define a totalitarian ideology by the universal overtone of a particular or network of ideologies (“the Aryan brotherhood,” “the *bourgeoisie*,” “Empire of the Sun,” etc.). However, as will be demonstrated, one of the chief assets of the appraisal of the covenantal idea is its ability to explain the universal and particular aspects of the three-fold institutions, while simultaneously checking them against totalitarian tendencies. This is especially so when the Baptist perspective is introduced to the overall appraisal, given its historical support of institutional checks and congregational covenantalism.

culture wars and are now proclaiming an unhealthy apathetic agnosticism over-looking the relationship between politics and theology.<sup>18</sup> Others are populating the opposite side of the spectrum, and are overreacting with their attempts to propagate a liberation-influenced social gospel.<sup>19</sup> In the spirit of O'Donovan's apologetic attitude, there is value in engaging with O'Donovan's political theology from a conservative evangelical Baptist perspective.<sup>20</sup> The general trends in Western culture and the Western Church make this apologetic contribution especially valuable. For good reasons, I have always felt Christian ethics is the Church's most beautiful apologetic, and that this beauty carries over into explaining sub-disciplines in ethics such as political and social theology.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Neil King Jr. "Evangelical Leader Preaches Pullback From Politics, Culture Wars," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 21, 2013, <<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887324755104579072722223166570>>.

<sup>19</sup> Jim Wallis and his Sojourners group are representative of this category. It is even more surprising that, given the noted need and interest, few Southern Baptist voices outside of these two categories are publically developing a rich political theology in dialogue with O'Donovan and historical figures such as Luther who populate such an opulent political theological tradition.

<sup>20</sup> At this point, it may be asked why a "conservative evangelical baptistic" perspective? In specific, there seems to be an absence of conservative evangelical Baptist voices among O'Donovan's dialogue partners. Craig G. Bartholomew, ed., *A Royal Priesthood?: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically: A Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan* (Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster Press; Zondervan, 2002), was created to critique and engage with O'Donovan's work. While it has a confessional Baptist university institution as its publisher, conservative evangelical Baptist voices are absent from the chapter contributions. Like Bartholomew's *A Royal Priesthood?*, the July 2008 edition of the *Political Theology* journal was dedicated to interact with O'Donovan's work. Luke Bretherton, "Introduction: Oliver O'Donovan's Political Theology and the Liberal Imperative," *Political Theology* Jul2008 Vol. 9 Issue 3 (2008): 265–271, summarizes O'Donovan as seeking "to re-state an Augustinian-Reformed approach to Church-state relations and distinguish this approach from political theologies that draw on the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, the Anabaptist/Radical Reformation tradition and more modern schools, notably Liberation theology and Liberal Protestantism (e.g. Reinhold Niebuhr's 'Christian Realism')" (p. 268). While the journal contains several representatives of those voices, American conservative evangelical baptistic responses are absent. Given that a conservative evangelical baptistic perspective fails to fit neatly in any of those categories, and that it is incredibly important in influencing American politics, it merits the approach taken in this paper.

<sup>21</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), xv: O'Donovan's notion of the beauty and apologetic power of political theology—which may be considered a sub-discipline within Christian ethics—is especially agreeable to the purpose and orientation of this dissertation. As O'Donovan wrote, "[E]thics has by its nature the force of an apologetic, not merely because the existence of a community reflecting systematically out of Christian belief upon the challenges

In addition to the desire of making an intentionally apologetic contribution to an immediate cultural and confessional environment, this dissertation seems warranted by a need to contribute to a broader academic environment that often overlooks the historical significance of theopolitical debate and ideas within the political and social science disciplines.<sup>22</sup> The dissertation is the product of over a decade of research. That period began with an interest in political theory in general, and social contract theory in particular. During my undergraduate education in political science and religious studies, I became acutely aware of how absent the influence of the Judeo-Christian theological tradition was in courses on political theoretical ideas. Even confessional Christian figures seemed to be stripped by secular academia of the influence theology played in generating political ideas. Locke is perhaps a representative of this issue. While Locke spent much ink explaining the scriptural and theological foundations of his theory in his *First Treatise*, the way his political theory was normally taught left one thinking his theology had little influence on his thinking.

---

of living in love is 'attractive,' as children playing an innocent game may be attractive, but because it is interpretative. It gives us a reason to believe that our lives are not, after all, merely thrown together, but are susceptible of a coordinated social meaning, even a beauty, such as St Paul called a *taxis*." To this, I agree with passion, and pound the table and say, "Yes! *Si! Qui! Ja!*" O'Donovan is absolutely correct! The most powerful apologetic is a self-reflective, actualized, and witnessed ethic. This is one of the chief things that makes covenants—from the particular moving depth of Hosea's faithfulness, to the universal warming display of the LORD's mercy—so apologetically powerful when lived publically.

<sup>22</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4, writes, "[T]he Moral Science of the early Enlightenment lifts political theory out of the purview of theology. But the High Tradition itself did not spring from nothing, but drew on thinkers and ideas of the patristic and Carolingian ages. Nor did the Enlightenment succeed in suppressing its impulses for long, as the first protests can be detected in the Christian socialists of the early to mid-nineteenth century. But the relation of the contemporary political theology to the tradition can be summed up in a single bleak word: ignorance. The feeling of invigorating new departure is in considerable measure due to the loss of antecedents from view. Occasionally our contemporaries light on moments in the tradition and recognise their importance (Boff on St Francis, the

In Oliver O'Donovan is found a scholar who not only confirms the legitimacy of certain suspicions, but he also provides a treasure trove of writings that empower a project to approach political theory with theological authenticity. In particular, as a student begins to investigate the influence of theological ideas on Western political thinkers—especially the American colonial and revolutionary episodes—covenant manifests itself as a central and seminal theopolitical idea. Covenant appears to be a concept that not only holds its own politically, but it was also historically applied across institutions to explain their origination and form. Furthermore, covenant stands distinct besides the more traditional contract, organism, and conquest models.

While these suspicions were carried for years, it was a second major figure that finally gave them confirmation, voice, and substance. A reader might at this point expect the name of some conservative evangelical American, but it was actually a 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish theologian named Daniel J. Elazar who systematically revealed the importance of covenant as a seminal political idea. I shared so many aspects of Elazar's own experience discovering the political importance of covenant, that it is worth sharing Elazar's voice in the hopes of capturing the sentiment and motivation behind the dissertation—the reader simply need swap the episodes' religious origins with a baptistic one, when he writes,

Sometime during the period when I was completing high school and beginning university I discovered the covenantal basis of Judaism and the Jewish people, perhaps the best kept secret of my otherwise rather good Jewish education. During the next several years, my university studies brought me face to face with the covenantal basis of Reformed Protestant Christianity and its derivation from the same biblical tradition. It was also at that time that my study of American government led me to understand how the American polity was founded on that

---

*Kairos Document* on John Salisbury, for example); but for the most part the tradition, with its wealth of suggestive theopolitical debate and analysis, has been occluded by the shadow of the modern period.”

Reformed Protestant covenantal tradition in its Puritan expression and in its secularized Lockean form. By the end of the 1950s, the convergence of these various lines of exploration brought me to a recognition that covenant was a truly seminal concept in Western civilization and stimulated me to begin what has been a decades-long exploration of the covenant tradition in the Western world, especially in its political dimensions.<sup>23</sup>

Once Elazar's work on political covenants was discovered, my growing academic suspicions were confirmed and ready for exploration. However, this did not stop with covenant as a political idea. There was also the strong suspicion and excitement that covenant was also a shared and seminal idea for understanding the institutions of marriage and the church, and thus society as a whole.

Covenant is hardly an unpopular subject in theology. There is no shortage today of dissertations and books being written on the theological importance of covenant. While searching the humanities and social sciences ProQuest database for dissertations on "covenant," about 53,055 works were written between 1897–2014. From within this period, 42,568 were written between 1990–2014. However, in the realm of contemporary political thought, it has been greatly ignored in favor of the more "secularized" compact and contract traditions. Searching this same database for "political covenant" only

---

<sup>23</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel: Biblical Foundations & Jewish Expressions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995), xiii. The reader need only swap the religious origins in Elazar's preface, and get a remarkably similar account of my own discovery of covenant's importance. Whereas Elazar's Judaism held the "best kept secret" of "the covenantal basis," it was my baptistic ecclesiology and its notion of local assemblies as covenantal bodies that stored this treasure. Furthermore, much of my most important college and graduate papers were also invested in exploring American polity, and the covenantal theme showed up over and over again. Much time was even spent investigating Locke, on the very suspicion Elazar notes about an inheritance of Puritan covenantal tradition (although I would argue it was far less secularized than the modern academic attitude purports). And so is the irony, and surely to Elazar's joy, that a Jewish covenantal theologian would be instrument in my discovery of the Reformed and broader covenantal tradition. Whereas Elazar chooses to begin the first paragraph of the preface of the first volume of his four-volume work aimed at systematically exploring covenant as a political idea, this dissertation's introduction hints at conducting the same type of

returned 224 dissertations, 182 of which were written between 1990–2014. While searching this same database for “social contract,” 27,065 dissertations were returned, with an additional 2,706 returned under “social compact.” In brief, these results not only exemplify the importance of covenant as a theological theme, but also the opportunity and need to explore it as a political, marital, and ecclesial idea. Furthermore, no dissertations were discovered that interacted with O’Donovan’s critique of traditional Protestant social theory, or his understanding of covenant.

O’Donovan’s work suffers from not developing the idea of covenant in his political theology.<sup>24</sup> This is unfortunate, given not only how the concept of political covenants help inform the influences of modern compact and contract theories, but also that biblical Israel represents “the oldest stratum in Western political thought and, since the record is derived very directly from the Israelites experience, the latter is in itself an important factor in the development of Western political institutions.”<sup>25</sup> Covenant as a

---

exploration, but by appraising the covenantal idea across all three of the central institutions noted in traditional Protestant social theory: ecclesial, familial, and political.

<sup>24</sup> A number of O’Donovan’s peers make this criticism against his work. For example, see J. Gordon McConville, “Law and Monarchy in the Old Testament,” in *A Royal Priesthood?: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically: A Dialogue with Oliver O’Donovan*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew (Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press; Zondervan, 2002), 81. McConville writes, “Covenant, indeed, plays a surprisingly small part in the argument in DN [*The Desire of the Nations*], in view of its prominence in the OT, and its usefulness as a concept for the commitment of individuals to each other, in a community under the authority of law and committed to justice. It furnishes a paradigm for consent to be governed that is more far-reaching than that which is entailed in Israel’s confession ‘*yhwh mālak*’ as understood by O’Donovan.” Bartholomew, *A Royal Priesthood?*, 106, also points out this absence, noting that “covenant plays a marginal role in DN, and O’Donovan’s pregnant phrase ‘the covenant of creation’ is never unpacked and explored for its political implications” (Bartholomew, *A Royal Priesthood?*, 106). Jonathan Chaplin, “Political Eschatology and Responsible Government: Oliver O’Donovan’s ‘Christian Liberalism,’” 272–273, goes on to ask, “[W]hy does the theologically central notion of ‘covenant’ play such a minor role in a political theology so indebted to the Old Testament idea of kingship, whereas it proved absolutely decisive for Calvinist and Puritan writers equally so indebted?” This all leads O’Donovan to criticize himself, acknowledging, “I plead guilty, on the other hand, to saying too little about ‘covenant’” (O’Donovan, *A Royal Priesthood?*, 89).

<sup>25</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 12.

political idea is fruitful not only for theologians, but also for the political scientist, as the Bible records one of the earliest and longstanding traditions of political record. Furthermore, it also contains explanatory power that makes sense of modern behaviors, institutions, and attitudes in Western political thought. The apologetic, missional, theological, and academic contributive value of a dissertation that explored these themes seemed interesting, and this provides the backdrop for why and how this dissertation arose. It was O'Donovan's lack of developing the idea of covenant politically, and his criticisms made against traditional Protestant social theory, that brought all these issues together and initiated the dissertation's formulation.

### **Research Key Terms**

Equally as important as asking the right questions, is having some key terms defined early on. While many of the terms below will be revisited and defined throughout the text, the dissertation profits from establishing some basic starting definitions.

Perhaps the most important terms to define early on are what the dissertation means by a social theory and a political theology. Social theory is here taken to mean any theoretical framework used to understand, explain, and organize social phenomena. Particular to the dissertation's interest is in examining the way a society originates and forms particular and universal social institutions. Given the Protestant's traditional emphasis on the institutions of church, family, and state, the Chicago school of thought—with its emphasis of examining particular social times and places—is helpful in defining what the dissertation means by social theory:

In a single sentence, the Chicago school thought—and thinks—that one cannot understand social life without understanding the arrangements of particular social actors in particular social times and places. Another way of stating this is to say that Chicago felt that no social fact makes any sense abstracted from its context in social (and often geographic) space and social time. Social facts are located. This means a focus on social relations and spatial ecology in synchronic analysis, as it means a similar focus on process in diachronic analysis. Every social fact is situated, surrounded by other contextual facts and brought into being by a process relating it to past contexts.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, when a social theory like the traditional Protestant approach is mentioned, the dissertation is referencing the analytical approach taken by thinkers to understand, explain, and organize the social phenomena of social institutions as they occur across particular and universal social times, places, and persons.

Defining what is meant by political theology is equally as important. Social theory by its nature is an interdisciplinary study, and much of its origins and its dialogue occur in symbiosis with political theory. Political theory can be identified as an analytical approach that concentrates on man's particular political institution and how he organizes power and authority—also known as sovereignty.<sup>27</sup> Modern approaches to contemporary political theory tend to stress the anthropocentric aspects—to the intentional post-Enlightenment exclusion of theological ideas and influences.<sup>28</sup> As such, the term political

---

<sup>26</sup> Andrew Abbott, "Of Time and Space: The Contemporary Relevance of the Chicago School," *Social Forces* 4 (1997): 1149, whites, "But in the main, the idea that social facts are located facts, facts situated in social time and place, is a strange one in contemporary sociology."

<sup>27</sup> O'Donovan provides a good and broad definition of political thought in O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, xi, writing, "Political thought is, in its broadest view, a train of practical reasoning about practical reason, a reflection on how, by whom, when, and in what order decisions are to be made by human beings on human action."

<sup>28</sup> Leo Strauss, *History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Joseph Cropsey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987): 6. In classical political philosophy, the subject of study was the allocation of power and authority within the *polis* (city-state). What makes political power *political*, is this organization of power and authority at the collective public level; it manifests itself primarily through a civil society's allocation of power and authority via laws and punishments. A contemporary version of the *polis* is often taken to be the state, although this has the tendency to be confused simply with the political civil

theology identifies a theocentric discipline that appropriates an analytical approach to the institutional organization of God and man's political power and authority. As O'Donovan writes, the purpose of a political theology is

to show how the political concepts wrapped up in Jewish and Christian speech about God's redemption of the world still had political force, generating expectations for political life that found one type of expression, though not the only possible one, in the political ideals of 'Christendom,' the European civilization that bridged the gap from late antiquity to early modernity, from which our modern political ideals have sprung.<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, when political theology is mentioned, the dissertation is referencing a theologically-sensitive and theocentric approach to the examination of God and man's allocation of power (in the form of the political act), and of authority (in the form of the political institution)—the collective presence of power and authority is called sovereignty and is the chief study of political theology.<sup>30</sup>

---

government. Modern political philosophy often breaks with the classical approach by intentionally emphasizing the study of the state/government as separate from society. However, as this paper agrees, the study of the *polis* and society must be done in symbiosis. The *polis* of today, and thus the subject of study in this political theory and theology, is better understood as the country, or the nation-state. He adds, "The modern equivalent to 'the city' on the level of the citizen's understanding is 'the country.' For when a man says, for example, that 'the country is in danger,' he also has not yet made a distinction between state and society" (p. 6).

<sup>29</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005): ix.

<sup>30</sup> There are some structural examples of the subtle differences between social theory and political theology in the dissertation's outline. These differences are more about vantage points, perspectives, and emphasis of study than fixed boundaries. Chapter II, section B, subsections 1, sub-subsections 1 and 2 provide examples of a more political theological study when they examine Luther's political act of stations and the law of love, and the political institutions of the two kingdoms. Sub-subsection 3 then examines Luther's social theory, which is recognized in the life beyond the political act and institution that manifests itself as the three orders. The differences may seem subtle, but that is intentional. The political simply is not the government. It is a particular way of viewing the allocation of power and authority in a society and its institutions. This view gives birth to a way of understanding how a society organizes itself via social institutions, thus giving birth to a social theory. This is why the subsections on the political act and political institution precede the third subsection's social theory, and why the dissertation considers all three comprehensively a political theology. The subtle differences are evident in the fact that what is termed "political" still operates within the more "non-political" institutions (aka, non-civil nation-state), in that the family and the church still contain the allocation of power and authority.

Once social theory and political theology are understood, a number of additional terms need defining given their importance to the dissertation. Church, family, and state become the three institutions at the heart of the traditional Protestant social theory, and each will find exhaustive definition in their respective chapters. In relation to these institutions, the dissertation often mentions terms such as origination, origin, form, and constitute. These terms combine the Chicago social school's emphasis on times, persons, places, and contexts, with what the dissertation calls the critical question of social theory. A social theory must address the question of how institutions become particular and universal churches, families, and states with respect to particular and universal times, persons, places, and contexts—known hence forth as the problem of particularity and universality. Thus, terms such as “origin” reference at what point a social institution becomes particular, and “form” represents the type of shape and structure it constitutes itself into.<sup>31</sup> The dissertation defines these individuals and institutions taken collectively and relationally as the idea of a society—a matrix of interrelated social institutions.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to these social theoretical terms, it is also helpful to define some vocabulary important to any political study. Perhaps the most important political terms to

---

<sup>31</sup> For example, covenant or conquest or contract is a way of understanding how a particular social institution originates, and constitution is a way of understanding how this institution arranges its internal allocation of power and authority. For sake of illustration, picture the Declaration of Independence as serving the origination component, and the United States Constitution forming the constitutional principle.

<sup>32</sup> The interconnectedness between individuals, institutions, and a society help explain why a society's health is usually measured by the health of its respective institutions. In this manner, society may also be considered an organism made-up of its institutional appendages. As Zimmerman especially demonstrates, the poor health of an institution such as marriage causes a decline in the health of society. As a doctor measures a vital such as a pulse or blood pressure to identify a state of trauma, institutions may have their own measurable vitals to detect a decline in society's health. As an example, Zimmerman's work argues for a civilization's birthrate as a way of measuring the particular institution of the family's impact on a society's health.

define upfront are the terms political, power, and authority. In most cases, when discussing political things, the dissertation shares O'Donovan's definition of politics, where he writes, "For the purposes of our present discussion, 'politics' and 'political' are used more narrowly than their widest current sense and more widely than their narrowest, to indicate those activities with a direct relation to government, but not only those with a direct relation to elected office."<sup>33</sup> He goes on to helpfully define power as

simply the capacity to accomplish something, by whatever means, and in this innocuous sense authority is a species of power. But in a narrower use, 'power' is the power to compel, which is not what authority is, though political authority does depend on power as a precondition.<sup>34</sup>

Authority he defines as "the objective correlate of freedom. It is what we encounter in the world which makes it meaningful for us to act. An authority, we may say, is something which, by virtue of its kind, constitutes an immediate and sufficient ground for acting."<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, and in distinction from power, authority

evokes free action, and makes free action intelligible. As such it has to be distinguished both from 'force' and from 'power'. Force overrides the agency of those against whom it is brought to bear, treats them as passive objects, imposes its purposes in such a way as to make their capacity for action irrelevant or even to destroy it. Power is the most general term for an ability to get things done by any means, whether by force, by authority or by persuasion. Persuasion, too, must be distinguished from authority, since, although it aims to evoke free action, it is not itself the ground of acting, but the rhetorical exercise of presenting such grounds to the mind.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 56.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>35</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 122.

<sup>36</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 30.

Additional political terms worth footnoted definitions include political institution,<sup>37</sup>

political authority,<sup>38</sup> the common good,<sup>39</sup> nation,<sup>40</sup> people,<sup>41</sup> law,<sup>42</sup> legitimacy,<sup>43</sup> justice,<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 135. O'Donovan defines the political institution, where he writes, "[A] series of common practices in which the exercise of political authority has a regular position. Institutionalized authority does not supplant the 'moment' of authority; it provides the framework within which such moments may easily occur and easily be recognized."

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 142. O'Donovan defines the political authority, where he writes, "Political authority arises where power, the execution of right, and the perpetuation of tradition are assured together in one coordinated agency." He states, "Authority (in the broadest sense, not political authority alone) attached to those structures of communication in which we engage in order to realize freedom" (p. 68). He states, "Authority is the objective correlate of freedom. It is what we encounter in the world which makes it meaningful for us to act. An authority, we may say, is something which, by virtue of its kind, constitutes an immediate and sufficient ground for acting" (O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 122). He states, "Authority is the nuclear core, the all-present if unclarified source of rational energy that motivates the democratic bureaucratic organizations of the Northern hemisphere; but it is also a central theme of the pre-modern political theology, which sought to find criteria from the apostolic proclamation to test every claim to authority made by those who possessed, or wished to possess, power" (O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 17). He states, "The distinctive form of authority which we call 'political' is, then, at its simplest, a concurrence of the natural authorities of might and tradition with that other 'relatively natural' authority, the authority of injured right" (O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 128). He states, "They are exercised together when the first two are put at the disposal of the third; that is, when one whose possession of might is in accord with the established order of a society takes responsibility for the rightings of wrongs within that society" (p. 128). Furthermore, "In speaking of God's rule as the foundation of political authority, then, we speak of the point at which things separated and often in tension in our political experience find their true point of equilibrium. 'All authority from God,' the apostle said. And we know that that must be true, precisely because of the contradictions and tensions that arise when we are mandated to exercise authority over one another" (O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 12).

<sup>39</sup> O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 138–140. O'Donovan defines the common good, where he writes, "The common good which government defends includes, in the first place, right" (p. 138). He states, "In the second place, the common good implies the flourishing of a particular society with a particular identity" (p. 140).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 149. O'Donovan defines the nation, where he writes, "On the ambiguities of the term 'nation' we shall have more to say; it is tied to the historical phenomenon of the 'nation-state' of early-modern times, being unsuitable for use either of the ancient polis or of an ancient empire, and it is hardly appropriate either to culturally heterogeneous peoples formed by immigration, e.g., the U.S.A. and Canada, or to peoples formed of parts of larger quasi-national groups, e.g., Austria and Bangladesh." He writes, "[F]irst we have the 'nation,' a self-evident political totality, and then the 'state,' which is the nation in its organized form. Our political obligation then consists in attaching the second to the first" (p. 155).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 150. O'Donovan defines the people, where he writes, "A people is a complex of social constituents: of local societies, determined by the common inhabitation of a place; of institutions, such as universities, banks, and industries; of communities of specialist function, such as laborers, artists, teachers, financiers; of families; and of communities of enthusiasm such as sports clubs and musical organizations" (p. 150).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 140. O'Donovan defines the law, where he writes, "law is just one form of political enactment, i.e., the act of upholding or defending right in senses (a) and (b). 'Judgment' is the broader term that encompasses any act of right-giving." He adds, "Law is the presupposition of every human act of judgment, because it is a presupposition of every human act that is conscious of itself" (p. 189).

judgment,<sup>45</sup> freedom,<sup>46</sup> right,<sup>47</sup> secular,<sup>48</sup> state,<sup>49</sup> sovereignty,<sup>50</sup> tradition,<sup>51</sup> and punishment.<sup>52</sup>

---

Furthermore, “Law is the all-comprising order to which we belong, and within which the idea of a path to plot makes sense” (p. 190).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 165. O’Donovan defines legitimacy, where he writes, “The first of the three answers is given with the concept of ‘legitimacy.’ Legitimacy is the subjection of representation to law. Not only the conduct of government but its constitution, too, is to be law-governed. Legitimate rulers are not merely representative rulers; they meet legal conditions for their representative status; they have an entitlement to exercise political authority.”

<sup>44</sup> O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 129. According to O’Donovan, justice is the event of public right action committed to righting wrongs. It is where tradition, community, and might come together. He writes, “Tradition safeguards the sphere of public life; for the substance of any community, that which its members hold in common, is determined by what they can ‘pass on’ from one to the other. Resentment of injured right is the form in which concern for right lays hold upon us at the instinctual level. Might, the power to coerce, is the guarantee that action can be effective” (p. 129).

<sup>45</sup> O’Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 7–10. O’Donovan defines judgment, where he writes, “[J]udgment is an act of moral discrimination that pronounces upon a preceding act or existing state of affairs to establish a new public context” (p. 7). He adds, “(1) Judgment is an act of moral discrimination, dividing right from wrong.... (2) Judgment pronounces upon a preceding act, or on an existing state of affairs brought about by action.... (3) Judgment establishes a public context, a practical context, that is, in which succeeding acts, private or public, may be performed.... The form of the political act lies in this double aspect, retrospective and prospective, as pronouncement and foundation.... This double aspect makes judgment subject to criteria of truth, on the one hand, and to criteria of effectiveness on the other.... (4) The object of judgment is the new public context, and in this way judgment is distinct from all actions that have as their object a private or restrictive good.... Judgment, even in its core political sense, is an analogical notion.... Official judgment serves the public order in this much stronger sense of acting on behalf of the public.... To put our finger on this narrowly political role, we must single out its representative function: a political act with political authority occurs where not only the interests of the community are in play, but the agency of the community as well.... The idea of divine judgment presupposes a context of covenant relations, in which ‘I shall be your God and you shall be my people’ (Lev. 26:12; Jer. 7:23). YHWH’s covenant with Israel constitutes the political relation in which he rules, and so judges; judgment is part of that covenant activity to which he has sovereignty bound himself” (pp. 7–11).

<sup>46</sup> O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 163. O’Donovan defines freedom, where he writes, “[F]reedom to act in such a way that our freedom itself is affirmed and sustained, the freedom to achieve our supernatural end, which is the perfect liberty of the kingdom of God. It is Christ, the pioneer of renewed creation, who evokes this freedom in us, as the Holy Spirit makes the authority of his eschatological triumph subjectively present and immediate to us.” “First and most formally, it is simply the power to act, that ownership of one’s behavior which distinguishes the intelligent agent from creatures of instinct.... [S]econd and more substantial sense of freedom: the realization of the individual powers within social forms.... [T]hird sense of the term ‘freedom,’ as the individual’s discovery and pursuit of his or her vocation from God” (O’Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, pp. 67–72). He writes, “Freedom, then, has to do with a society’s particular historical way of existing” (p. 70).

<sup>47</sup> O’Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 139. O’Donovan defines right (*ius*), where he writes, *ius* “(a) means ‘what is just—‘just’ being understood in a negative rather than a positive sense, to mean ‘what is not unjust’, and ‘unjust’, in turn, meaning what is inconsistent with the nature of a society of rational beings. (b) A secondary and derivative sense is ‘attributed to a subject,’ a ‘subjective right’ in our modern sense: ‘a right is a moral quality attaching to a subject enabling the subject to have something or do

The final terms worth defining are covenant and constitution. Since so much time will be spent defining covenant, it is best to settle for some shortened definition. The dissertation adopts Elazar's description of covenant as

a morally informed agreement or pact based upon voluntary consent, established by mutual oaths or promises, involving or witnessed by some transcendent higher authority, between peoples or parties having the independent status, equal in connection with the purposes of the pact, that provides for joint action or obligation to achieve defined ends (limited or comprehensive) under conditions of mutual respect, which protect the individual integrities of all the parties to it.<sup>53</sup>

As for the term constitution, the classical definition given by Aristotle defines it as

the arrangement of magistracies in a state, especially of the highest of all. The government is everywhere sovereign in the state, and the constitution is in fact the

---

something justly.' (c) The third sense 'means the same as 'law', understood in a broad sense as a rule of action obliging us to do what is correct'" (p. 139).

<sup>48</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 211. O'Donovan defines secular, where he writes, "Secular institutions have a role confined to this passing age (*saeculum*). They do not represent the arrival of the new age and the rule of God. They have to do with the perennial cycle of birth and death which makes tradition, not with the resurrection of the dead which supersedes tradition" (p. 211).

<sup>49</sup> Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1946), [http://archive.org/details/weber\\_max\\_1864\\_1920\\_politics\\_as\\_a\\_vocation](http://archive.org/details/weber_max_1864_1920_politics_as_a_vocation). Weber's classic definition of a state is "a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory." The dissertation will use state in Weber's manner to reference this institution holding the power of public punishment—Romans 13's "sword" authority.

<sup>50</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 240. O'Donovan defines sovereignty, where he writes, "Within the context of Christian constitutionalism, sovereignty (*suprema potestas*) has a clearly defined reference to that office of state which, by presiding over other offices, ensured the lawfulness and authority of the whole."

<sup>51</sup> O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 140. O'Donovan defines tradition, where he writes tradition "is 'what is established'; and 'what is established' is not the past, but the present as determined by the past."

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 101. O'Donovan defines punishment, where he writes, "'Punishment' refers to a practice found in many forms—slapping, depriving of pleasures or satisfactions, physical beatings, pecuniary confiscations, imprisonment, maiming, killing—and in many contexts (families, schools, businesses, and armies, as well as political societies) in every major type of human community, extant or historical, primitive or developed." He adds, "We propose as our thesis, then, that punishment is best understood as a judgment enacted on the person, property, or liberty of the condemned party.... (a) Punishment is judgment, in saying which we presuppose all that has been said about judgment up to this point: it is an act of moral discrimination, that pronounces upon a preceding act or existing state of affairs to establish a new public context.... (b) Punishment is judgment enacted, not as additional act subsequent to judgment. The misconception of punishment as an 'extra,' a level of retaliation that goes beyond the enactment of justice, is encapsulated in the negative sense of the adjectives 'punitive' and 'vindictive'.... (c) Punishment is judgment enacted against the person, property, or liberty of the condemned party" (pp. 107–108).

<sup>53</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 22–23.

government. For example, in democracies the people are supreme, but in oligarchies, the few; and, therefore, we say that these two forms of government are different: and so in other cases.<sup>54</sup>

However, this classic definition risks confusing constitution as simply a written or unwritten style of political government. The term as used throughout the dissertation is intended to be a bit more comprehensive, and is understood as “a body of fundamental principles or established precedents according to which a state or other organization is acknowledged to be governed.”<sup>55</sup> As Thomas Paine helpfully puts it, “a constitution is not the act of a government, but of a people constituting a government, and a government without a constitution is power without right. . . . [C]onstitution is a thing antecedent to a government; and a government is only the creature of a constitution.”<sup>56</sup> The emphasis

---

<sup>54</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, Revised edition. (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2000), 112. As my mentor, Daniel Heimbach, noted in a lecture on Aristotle’s constitutions, there are six ways to constitute a political body based off rule by the one, rule by the few, and rule by the many: kingship, tyranny, aristocracy, oligarchy, polity, and democracy. What is especially noteworthy here—and what Elazar picks up on when he develops Aristotle’s view by exploring the three dimensions of a political system (a “constitution” in the sense of the dissertation)—is that Aristotle first categorized constitutions on the moral grounds of whether they were serving the common good or the ruling self (kingship vs. tyranny).

<sup>55</sup> “Constitution, Definition of Constitution in English by Oxford Dictionaries,” *Oxford Dictionaries, English*, n.d. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/constitution>.

<sup>56</sup> Charles Howard McIlwain, *Constitutionalism, Ancient and Modern* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1940): 2. Quote originally taken from Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* in *The Complete Works of Thomas Paine* (New York, NY: Peter Eckler Pub. Co., 1922). McIlwain provides some additional helpful confirmation and commentary on Paine’s understanding, however with an emphasis on the legal component of a constitution, when he writes, “As a general principle I think we must admit the truth of Paine’s dictum that ‘a constitution is not the act of a government but of a people constituting a government.’ And, if this be true, the consequence is that the forms and limits followed in this ‘constituting’ become the embodiment of a ‘constitution,’ superior in character to the acts of any ‘government’ it creates. If, for example, this constituent act of the people entrusts certain definite powers to their government, ‘enumerated powers’ as we term them, it is a necessary inference that this government cannot exercise any powers not so ‘enumerated.’ All constitutional government is by definition limited government, . . . constitutionalism has one essential quality: it is a legal limitation on government; it is the antithesis of arbitrary rule; its opposite is despotic government, the government of will instead of law” (p. 20–21). Also noteworthy is a definition of constitution McIlwain provides from Henry St. John Bolingbroke’s *A Dissertation Upon Parties* in *The Works of Lord Bolingbroke* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1841), which stresses less the written constitutional component inherent in Paine’s understanding: “By constitution we mean, whenever we speak with propriety and exactness, that assemblage of laws, institutions and customs, derived from certain fixed principles of reason, directed to certain fixed objects of

here is that a constitution is a constituted body/form/structure—be it political, marital, or ecclesial—that is preceded by some originating episode[s], and which authoritatively specifies the allocation and limitation of rights and powers.<sup>57</sup> Elazar captures the breadth of this dissertation’s understanding of constitution where he writes that a constitution “is delineated along three dimensions: its moral constitution, its socioeconomic constitution, and its frame of government.”<sup>58</sup> He further explains the three dimensions as follows:

1. The *moral* basis of the constitution refers to the generally accepted ideas about how people in a particular polity should live. It includes the conception of justice that is held to be the guiding standard of the polity, the picture of the good polity in the minds of citizens, plus other opinions about what kinds of political and social actions are right and good.
2. The *socioeconomic* basis of the constitution refers to the ways people actually live. It includes such things as class structure, ethnic composition, type of economy, and the actual distribution of power; in other words, who is important and influential and why.
3. The *frame of government* refers to the institutions and structures of government itself, including the document (or collection of documents) that sets out the institutions of government, establishes their powers and limits of those powers, and indicates who shall govern and how the governors shall be chosen.<sup>59</sup>

---

public good, that compose the general system, according to which the community hath agreed to be governed” (Bolingbroke, *A Dissertation Upon Parties*, 88).

<sup>57</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 28, writes, “Normally, then, a covenant precedes a constitution and establishes the people or civil society, which then proceeds to adopt a constitution of government for itself. Thus, a constitution involves the implementation of a prior covenant—an effectuation or translation of a prior covenant into an actual frame or structure of government. The constitution may include a restatement or reaffirmation of the original covenant as does the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780 in its preamble: ‘The body-politic is formed by a voluntary association of individuals: It is a social compact, by which the whole people covenants with each citizen with the whole people, that all shall be governed by certain laws for the common good.’”

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 29. Elazar notes these three are specifically the dimensions of a political system, but Elazar could have well substituted the word constitution. Furthermore, this understanding of constitution contains some noteworthy intimacies with the covenantal idea. He writes, “Unlike many philosophic concepts, covenant addresses all three dimensions of the political system. It delineates the system’s moral foundations, offers mechanisms for constructing the institutional system’s frame of government, and suggests a behavioral dynamic to shape the system’s socioeconomic basis.”

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 29–30. See Appendix 4, “Angle 4.2.1: Constitution: Covenantal Constitution,” for a model of this three-fold dimension of what the dissertation considers to be a “constitution.”

This moral basis, socioeconomic basis, and frame of government is what the dissertation means by the term constitution.<sup>60</sup> Having defined the key terms of social theory, political theology, origin, form, politics, power, authority, covenant, and constitution, the reader is now adequately prepared to hear a word on the research's assumption, review a breakdown of the dissertation's chapters, and ultimately consider the thesis' supporting arguments.

### **Research Assumptions**

At the core of the dissertation's methodology is to appraise covenant as an ecclesial, marital, and political idea. To perform this appraisal, the project relies heavily on a scriptural exegesis of the covenantal idea as it relates to each of the respected social institutions. Such an exegesis will include original language studies, narrative analysis, and commentary where appropriate. The exegetical study is organized within the Bible's Old and New Testaments, given the context these important environments provide to understanding the metanarrative of the covenantal idea. Given the dissertation's sincere and authentic evangelical commitments, the scriptural analysis becomes central to both the dissertation's thesis, and its presupposed authority.

The second major component of the appraisal occurs in the historical survey of the covenantal idea in the institutions of church, family, and state. This historical survey

---

<sup>60</sup> It should be noted that all three of these dimensions apply to the institutions of the family and the church. While we do not often think of churches and families having a "frame of government," they assuredly do. Both contain officers—mother, father, pastor, deacon—and allocations of power and punishment—parental punishment/spanking, church discipline/excommunicating. These three dimensions of constitution are especially helpful in examining the three social institutions, and why covenant provides

can be seen as a continuation of the scriptural analyses. Whereas the first section conducts exegetical work directly from the text, the analysis of the historical presence of the covenantal concept is seen as the exegetical application of covenantalism by historical church figures within their respective frontiers. It asks, “how did figures in church history understand and apply their theopolitical covenants?” The first part of the appraisal views covenant in Scripture, and the second part looks at covenants in history.

The dissertation does not intend to be considered primarily a work in sociology, history, or philosophy. It is, first and foremost, a theological project emanating from the field of Christian ethics and the subfield of political theology.<sup>61</sup> It hopes to be sincere and authentic in its theocentricity.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, it was made in a spirit of academic and aesthetic authenticity that has a post-modernist audience in mind. The dissertation also attempts to balance depth, breadth, and diversity. The diversity is represented in the figures chosen to help introduce the question of origination as it pertains to the respective institutions. Oliver O’Donovan—a Christian ethicist and political theologian—provides

---

an appealing idea that especially explains their moral basis and connects it with God’s redemptive moral framework.

<sup>61</sup> Helmut Thielicke, *Theological Ethics; Volume 2: Politics*, ed. William Henry Lazareth, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966). Thielicke models in part this intentionally theological method towards studying political and philosophical questions, writing: “One crucial distinction between the thinking of the theologian and that of the philosopher is that the philosopher, for all the weight of tradition, begins fundamentally with himself, whereas the theologian as a matter of principle relates himself to the believing community within which he has his theological existence. In so doing the theologian refers back to the historical realities which determine the path of that community, namely, Scripture and the fathers.” (3) “Theology’s task is to carry on. Hence it is characteristic of theological thinking (even where this may not be structurally apparent) to begin with this backward reference and to make the body of affirmations from Scripture and the fathers relevant to the present” (p. 3).

<sup>62</sup> Four figures that model and shaped some of my own pursuit of theocentric authenticity are Oliver O’Donovan, Karl Barth, Martin Luther, and Cornelius Van Til. Van Til articulates this type of genuine authenticity in *Christian Theistic Ethics* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1980). He writes, “If Christianity be true the possibility of the asking of any questions about anything whether it be ethical or something else, depends upon the presupposition of God as revealed in Christ as

the introduction of the ecclesial idea, and he helps navigate concepts and techniques appropriate to a more theological and ecclesial investigation. Carle Zimmerman—a Harvard sociologist—provides the same type of figure for the marital idea, and helps navigate some sociological questions. Daniel J. Elazar—a Jewish political theorist—provides the figure introducing the political idea, and helps introduce political methodology, while establishing a framework that can be used to incorporate the insights of the former two appraisals. Throughout these investigations, an emphasis is placed on working with as many classical and authoritative primary sources in theology and political philosophy as appropriate.<sup>63</sup> These surveys are then sandwiched between attempted political theologies that build upon social theories. This means that the dissertation structurally begins and returns to a question operating within a subfield of Christian ethics, and appeals to the prior investigations in an attempt to make a moral theological contribution.

---

absolute. To this point we shall return again and again” (p. 5). Barth and O’Donovan are also models in taking the assumptions of their theocentric commitments, and this is evident throughout their work.

<sup>63</sup> Strauss, *History of Political Philosophy*, 910–912. Leo Strauss provides a good example of an agreeable method in the discipline of political philosophy where the student is encouraged to learn and wear the perspective of political philosophers. In short, Strauss wanted students to learn and pretend to hold the ideas and stories of a philosophy. Strauss is also to be commended for his approach to the discipline that focused on reading—and understanding—a political philosophy’s primary texts. Tarcov and Pangle help explain this Straussian approach in their essay on the namesake in the closing chapter of Strauss’ *History of Political Philosophy*, writing, “Strauss’s inquiry into ancient and modern political teachings had to be historically as well as philosophically serious: historically serious by first inquiring into the original understandings of their authors; philosophically serious by then inquiring into their truth” (p. 910). He adds, “To try to understand past thinkers as they understood themselves required that one seek to suspend one’s own questions to see their questions; that one attempt to rely as much as possible on what they say directly or indirectly, and as little as possible on extraneous information; and that one strive to use their own terms and premises and avoid using alien modern terminology and premises” (p. 912). This roleplaying of big ideas is central to my own handling and studying of cross-disciplinary ideas. Extra care is taken in trying to present thinkers and their ideas sincerely and authentically. Forgiveness is asked where this unintentionally is not the case.

## Research Outline

The dissertation is symmetrically organized along an argumentative chiasm.<sup>64</sup> In the first chapter, the introduction familiarized the reader to the thesis, background, questions, terms, assumption, and outline. Particular attention was placed on helping the reader orient themselves to a thesis question that operates at the intersection of a number of academic fields. The research question was straightforward: “Is O’Donovan’s criticism against traditional Protestant social theory warranted?” Prior to answering this question—and assuming both secular and theological readers—the project needed to help orient the reader to the vocabulary and methods of disciplines that house elements of the thesis’ answer. For these reasons, terms and methods from political theory, political theology, political ethics, Christian ethics, and others were developed.

With the introduction established, the dissertation’s second chapter starts with a wide-angled survey of two academic topics in Christian ethics that host the thesis’ particular dissertation question. It begins by surveying the notion of a “traditional Protestant social theory” as found in representatives across Protestant traditions. After this survey, the project introduces Martin Luther as a major representative who made a notable attempt to develop a political theology that articulates the traditional Protestant social theory’s earliest formulation. Afterwards, Oliver O’Donovan is introduced as a worthy contemporary dialogue partner, given his work in articulating the development of political theology in the Church’s history, as well as his own major contributions to

---

<sup>64</sup> The summary of a chiastic argumentative structure helps clarify the dissertation’s methodological approach further, and may be found in Appendix 1, “Outline: Chiastic Argumentative

political theology. Luther and O'Donovan represent different historical corners of a single Protestant political theological tradition (Luther at its earliest, and O'Donovan at its current state), but O'Donovan is also of interest as a dialogue partner because of his criticism and deviation from traditional Protestant social theory. Their political theologies are each systematized to model O'Donovan's structure in *The Ways of Judgment*.

Particular attention is paid to how these two theologians address the central political theological topics of the political act, political authority, and life beyond political act and authority (society, church, and family). Along the way, these approaches touch upon the major terms and ideas relevant to a political theology, such as authority, representation, freedom, law, and justice. The chapter then closes by reviewing O'Donovan's two major criticisms of the traditional Protestant social theory, and his critical social question.

Throughout O'Donovan's corpus of work, lite references are made to the importance of covenants.<sup>65</sup> As other authors have acknowledged, it is odd for O'Donovan to speak of covenant's political theological importance, but to never develop the concept.<sup>66</sup> As a master of the history of political theology, the notion of using covenant to

---

Structure." The adoption of this structure was not done in vain, but was an attentional attempt to highlight the dissertation's core, as well as give it some beauty with poetic symmetry.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 11. He writes, "The idea of divine judgment presupposes a context of covenant relations, in which "I shall be your God and you shall be my people" (Lev 26:12; Jer 7:23). YHWH's covenant with Israel constitutes the political relation in which he rules, and so judges; judgment is part of that covenant activity to which he has sovereignty bound himself."

<sup>66</sup> J. Gordon McConville, Craig Bartholomew, and Jonathan Chaplin make examples of such critiques in chapters 3, 5, and 20 of Bartholomew's *A Royal Priesthood*. Chaplin, "Political Eschatology and Responsible Government: Oliver O'Donovan's 'Christian Liberalism,'" 272–273, summarizes the sentiment well where Chaplin writes, "Or, as others have noted, why does the theologically central notion of 'covenant' play such a minor role in a political theology so indebted to the Old Testament idea of kingship, whereas it proved absolutely decisive for Calvinist and Puritan writers equally so indebted?" Oliver O'Donovan, "Response to Gordon McConville," in *A Royal Priesthood?: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically: A Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew (Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press; Zondervan, 2002), 89–90. O'Donovan's response to McConville is telling, given he

explain political ideas is surely not foreign to O'Donovan; after all, he is well acquainted with the efforts of the federal theologians. The twentieth century has also seen a rising popularity in cross-denominational academic works that argue for a covenantal understanding of marriage. In addition, a covenantal understanding of the church is at the heart of a baptistic and congregational ecclesiology. The prominent role that covenant plays in possibly understanding all three traditional Protestant social institutions warrant an appraisal of covenant not only as a political idea, but also as an ecclesial and marital one. The core of the dissertation's research divides into three such appraisals. The first starts with the ecclesial analysis. The reasons for starting with the ecclesial institution are twofold: (1) in Luther's understanding, the church actually preceded the other institutions in the garden; (2) O'Donovan is intentionally ecclesial in his perspective, arguing that we should begin with an ecclesiology that has the church addressing society and political theology at a missional horizon.<sup>67</sup>

The third chapter starts by developing this appraisal in four parts. First, the chapter utilizes O'Donovan as a guide towards exploring the pressing ecclesial questions

---

openly confesses the error, admitting, "I plead guilty, on the other hand, to saying too little about 'covenant', thinking, on the other hand, that it was accounted for within the category of law, and on the other that it was a temptation to the modern mind, for which the slide from 'covenant' to 'contract' was a fatally easy one" (p. 89). The "temptation to a modern mind" to think contractually affirms the dissertation's suspicion that part of O'Donovan's reasoning is deeply anti-contractual, to the point of avoiding covenant in favor of kingship. However, as evident with the federal theologians, covenant is an idea that can stand on its own, and is worth investigating chiefly because its difference and response to contractualism is so compelling. There are a number of areas throughout O'Donovan's work where his anti-contractual sentiment is overt, and this will be acknowledged throughout the dissertation.

<sup>67</sup> O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 253–254, writes, "It is at this point that ecclesiology becomes critically important to social theory; for the church differs from all societies that we know otherwise in representing the kingdom of heaven, the universal humankind subject to God's rule." He adds that political theology "is an intellectual enquiry located on the horizon of the theology of the church. Every aspect of theology is a pursuit of the church; but theology also has a self-descriptive moment when it speaks about the church, 'ecclesiology'" (p. 239).

related to the origination, constitution, particularity and universality of the ecclesial institution. Second, the chapter appraises the covenantal model's presence in the Old and New Testaments. Third, the chapter evaluates the covenantal model's ecclesial presence in classical and modern historical periods. Fourth, it concludes by evaluating any significant contributions drawn from this specific appraisal. As major guides, the section engages with O'Donovan as a transitional figure between the current and prior chapters, and brings him into contact with major figures whose ecclesial understandings are confessedly covenantal. Special emphasis is placed on the Baptist tradition, with the proto-Baptist Balthasar Hubmaier serving as an appropriate dialogue partner. The fourth chapter repeats the four parts of the third, but it appraises marriage as a covenantal idea. To help orient the issue of origination, the chapter opens with the work of Harvard sociologist Carle Zimmerman, whose sociological analysis of familial types is of interest to the dissertation's question.<sup>68</sup> Zimmerman's trustee, domestic, and atomistic familial models are brought into dialogue with the covenantal analysis, and in particular Zimmerman's work is amended to reflect the importance of the theopolitical covenantal idea. The fifth chapter repeats the framework of the others, but appraises covenant as a political idea. It opens with Jewish theologian and political theorist Daniel J. Elazar, whose work examining covenant and constitution inspired the dissertation to perform a similar analysis upon the other two institutions.<sup>69</sup> Throughout these three chapters, a host

---

<sup>68</sup> Carle C. Zimmerman, *Family and Civilization* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2008).

<sup>69</sup> Daniel J. Elazar represents a 20<sup>th</sup> century movement among Jewish theologians to study the role of covenant in politics. His four-part series on *The Covenant Tradition in Politics* may be a key to discovering the particular and universal grounds for a covenantal perspective. The dissertation is inspired by his work, and it seeks to bring Elazar's political analysis in conversation with O'Donovan's views,

of relevant figures across a broad spectrum of disciplines and historical periods are brought into the dialogue, with some of the most noteworthy conversations occurring within the footnotes.<sup>70</sup>

The sixth chapter returns to the problem of particularity and universality. It summarizes the findings of the earlier appraisals, and organized them into a response that undermines O'Donovan's criticism. Furthermore, the chapter organizes these findings into an articulation of a political theological model which is called "Covenantal Constitutionalism." The model develops a systematization of the covenantal idea to address the political act, political authority, and the institutions and society beyond political act and authority. In particular, the proposal synthesizes the findings from the study with the political and social theological insights of Luther and O'Donovan to formulate two models that symbolize the individual's colorful and prismatic social communication within their institutions, orders, societies, civilizations, and Creation.

---

specifically on the question of correcting the absence of covenant in O'Donovan's work. Elazar is especially relevant to the task, given he is intentional in combating the contractual model that O'Donovan disdains, by pointing to the covenantal one. Elazar also develops his work with the goal of analyzing the origination question, and he brings the covenantal model in dialogue with the traditional conquest, organic, and contractual ones. Zimmerman's own utility is then found in applying a similar categorical framework but to the family's interaction with political orders throughout history. The important corrective however, is to apply the covenantal model as a fourth addition to Zimmerman's analysis. See Daniel Judah Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*; Daniel Judah Elazar, *Covenant and Commonwealth: From Christian Separation through the Protestant Reformation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996); Daniel Judah Elazar, *Covenant & Constitutionalism: The Great Frontier and the Matrix of Federal Democracy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998); and Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant and Civil Society: The Constitutional Matrix of Modern Democracy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1998).

<sup>70</sup> Some of the more noteworthy footnoted discussions includes an evaluation of political theology's role in broader mainstream political science; an analysis of the criticisms of Luther's Two Kingdoms doctrine; an analysis of Barth and Brunner's debate on natural theology; an exploration of the importance of the concept of liberty to a biblical political theology; a criticism of the Liberationist approach from a South American evangelical perspective; an appraisal of Locke's political theory that accounts for his political theological influences; an evaluation of the overlooked covenantal symbols that inspired the Declaration of Independence, and many others.

The final chapter explores the implications from the study and the Covenantal Constitutionalism model. The conclusion summarizes the symbolic importance of the findings of the work, and addresses any relevant implications. Special attention is paid to a postmodern Western and American social context, and the apologetic and missional value of the appraisals and proposed model. With the thesis identified, and the research background, questions, terms, assumptions, and outline introduced, it is now possible to begin the formal appraisal.

## CHAPTER 2

### TRADITIONAL PROTESTANT SOCIAL THEORY AND THE PROBLEM OF PARTICULARITY & UNIVERSALITY

In much of post-enlightenment and 20<sup>th</sup> century modernist political theory, the influence and contributions of theologians are often overlooked.<sup>1</sup> There's almost a general paranoia

---

<sup>1</sup> According to Frederick D. Wilhelmsen, *Christianity and Political Philosophy* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1978), although modernity's aggressive secularism is the chief culprit, Wilhelmsen also places some of the blame at the feet of Strauss and Voegelin, whose massively influential schools and approaches to today's political philosophy stressed a return to classical insights that seemingly skipped much of Christian political theology along the way (Strauss more so than Voegelin). Take Strauss as an example. He understood the primary political tension as being between human reason and divine revelation; the claims between Athens and Jerusalem. In Leo Strauss, *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity: Essays and Lectures in Modern Jewish Thought* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012), Strauss considered "the conflict between the biblical and the philosophic notions of the good life" to be "the core, the nerve of Western Intellectual history, Western spiritual history" and "the secret of the vitality of Western civilization" (p. 116). Why then would so many important Christian thinkers be left out of his work, especially *History of Political Philosophy*? Why would Jerusalem's voice, as carried especially by its proponents in modernity, be relatively silent? Strauss turns to the ancients for a potential solution, but an equal—if not more powerful—argument can be made in turning to a tradition that arguably inspired many of the West's major institutions. Strauss' *History of Political Philosophy* has a handful of Christian thinkers, while placing most of his focus of modernity on more secular thinkers. Even thinkers who drew heavily from revelation and their Christian inheritances such as Locke, are presented in fashions that scrub "Jerusalem" of her influence (his treatment on Locke makes this especially evident). A number of Christian political theories whose contributions helped shape Western political thought are possibly ignored (if the Federalist are included, why not Canonical thinkers? Paul was quoted more among America's founding fathers than any political theorist), and the thinkers who do have significant transcendent influences are almost presented in a manner that secularizes them—which seems rather antithetical to Strauss' approach in Leo Strauss, "On a New Interpretation of Plato's Political Philosophy," *Social Research*, 13.3 (1946), where he describes his approach as to "think the thought" by questioning "an argument's logical connections and relations to the world in order to follow it" (pp. 328–329). It is difficult to make a critique of what an editor did not include in *History of Political Philosophy*. The work is already at over 900 pages, but there is a legitimate criticism in Strauss' approach towards giving weight to modernity's secular influences, against the continuing voices of that transcendent perspective, given his exegetical and historical approach.

If the ancient and modernist divide stands between a pendulum swing from the transcendent to the immanent, it seems worth including a greater emphasis on a unique theopolitical perspective that held theological solutions to a broader transcendent and immanent question that directly affects the political question. Through the political theological tradition, approaches that were both authentically transcendent and immanent address influential contributions to "regimes." Accepting Strauss's wider point of thinking

of opening political philosophy's door to theocentric theopolitical reasoning, with the result of unfortunately depriving a field of study of understanding the theologies and theologians that formed the foundations to much of Western civilization's political thought.<sup>2</sup> One such overlooked figure is Martin Luther, whose fiery rhetoric and contextual relevance led to a number of opulent political and social insights. From economy to constitution, Luther was rich with political contributions befitting the

---

the thoughts of these thinkers after them, it would seem this includes not only thinking their philosophical thoughts, but wearing their theological and religious convictions. Wilhelmsen is correct in exposing this same criticism in Wilhelmsen, *Christianity and Political Philosophy*. One of the most fruitful sections of *Christianity and Political Philosophy* is the criticism Wilhelmsen makes against modern schools of political philosophy. He perceives Voegelin and Strauss—while helpful—to be dangerous to Christian political thought, writing, “[S]ound Christian political philosophy must shake itself free of the academic authority of both Strauss and Voegelin even while it absorbs their genuine insights. To this purpose these final chapters have been written” (p. 195). And what is the danger? Both Strauss and Voegelin underrepresent the tremendous contributions Christianity has made to political thought. My experience at both a secular institution studying political science, and a denominational seminary examining political theory, provide experiential confirmation of Wilhelmsen's criticisms. Voegelin's error according to Wilhelmsen: he completely bypasses Jesus and focuses solely on Paul. While he wrote about Christianity, and he ignored the major creeds and major traditions. However, with Wilhelmsen's criticisms of Voegelin in mind, we cannot let that diminish the great debt political theologians owe Voegelin for almost singlehandedly making it possible for political theologians to join political science's round table. Wilhelmsen's criticism is simply a sober warning to capitalize on Voegelin's opening by producing attractive, articulate, and authentically Christian political theologies. In particular, it is Wilhelmsen's treatment of the school of Strauss that resonates especially, where he states, “But with so much said there nonetheless remains a curious lacuna in the thought and even in the interests of the Straussians that has puzzled outsiders for some years. Why do these men skirt Christian political philosophy as though it were a body of speculation unworthy of serious consideration?... [L]ittle is taught us about the contribution, if any, of Christian thought to politics” (p. 209). In the spirit of advancing Strauss's intent of asking the same questions and thinking the same thoughts, I believe a distinctly political theological approach both honors Strauss' wider objective, while illuminates a politico-solution that helps political scientists better understand the basis for much of Western political thought.

<sup>2</sup> Wilhelmsen, *Christianity and Political Philosophy*, 211–225. Wilhelmsen writes, “The Strauss and Jaffa position on this point reiterates and even heightens, as would a distorted mirror, the dilemma in which the Christian West finds itself today. Enjoying a culture and a liberty, a largeness of spirit, which themselves are the products of the historic creeds of orthodox Christianity, our world, on the whole, rejects the faith that made it free” (p. 211). Furthermore, he adds, “Any principled refusal to read and assess the meaning of America that ignores Christianity is at the very best a game of ideological partisanship; at the worst, this game dooms political theory to antiquarianism” (p. 225). This observation is especially evident when discussing the political influences relevant to the American Revolution. Although the usual influential culprits like Locke and Montesquieu come up, little is mentioned of the enormous influence stemming from Locke's own inherited Federal Puritan Christian worldview, or the principles derived from the Biblical principles that inspired generations of political theorists. The same can be said for the wider

significance of the Reformation's call for change, and he provides one of many examples of socially significant theologians.

However, Luther's political thoughts were not completely innovative, as they inherited a strong tradition in Christian political theology.<sup>3</sup> In specific, Luther exegeted a biblical idea and articulated an inherited tradition of social theory that classified society along three or four institutions: religion, family (and economy), and the state. Much of the thought from Protestant political and social theory approached social questions from this three-fold framework. There is value in assessing the Protestant social framework, given the influence it had on Western civilization's social and political foundations. With Luther connecting the inherited tradition, having a firm commitment to biblical authority and exegesis, and being a father of Protestantism and what would be called a Protestant social theory, there is worth in returning to Luther's works on the subject. Furthermore,

---

study of political theory, with the key contributions and political influence by Reformers being often ignored.

<sup>3</sup> Luther and Calvin were more faithful articulations of Augustine's political theology than the alleged "political Augustinian" that came to describe the medieval synthesis of Gregory I and Isidore of Seville. Gregory and Isidore developed their Augustinian convictions in line with their contextual setting to argue in favor of a Christian "Romano-Germanic" kingship that subjected political powers beneath ecclesial authority. The progressing synthesis was ultimately completed by the idealist efforts of the imperial papacy, and Gregory VII is treated as a representative of this view. In Gregory VII's work, all ecclesial and political power was identified in the office of the pope, and Gregory VII constructed an alleged Augustinian dualism that saw disobedience or obedience to the pope as defining the boundaries of Augustine's two kingdoms. In contrast to this synthesis, Augustine's political theology highlights Augustine's allowance of a legitimate political commonwealth outside of the medieval restrictions. Augustine's two cities not only provides a realist perspective against the idealism of Gregory VII, but also roots the relationship of the two cities' citizens, and the legitimacy of political authority, within the pursuit of earthly conventional peace. In short, Luther and Calvin are considered by the dissertation as more faithful political Augustinian realists than the medievals. Both Luther and Calvin adopted the framework of Augustine's dual cities, yet developed the additional vocabulary of kingdoms, stations, and law to help root all authority in God's sovereignty, while taking care to maintain the temporal and spiritual authoritative distinctions, and addressing the internal and external responsibilities thereof. Luther and Calvin are taken to be the more faithful inheritors an Augustinian "political Augustinianism," because of their faithfulness to both Augustine's realism and his political theological framework. This is what is being assumed in the "strong tradition in Christian political theology" quoted from the footnoted sentence.

there is value in comparing his political thought with a modern theologian who dissents from the traditional Protestant social theory, and in turn raises a number of important social questions.

In the field of contemporary political theology, few theologians have been as helpful and innovative as Oliver O'Donovan. In addition to his influential work of developing an authoritative ethics in *Resurrection and Moral Order*, O'Donovan has contributed to a wide-angled perspective of political theology evidenced in his sourcebook *From Irenaeus to Grotius*.<sup>4</sup> O'Donovan is valued for his production of a complex political theology that handles seriously the theological and political perspectives.<sup>5</sup> In addition to his political approach, O'Donovan is also determined to be a worthy conversation partner to Luther because of the criticisms O'Donovan wages against the classical threefold Protestant social theory. O'Donovan critiques the

---

<sup>4</sup> Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100–1625* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> In Oliver O'Donovan's *The Desire of the Nations* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), ix–x, O'Donovan approaches the topic with a focus on a more theological and exegetical framework, arguing that a positive reconstruction of political theology occurs when readers look back to the rich history between the patristics and reformers on political theological discourse. In specific, his concern centers around the notion of authority inherent in Jesus' preaching on the kingdom of heaven. As he writes in the introduction of *The Ways of Judgment*, in *The Desire of the Nations*, "I outlined what I called a 'political theology,' the purpose of which was to show how the political concepts wrapped up in Jewish and Christian speech about God's redemption of the world still had political force, generating expectations for political life that found one type of expression, though not the only possible one, in the political ideals of 'Christendom,' the European civilization that bridged the gap from late antiquity to early modernity, from which our modern political ideals have sprung" (p. ix). In *The Ways of Judgment*, O'Donovan complements the first book by weighing the work more from the perspective of politics-proper, examining in three partitions the main political act rooted in the act of judgment, the proper usage of that act in representative institutions, and then the life of society beyond that act. This latter work is more akin to traditional political theory, with treatments ranging from legitimate political constitutions, to a novel construction of social theory that parts with the reformers and replaces it with a notion of "place." Noting the relationship between the two books, O'Donovan writes, "In other ways the two books have a certain parallelism, both beginning with an examination of the political act, the act of judgment, and only then proceeding to the institutions of judgment in the political community. The second section of this work

traditional Protestant social theory as being inefficient, and he essentially argues that it results in a problem that fails to explain the particularity and universality of those very institutional categories.

The goal of this chapter is to provide the social and theological context for—and the presentation of—O’Donovan’s criticism of traditional Protestant social theory. To achieve this goal, three things are necessary. First, prior to understanding a criticism against traditional Protestant social theory, the reader needs to understand what this tradition is and where it existed. Can it rightly be called a “Protestant tradition?” The first section surveys traditional Protestant social theory by accepting O’Donovan’s identification of the pattern, and illustrates examples of it among cross-denominational Protestant theologians such as Luther, Baxter, Kuyper, Bonhoeffer, Troeltsch, Henry, and others. Second, the chapter surveys in greater depth a traditional and modern example of how political theologies develop notions of political action and authority to arrive at their respective social theories. Within this section, Luther’s political theology and how he arrives at the traditional three-fold social theory is treated first, followed by an examination of O’Donovan’s own political theology and how he arrives at an alternative social theory. By surveying the cross-denominational evidence for a traditional framework of Protestant social theory, as well as surveying two examples of how political theologies arrive at their respective social theories, the context is set to understand O’Donovan’s criticism of the traditional framework. The third and final

---

explores the shape of these institutions, and the third section takes up, as a theme for which the groundwork was laid in the first book, the formal opposition between political institutions and the church” (p. x).

section closes the chapter by surveying O'Donovan's criticism of traditional Protestant social theory, and presenting the social problem of particularity and universality.

### **Survey of Traditional Protestant Social Theory**

The renowned church historian Philip Schaff wrote that

[T]he family, the church, and the state are divine institutions demanding alike our obedience, in their proper sphere of jurisdiction.... The church is the right of love; the state is the reign of justice. The former is governed by the gospel, the latter by the law.... Both meet on questions of public morals, and both together constitute civilized human society and ensure its prosperity.... The root of this theory we find in the New Testament.<sup>6</sup>

Schaff's insights are a fair representation to the general idea behind traditional Protestant social theory. In short, it emphasized church, family, and state as the divinely instituted orders in creation that each had distinct and ordained responsibilities. O'Donovan recognized this theory as the traditional approach taken in Protestantism, where we wrote,

A well-established pattern of social theory in Protestant theology identifies three or four key spheres of communication: church, state, household, and sometimes industry. Luther has his doctrine of the three "estates," *oeconomia, politia, ecclesia*, from which Bonhoeffer drew his four "mandates," *Arbeit, Ehe, Obrigkeit, and Kirche*. The Puritans promoted similar schemata: Baxter's *Christian Directory* (1673) is organized into "*Christian Ethicks*" (on private duties), "*Christian Oeconomicks*," "*Christian Ecclesiasticks*," and "*Christian Politicks*."<sup>7</sup>

O'Donovan claims that this traditional pattern leaves him unsatisfied. He writes that the Protestant pattern has what he calls a "superficially evident weakness," claiming,

[I]t appears to be based on nothing stronger than intuition, with no exegetical or doctrinal argument to support it; but this is true of many great insights, and is not

---

<sup>6</sup> Philip Schaff, *Church and State in the United States: Or, The American Idea of Religious Liberty and Its Practical Effects, with Official Documents* (New York & London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1888), 10.

<sup>7</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 254.

fatal. In this case there is a deeper weakness, which is that it ranges the church among a number of elementary social forms.<sup>8</sup>

He further identifies this criticism by bringing about two central charges against the traditional pattern: First, “from the point of view of the church, this seems to undermine ecclesiology by ignoring both the historical identity of the church as the church of Jesus and the eschatological identity of the church as the heavenly city.”<sup>9</sup> Second, “from the point of view of the social spheres, government, household, etc., they are not envisaged concretely, as this government or this household. They are therefore liable to assume improper universal overtones.”<sup>10</sup>

The chief criticisms made by O’Donovan can be summarized as a problem with explaining the universality and particularity of these social spheres. In the traditional theory’s place, O’Donovan advances a theory that seeks to understand the concreteness of particular societies by “identifying them in terms of the place in which they are situated,” defining this place as “the social communication of space.”<sup>11</sup> O’Donovan’s reasons for proposing this alternative theory of place as the social communication of space derives from the concern that adapting views like Luther’s gives a thinker little room to explain how particular churches, states, and families identify with—and in distinction from—the universal spheres of Church, State, and Family.

The distance between the particular and universal opened by the traditional Protestant social theory is of additional concern for O’Donovan as it undermines the

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

relevance of politics to theology. O'Donovan is unnerved by the attempt started in the Enlightenment and refined in modernity to entirely separate theology from understanding politics.<sup>12</sup> In addition, O'Donovan's sees the 20<sup>th</sup> century attempt by liberation theologies to unite politics and theology as also problematic in its selectiveness.<sup>13</sup> O'Donovan's purposes for writing *The Ways of Judgment* becomes somewhat of an apologetic aimed at addressing two contemporary attitudes that reflect these two theological traditions: (1) an address to those who are agnostic/apathetic when it comes to the nature of a relevant and beautiful political theology and its contributions to understanding Western civilization's political values, and (2) an address to those 20<sup>th</sup> century thinkers who overreact in yoking theologies to political theories and acting as if there existed no wider and richer history of theopolitical thought.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> O'Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 787. This division of theology and philosophy itself is arguably the central political moment dividing ancient and modern political theory. It is also one of the O'Donovan's main reasons for writing *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, which concludes with Grotius on the understanding that Grotius represented the last of the great political theologians within a rich tradition of political theology. According to O'Donovan Grotius arrived as "a significant figure in the public inauguration of the rationalist era, dressing its iconoclastic principles in an overcoat of piety and organizing them in a systematic science of natural law" (p. 787). Although O'Donovan wants to make it clear that Grotius is not solely a product of a simply secular rationalist political theory (as he is typically quoted as being). Rather, Grotius is a contrast to Hobbes, who is more akin to such a description. For O'Donovan, Grotius is an appropriate conclusion to the book because he not only appropriates the rationalist program and humanist science, but is still "a true heir of the theological tradition" (p. 787). That becomes most evident in Grotius' treatment of the notion of rights.

<sup>13</sup> The newfound tradition is evident in the liberation theologies of the Southern Hemisphere, which O'Donovan sees as erring in an overreaction that submitted theology to political theory. The problem of the liberationist tradition is not only in this submission, but also in a selective attitude that ignores a rich long-running political theological tradition in Christendom. The liberationists instead opt to grab past theologians only as they advance their political convictions. They tend to ignore a number of historical figures, and O'Donovan's *From Irenaeus to Grotius* stands as an educational corrective.

<sup>14</sup> In O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, xii, O'Donovan writes, "Christian political thought has also acquired a secondary value in the circumstances of our time, which may, however, be no less important: it has an apologetic force when addressed to a world where the intelligibility of political institutions and traditions is seriously threatened."

In *The Ways of Judgment*, O'Donovan sets out on the task of providing an alternative political theology to address the problem of particularity and universality in the social theories of traditional Protestantism, as well as address contemporary attitudes among Christians that either overlook or mishandle the relationship between theology and politics.<sup>15</sup> Modernist thinkers assumed that separating theology from political theory would lead to a humanistic new dawn, only to learn that this parting produced a 20<sup>th</sup> century darkness that smashed the Enlightenment's optimism and its secular ideals under the weight of two world wars, near nuclear extinction, and ecological crisis.<sup>16</sup> In this setting Western civilization was left in the dark as it inherited political institutions and traditions that it valued without any clear understanding as to why, and to what extent, it valued them.<sup>17</sup> O'Donovan's goal in his political theology is to "shed light from the Christian faith upon the intricate challenge of thinking about living in late-modern Western society."<sup>18</sup> In essence, political ethics has a vast and untapped apologetic force,

not merely because the existence of a community reflecting systematically out of Christian belief upon the challenges of living in love is "attractive," as children playing an innocent game may be attractive, but because it is interpretative. It gives us reason to believe that our lives are not, after all, merely thrown together, but are susceptible of a coordinated social meaning, even a beauty, such as St. Paul called a *taxis*.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., xi. O'Donovan writes, "Political thought is, in its broadest view, a train of practical reasoning about practical reason, a reflection on how, by whom, when, and in what order decisions are to be made by human beings on human action."

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., xiii. O'Donovan writes, "The four great facts of the twentieth century that broke the certainty in pieces were two world wars, the reversal of European colonization, the threat of the nuclear destruction of the human race, and, most recently, the evidence of long-term ecological crisis."

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., x. O'Donovan takes the Gospel proclamation to be, "in its essential features, luminous, the political concepts around us obscure and elusive. The work of political theology is to shed light from the Christian faith upon the intricate challenge of thinking about living in late-modern Western society."

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., xv. Although O'Donovan writes from the perspective of an English Anglican, the apologetic force of political theology is relevant to the United States, given its foundational declaratory

O'Donovan's insights into 20th century political thought, and the apologetic and explanatory power of a political theological approach, are valid. Political theology has a great contribution to make to the political and social sciences by helping them understand the theopolitical foundations that gave rise to many of Western civilization's political and social values. However, O'Donovan also critiques the type of traditional Protestant social theory that gave rise to many of the West's institutional values.

In order to understand O'Donovan's criticism—and respond to it—a survey is needed of this traditional Protestant social approach. What does O'Donovan mean by a traditional Protestant social theory, and what theologians are representative thereof? To answer this question, seven examples are selected from a diverse array of Lutheran, Puritan, Baptist, Reformed, Liberal, Neo-Orthodox, and Evangelical theological traditions. Luther's three estates of *oeconomia*, *politia*, and *ecclesia* help articulate the theory at the founding era of Protestantism, as well as prelude the doctrine's adoption throughout Lutheranism. Baxter's *Christian Directory* and its *oeconomicks*,

---

statement speaks of the “self-evident truths . . . that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.” The Declaration continues by stating that “to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men,” yet whence these alleged self-evident truths lose their ontological grounding, the entire premise of government becomes shaken. Like O'Donovan's statements on Western civilization, modern Americans have inherited institutions and traditions that they value, without the illuminating concepts that undergird and illuminate them. The value of political theology is thus blatantly obvious (if not demanded) by an American experience, which weds the theological imagery of inalienable rights, *imago Dei* equality, and a Creator, with the political imagery of political rights, governmental institutions, and popular representation. For the author of the Declaration of Independence, the relationship between the two was so important as to position them side-by-side in a document that announced the very foundation of what would become the United States of America. It is also noteworthy that Thomas Jefferson, ever alleged to be a Deist, was hardly dualistic. In Jefferson is the most arguably unorthodox of Founding Fathers grounding the nation's Declaration of Independence on an obviously political theological statement. Furthermore, note the order: First, he talks of the theological notions; second, he talks of the political notions. It would be wrong to assume the ordering is unintentional and unwarranted. An analysis of the back and forth revisions between Jefferson and the Declaration's drafting committee make it obvious.

*ecclesiasticks*, and *politicks* organizational structure helps evidence the tradition as articulated in Puritan and Calvinist theology. A number of Baptist confessions—such as the *Second London Baptist Confession* of 1689 and the *Baptist Faith and Message* of 2000—emphasize the three orders as distinct ordained institutions, and they help evidence the tradition throughout numerous socially-sensitive episodes in Baptist history. Kuyper’s three realms of state, society, and church provide a Reformed re-articulation of the doctrine which maintains the institutional emphasis, yet reformulates it with its notion of sphere sovereignty. Troeltsch’s main social organizations of Church, Family, State, and Economic Society show the tradition’s inheritance in liberal Protestantism, and also identifies a sociological approach intent on surveying the historical interaction between the social institutions. Troeltsch’s sociological approach also helps identify and answer some important critical social questions. Bonhoeffer’s four mandates of *arbeit*, *ehe*, *obrigkeit*, and *kirche* show a neo-orthodox appraisal of Luther’s earlier formulation, and evidence the tradition as it entered the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, Henry’s supernaturally-willed orders of family, church, and state show the assumption of the traditional framework within evangelicalism, and its usage to address a mid and late 20<sup>th</sup>-century cultural environment whose social institutions faced severe revisionism by modernist, postmodernist, and anti-Christian social forces.

The core objective of the survey is to simply support O’Donovan’s claim that the identification of three or four key social institutions—church, family (and economy), and state—was a well-established pattern of organizing and approaching social questions, and thus a worthy framework for the covenantal appraisal and study. Throughout this survey,

the reader must be wary of what the dissertation is not trying to argue. First, the dissertation is not making the argument that what it calls traditional Protestant social theory—with its emphasis on the three or four institutions—was the only framework adopted by Protestants in their social thought.<sup>20</sup> Second, the reader must be wary of reading a number of theological debates and conclusions into the project. What the dissertation calls traditional Protestant social theory is not meant to be equated merely with Luther's three orders of creation or his two kingdoms; rather, Luther's orders of creation are one example of traditional Protestant social theory. Nor should the reader allow debates about two kingdoms, and Barth's criticisms against Luther and Brunner, to distract from the survey's purpose of establishing credence to the claim that Protestants traditionally used an ecclesial/familial/political institutional framework for thinking through the Church's political theological social questions.<sup>21</sup> With these caveats noted, it may now be asked: what was a traditional Protestant social theory?

---

<sup>20</sup> Some of the examples given in the pages that follow—such as Kuyper's sphere sovereignty—are especially noteworthy for how they re-appropriate and remodel the traditional framework. One of the main differences that come across from the Lutheran and Calvinist articulations of the orders of creation is that for the Calvinist, the divine orders were prescriptive, meaning the Church was under an obligation to reform institutions through culture. See Thielicke Helmut, *Theological Ethics; Volume 2: Politics*, ed. William Henry Lazareth, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1966), 586–595 & 600–602.

<sup>21</sup> There are two major theological questions which often come to mind during the exploration of the paper's treatment of the three institutions. The first relates to criticisms against—and interpretations of—Luther's doctrine of two kingdoms and his orders of creation. These criticisms often come from reformed thinkers, or post-WW2 progressive Lutherans. Often the criticisms unfairly represent Luther's view via straw-manning and misunderstanding his doctrine of the orders of creation, or failing to jointly present Luther's interconnected two kingdoms, orders of creation, and stations and vocations doctrines. In Thielicke Helmut, *Theological Ethics; Volume 2: Politics*, 568, Thielicke describes the problem with these criticisms against Luther's social doctrine as follows: “[I]t is open to question however, whether this guilt derives from the two kingdoms doctrine, or whether that doctrine was not rather twisted beyond recognition by those making this charge, whether the neo-Lutheran misunderstanding of it was not substituted for the doctrine itself. In this theological ethics we have tried to show that the two kingdoms doctrine does not issue in a separation of church from world.”

A second major debate is connected with the first, and it consists of Barth's criticisms of Luther and Brunner's doctrines of nature and the orders of creation. In particular, Barth goes so far as to blame the

---

doctrines for enabling the rise of German Nazism, stating in Karl Barth, *Eine Schweizer Stimme, 1938–1945* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1945), 122, that Luther’s doctrinal emphasis of the independent “authority of the state . . . provided a certain amount of breathing space for German paganism” and that this “separated the created world and law from the gospel.” Barth blames the Lutheran doctrine for enabling the Nazi regime to insulate itself distinct from Christ’s Lordship by appealing to a separate and secular realm of independent authority. While the dissertation may engage with these three debates throughout the paper and its footnotes, they do not formulate the core of the investigation, and they should not distract from the purpose of responding to O’Donovan’s criticisms with an appraisal of covenant.

I generally agree that the responses from Moltmann, Pannenberg, Thielicke, Bonhoeffer, and Braaten sufficiently address the major criticisms. A couple of elements of their responses are worth inclusion. First, in Carl E. Braaten, “God in Public Life: Rehabilitating the ‘Orders of Creation,’” *First Things*, 1990, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/1990/12/god-in-public-life-rehabilitating-the-orders-of-creation>, n.p., Braaten notes, “Barth’s relentless attack on natural theology motivated his rejection of the orders of creation, because of its family resemblance to the idea of natural law. The family resemblance consists in the idea that people do not need to know Jesus Christ to have some knowledge of what is right and good through the law of creation and conscience.” Regardless of how correct Barth’s initial motivation, Braaten notes it may have unfairly tainted Barth’s view of Luther’s social doctrine, since, “for all the affinity between the Thomist-Aristotelian theory of natural law and the Lutheran theology of the orders of creation,” there are “fundamental differences between them that Barth’s criticism blurs.” Barth himself admits as much, where Braaten quotes Barth as saying, “‘I do not fully understand the intention and spirit of [Brunner’s work]. . . . What I do not understand is from what source and in what way Brunner claims to know these orders. . . . We cannot help feeling that at the root of his conception of ‘orders’ there lies something akin to the familiar notion of a *lex naturae* which is immanent in reality and inscribed upon the heart of man, so that it is directly known to him. But does not this mean that there is not only a second (or first) revelation of God before and beside that of the Word of His grace?’” While I agree with—and would consider myself a proponent of—Barth’s arguments against a *lex naturae*, perhaps Braaten’s observations and Barth’s own comments suggest Barth was all-too-eager to throw Luther’s view out with the Thomist-Aristotelean bathwater.

Agreement with Braaten’s observations on Barth does not necessarily mean there were not aspects of Luther’s social thought that—taken individually or exaggerated—could be abused. As Pannenberg notes in his summary of Luther and the arguments made against him in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Ethics* (Philadelphia; London: Westminster Press; Search Press, 1981), 114, “[A]ll this shows that Luther did not intend to abandon the state to the caprice of those in power, or to allow it to go its own way, independent of the will of God. This does not, however, exclude the possibility that in Luther’s distinction between two realms and two ‘regiments’ there might be factors that, taken alone, would move in another direction, as can be seen in the themes mentioned above, and would tend to separate secular authority from the context of those principles that motivate Christianity.” However, these movements cannot be equated with Luther himself, as Lutheranism—especially in its Nazi-friendly form—can maintain stark differences with their namesake’s doctrinal intent. Jürgen Moltmann, *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 70–76, is especially helpful here, by making the argument that *abusus non tollit usum*. Moltmann is correct in saying Luther’s doctrine “is in its truth a critical-polemical separation between God and Caesar. It permits neither a Caesaro-papism nor a clerical theocracy. It intended to teach that the world and politics may not be deified, nor may they be religiously administered. . . . This [critical dualistic] view of the two kingdoms doctrine only arises, however, if one takes the distinction of both regiments out of the world-historical drama of the battle between the reign of God and the reign of evil and deals with it in isolation on its own. The more both regiments are seen in their common struggle against the kingdom of the devil, the closer they come together and so the clearer their common features become” (pp. 70–72). Key to addressing the criticisms is thus an understanding of the importance of love in Luther’s doctrine, which Moltmann notes where he writes, “According to this view, Christian love in the various circumstances of political, economic, and family life corresponds to the guiding principles of Christ. Even through politics, business, and family life the Christian becomes God’s

## Luther's Three Estates (*oeconomia, politia, ecclesia*)

---

co-worker and a witness to the kingdom of Christ against the kingdom of the devil. Christians will act appropriately and rationally in these various dimensions, but their deeds will be motivated by the faith and will be directed toward the salvation of the world. The various areas of life provide the place of Christian action but not the law of these actions. The Christian acts in the relationships of the world but does not act under their compulsion” (p. 73).

After summarizing Luther's doctrine, Moltmann properly identifies three of the abuses of the two kingdoms: “1. There was an inversion of this doctrine into its opposite when it was no longer employed critically-polemically for the sake of disentangling an entangled world but was made instead into an ideology which affirmed the Protestant world. Instead of aiding the critical distinction to be made within both kingdoms which are actually constantly mixed in history, the doctrine became a religious theory for two separate dimensions of the world—church and state.... If the law was thus separated from the gospel, then in the nineteenth century the state could soon be seen as presenting itself as a ‘law unto itself’.... 2. An inversion of the two kingdoms doctrine arose when in the nineteenth century the distinction between the spiritual and the worldly regiment was replaced by the distinction between private and public, or inner and outer. With that, faith was made world-less and the world was made faith-less. God became unreal and reality God-less.... 3. The negative consequences of this misuse of the two kingdoms theory came to expression in Germany during the Hitler period” (pp. 74–75).

After having properly summarized the doctrine, and identified the areas in which it was abused, Moltmann identifies the real problem with Luther's two kingdoms, which is that “[it] gives no criteria for a specific Christian ethics. It gives a criterion only for a recognition of a secular ethics or an ethics of the worldly orders. Basically, it is a theology of history but not a foundation for Christian ethics. It serves to sharpen the conscience; that is its strength. It brings into Christian ethics a realism which reckons with the given facts. But it does not motivate world-transforming hope. That is its weakness” (p. 76). Moltmann's criticism is valid, and this dissertation's notion of covenants seems to be a possible corrective to the noted weakness. Besides the dissertation's thesis, other correctives from Lutheran and Reformed traditions also have prospective merit. In Thielicke's *Theological Ethics; Volume 2: Politics*, Lutheran theologian Helmut Thielicke depicts Kuyper as sharing a view similar to Luther's emphasis on two kingdoms and Christian persons, writing, “Indeed Kuyper can make statements reminiscent of the two kingdoms doctrine of Luther: ‘Sin has, in the realm of politics, broken down the direct government of God, and therefore the exercise of authority, for the purpose of government, has subsequently been invested in men, as a mechanical remedy.’ i.e., as something ‘unnatural’ and contrary to ‘the deeper aspirations of our nature’” (p. 600). Besides a notion of two kingdoms, Kuyper even shared Luther's emphasis on the importance of Christian persons. Thielicke notes this affinity, writing, “Thus the Christian shaping of the state is not accomplished from above by way of determining the character of its order. It is accomplished from below through the influence of Christian persons (the ‘people of God’) and impulse centers in the form of specific Christian institutions (university, school, press, etc.) which will bring it to pass” (p. 602). For these reasons, Thielicke presents Kuyper as a possible Reformed “intermediate position” and “synthesis” of the Lutheran heritage, and as someone who also avoids the overcorrection charged against Calvinists that theocratize the other institutions with “monistic tendencies of the doctrine of the decrees” (p. 598). This also says nothing of the genius of Kuyper's political manifesto, which appropriates traditional Protestant social theory within his theory of sphere sovereignty. Furthermore, Bonhoeffer represents a second attractive mediation, which appropriates Luther's social ideas within Bonhoeffer's four mandates, and synthesizes these ideas with the Christocentric insights of neo-orthodoxy. Bonhoeffer is especially attractive as a response to Barth's criticisms, and it is a tragedy of political history that Bonhoeffer would not live long enough to continue articulating them in his unfinished *Ethics*.

Although Martin Luther (1483–1546) will be treated in greater depth later in the chapter, it is worth sharing his early three estate articulation of traditional Protestant social theory. According to Luther, God calls humans to apply His commandments within the unique situations generated by humanity’s respective relationships. Luther infers from the Bible that society is made up primarily of stations, and notes God instituted three estates/works:

First, the Bible speaks and teaches about the works of God. About this there is no doubt. These works are divided into three hierarchies: the household [*oeconomia*], the government [*politia*], and the church [*ecclesia*]. If a verse does not fit the church, we should let it stay the government or the household, whichever is best suited to.<sup>22</sup>

Within these estates, individuals are called into stations to perform tasks relevant to that institution’s particular relationships. These stations underlie the law of love evident in nature, and they are central to the preservation and order of social humanity, and the performance of Christian social ethics. As Luther writes in the third part of *Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper*, “the holy orders and true religious institutions established by God are these three: the office of priest, the estate of marriage, the civil government,” and “these three religious institutions or orders are found in God’s Word and commandment; and whatever is contained in God’s Word must be holy, for God’s Word is holy and sanctifies everything connected with it and involved in it.”<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Luther writes that individuals serving in the particular work of these estates are “engaged

---

<sup>22</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), *LW* 54:446, no. 5533 (1542–43). As an example, see also Martin Luther and Ulrich Köpf, *D. Martin Luthers Werke Tischreden [1531–46]. Begleith. Begleitheft zu den Tischreden.* (Weimar: Böhlau, 2000), *WA TR* 2, no 2762 (1532).

<sup>23</sup> Martin Luther and William R. Russell, *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 28.

in works which are altogether holy in God's sight."<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Luther notes that these estates are directed from above by "the common order of Christian love, in which one serves not only the three orders, but also serves every needy person in general."<sup>25</sup> These three divinely instituted orders—ministry (church, *ecclesia*), marriage (family, *oeconomia*), and secular authority (state, *politia*)—make up what is at the core of a framework for a traditional Protestant social theory.

Baxter's Christian Directory  
(*oeconomicks, ecclesiasticks, politicks*)

One of the clearest examples where the traditional Protestant social theory's framework is evident is in the work of Richard Baxter (1615–1691). What makes the presence doubly interesting is that it represents the traditional Protestant social theory in arguably the second major theological tradition to come out of the Reformation—and particularly the most influential as it relates to colonial America and covenantal Federal theology—by shaping the English Puritanism that came from Calvinism.<sup>26</sup> In *A Holy Commonwealth*, Baxter provides his utilization of the general framework of traditional Protestant social theory by ordering practical ethics on the basis of self-government, domestic government,

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Max Weber, Peter R. Baehr, and Gordon C. Wells, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism and Other Writings* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2012), 105. Max Weber made considerable use of Baxter's *Christian Directory* to develop his thesis in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber chose Baxter as his representative of the English puritanism that grew out of Calvinism because of Baxter's "eminently practical and irenic position, and at the same time by the universal recognition of his works." The only other person featured in more pages in Weber's work is Martin Luther. In Robert K. Merton, "Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England," *Osiris* 4 (1938): 360–632, Merton also emulated Weber's emphasis on using Baxter's *Christian Directory* as "a typical presentation of the leading elements in the Puritan ethos."

political government, and ecclesial government.<sup>27</sup> He describes the “Domestical [oeconomicks], Political [politicks], and Ecclesiastical [ecclesiasticks] Order of Government and subjection” as “the Institutions of God,” and as “commanded in his Laws.”<sup>28</sup> Baxter develops his understanding of these institutions in *A Holy Commonwealth*’s 43<sup>rd</sup> thesis, where he explains each order individually, and stresses God’s ordination of these distinct orders through nature and revelation.<sup>29</sup>

A second of Baxter’s works where the traditional Protestant social theory is especially evident is *A Christian Directory*. The work is divided into four parts, with each partition corresponding to one of the four governments outlined earlier in *A Holy Commonwealth*’s 43<sup>rd</sup> thesis.<sup>30</sup> In *A Christian Directory*, Baxter is attempting to write a

---

<sup>27</sup> Richard Baxter, *A Holy Commonwealth*, ed. William Lamont (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 65. Baxter writes, “Thes [sic] 43. As the difference of our faculties, and our personal self Government, so also Domestical [sic], Political, and Ecclesiastical Order of Government and subjection, are the Institutions of God, commanded in his Laws.”

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 65–67. On the familial institution, Baxter writes, “2. Domestical Order is commanded of God, partly in nature directly, as the Rule of Parents, and obedience of Children: partly by the intervention of contracts for the application of the Law to the individual persons, as in the Relations of Husband and Wife, ... but it is Nature partly as Indicative of Gods will, and partly as endowing us with Principles or Dispositions of Morality (that is, as a law) that obliged Children to obey, as Parents to Govern: so also the Law of Nature and Scripture is it that imposeth on Wives and Servants the duty of obeying, ... But whether the Husband shall govern, and the wife obey, and whether the Master shall govern, and the servant obey, this is not of choice: so that if they should by Contract agree, that the wife shall not be subject to the Husband, it were ipso facto null, as being contrary to the divine Institution or Law” (p. 66).

On the political institution, Baxter writes, “3. As many Families cohabiting without Political or Civil Government, would want that which is necessary to their own Wel-fare and the Common good. As an Empire is divided into several Provinces, or Principalities, so God hath made it necessary that the world be distributed into many particular Common-wealths ... men as his Officers have their several Provinces, which in due subordination to him and his Laws, must be governed by them” (p. 66).

Finally, on the ecclesial institution, Baxter writes, “4. Because men have immortal souls to save, and an everlasting life of happinesse [sic] to attain, or misery to suffer, and God himself hath a final Judgment to pass on all according to his Laws, and because men are rational free Agents that must by knowledge and choice be brought into a fitness for felicity, and be kept in acceptable obedience to their Sovereign; therefore hath he appointed Pastors to teach and guide the people in the way of life” (pp. 66–67).

<sup>30</sup> Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory (Part 1 of 4) Christian Ethics* (Project Gutenberg, 2012), <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/41633>, 1. Baxter describes the purpose of his work as “directing

practical ethic that gives Christians “from God’s word those plain directions, which are suited to the several duties of their lives, and may guide them safely in their walk with God, to life eternal.”<sup>31</sup> In addition to directions for the self, Baxter’s work aims at helping his audience understand how they ought to direct themselves “as christians simply, with respect to God, or in their relations to others,” and specifically in their “either ecclesiastical, civil, or domestical (family relations).”<sup>32</sup> Baxter explains his project’s method, where he writes,

Accordingly, my intended method is, 1. To direct ungodly, carnal minds, how to attain to a state of grace. 2. To direct those that have saving grace, how to use it; both in the contemplative and active parts of their lives; in their duties of religion, both private and public; in their duties to men, both in their ecclesiastical, civil, and family relations. And, by the way, to direct those that have grace, how to discern it, and take the comfort of it; and to direct them how to grow in grace, and persevere unto the end.<sup>33</sup>

No other Protestant thinker is as overt in utilizing church, family, and state as a foundational framework in which to discuss ethical directives particular to one’s institution-specific behavior. It is little wonder that Baxter was so influential to much of Puritanism, and through it a heavy influence on Federal theology and its appropriation of the traditional Protestant social theory (and with it, the American political experience).

---

Christians, how to use their knowledge and faith; how to improve all helps and means, and to perform all duties; how to overcome temptations, and to escape or mortify every sin.” He does this in four parts, with each of the three later volumes corresponding to one of his institutions/governments: “I. Christian Ethics, (Or Private Duties.), II. Christian Economics, (Or Family Duties.), III. Christian Ecclesiastics, (Or Church Duties.), IV. Christian Politics, (Or Duties To Our Rulers And Neighbours.)” (p. 1).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

## Baptist Confessions' Ordained Institutions (Civil Magistrate, Marriage, and Church)

Whereas Luther and Baxter evidence the presence of the traditional Protestant social theory in Lutheranism and Calvinism, a number of historical confessions make it evident throughout Baptist theology. The value of isolating exemplary examples of the tradition in Baptist confessions is twofold: first, it displays evidence for the maintenance of the tradition along early and contemporary periods of a particular Protestant tradition; and second, it reveals that institutions were emphasized in relation to particular historical contexts that had the church addressing the social concerns of their day.

The *Second London Baptist Confession* of 1689 is one early example of both the presence of the traditional Protestant social theory, and the emphasis of a particular institutional question per the document's historical and theological context. Chapters 25–27 address “the civil magistrate,” “marriage,” and “the church” individually, describing God as having “ordained civil magistrates to be under him, over the people, for his own glory, and the public good,” and marriage as “ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife.”<sup>34</sup> However, it is the confession's longer description of the institution of the Church as universal in respect to its invisible catholicity, and visible in respect to its Christ-believing particularity, that reveals the document's contextually weighted ecclesial concerns.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> *The Baptist Confession of Faith 1689*, Early American imprints, First Series; no. 26614. (Portland OR: Printed by Thomas Baker Wait., 1794), 55–57.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 57–60. The confession spends considerable time—compared to the other institutions—in addressing the Church as invisible in its catholicity (“Church”), but visible in its particularity (“churches”), showing that the major social debate behind the document was an ecclesial one—specifically, what was the nature of the particular and universal church. The document describes the universal Church as that which “consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ,

Another confession from this early Baptist historical period that shares the presence of the threefold institutions—as well as the emphasis of the particular and universal ecclesial question—is *An Orthodox Creed* of 1679. The document contains the usual references to the divine origins of the orders, describing the familial institution as consisting of parents who are “a sort of Subordinate Governors, and Rulers, in their respective Jurisdictions and Families; in their respective Relative Places, according to their Capacities, and Opportunities;” and who are “engaged from God’s Word, to take Charge of their Families, and rule and govern them according to the Word of God.”<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, it describes the civil magisterial institution as those “ordained Civil Magistrates to be under Him, over the People for his own Glory, and the Publick [sic] Good.”<sup>37</sup> Akin to the *Second London Baptist Confession*, *An Orthodox Creed* contains a lengthy baptistic treatment in articles XXVIII–XXXI on the universality and particularity of the institution and government of the church, which addresses from a baptistic perspective the ecclesial variant of this dissertation’s later addressed problem of particularity and universality.<sup>38</sup>

---

the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.” It then describes the particular church, which manifests itself as a visible institution, as “these churches therefore gathered, according to his mind declared in his word, [that] he has given all that power and authority, which is in any way needful for their carrying on that order in worship and discipline, which he has instituted for them to observe; with commands and rules for the due and right exerting, and executing of that power” (pp. 59–60).

<sup>36</sup> Edward Bean Underhill, *Confessions of Faith and Other Public Documents Illustrative of the History of the Baptist Churches of England in the 17th Century* (London: Printed for the Society by J. Haddon, 1854), 162–163.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 148–151. The confession’s definitions of universal and particular church are useful for the later baptistic approach that appraises the covenantal idea per the traditional Protestant social theory’s framework. The confession defines the Universal church as “one holy Catholick Church, consisting of, or made up of the whole number of the Elect; that have been, are, or shall be gathered, in one Body under Christ, the only Head thereof: Which Church is gathered by Special Grace, and the Powerful and Internal Work of the Spirit; and are effectually united unto Christ their Head, and can never fall away.” It then

Additional confessions across six centuries repeat the pattern highlighted in *Second London Baptist Confession* and *An Orthodox Creed*. By taking the description of just the institution of the family as an example, the trend becomes evident and in line with traditional Protestant social theory. The theory is represented in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the Mennonite statement, “A Brief Confession of the Principle Articles of the Christian Faith” of 1580 and its description of marriage as “an ordinance of God which must be entered into according to the primal institution;” it is represented in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in John Smyth’s *Short Confession of Faith* of 1610’s description of marriage as an “estate ... an ordinance of God, which, according to the first institution, shall be observed;” it is represented in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the American Baptists adoption of the *Second London Confession* as the renamed *Philadelphia Confession of Faith*, and its mention of marriage as “ordained;” it is represented in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Georgia Baptist Association’s 1864 passage of a resolution describing marriage as an “institution ... ordained by Almighty God for the benefit of the whole human race;” and finally it is represented in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century in the *Baptist Faith and Message*’s description of family as an “ordained ... foundational institution of human society,” and marriage as “the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a

---

describes the particular visible church as “made up of several distinct Congregations, which make up that one Catholick Church, or Mystical Body of Christ,” and which is marked by being a particular institution “Where the Word of God is rightly Preached, and the Sacraments truly Administered, according to Christ’s Institution, and the Practice of the Primitive Church; having Discipline and Government duly Executed by Ministers or Pastors of God’s Appointing, and the Churches Election, that is a true constituted Church: to which Church (and not elsewhere) all Persons that seek for Eternal Life, should gladly joyn [sic] themselves.”

lifetime.”<sup>39</sup> This cross-century survey reveals the traditional social pattern in Baptist thought, as well as the shifts in addressing the social questions, which are evidenced in the earlier confession’s extended treatment on questions related to the particularity and universality of the ecclesial institution, and the later confession’s extended treatments on challenges directed to the familial/marital institution.

### Kuyper’s Sovereign Spheres (State, Society, Church)

A fourth worthy representative of the traditional Protestant social theory comes from Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920). While Kuyper’s Dutch Reformed theology stands on its own merits, it is Kuyper’s *curriculum vitae* that add special relevance to his remodeling of the social theory. Kuyper lived his political theology. Literally. His influence on Dutch education, politics, and theology are widely felt, and they include service as a prime minister, as a member of Parliament, as a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, and as the founder of a university, a denomination, and a political party. Furthermore, Kuyper sought to articulate these actualized political and social convictions across a number of written works such as *Lectures on Calvinism* and *Our Program*. These works are not only valuable as examples of Kuyper’s political manifesto, but also as evidence of his appropriation and modification of the traditional Protestant social theory from within the Dutch Reformed tradition.

To understand Kuyper’s revisions of the traditional Protestant social theory, the reader needs to first understand his overall project. Kuyper sees two “life systems” in a

---

<sup>39</sup> Jason Duesing, “Marriage and the Family in the Baptist Tradition,” *ERLC*, 29 January 2016,

mortal duel for claim over creation: modernism and Christianity.<sup>40</sup> The modernist, he writes, focuses on building a world “of its own from the data of the natural man, and to construct man himself from the data of nature.”<sup>41</sup> In opposition to this modernism stands the “Christian Heritage,” and in particular Calvinism, which he describes as “the only decisive, lawful, and consistent defence for Protestant nations against encroaching, and overwhelming Modernism.”<sup>42</sup> The theme of Kuyper’s *Lectures on Calvinism* is to propose in six lectures Calvinism as “a central phenomenon in the development of humanity,” which he believes is “not only entitled to an honorable position by the side of Paganism, Islamistic and Romanistic forms, since like these it represents a peculiar principle dominating the whole of life,” but also as meeting “every required condition for the advancement of human development to a higher stage.”<sup>43</sup>

Kuyper’s third lecture in *Lectures on Calvinism* zeros in on Calvinism’s relevance to political and social life. It is here that Kuyper reformulates the traditional Protestant social theory into his theory of sphere sovereignty. The fundamental political conception of Calvinism, Kuyper writes,

was not, soteriologically, justification by faith, but, in the widest sense cosmologically, the Sovereignty of the Triune God over the whole Cosmos, in all

---

<http://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/marriage-and-the-family-in-the-baptist-tradition>.

<sup>40</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1931), 11. On these two life systems, Kuyper writes, “There is no doubt then that Christianity is imperiled by great and serious dangers. Two *life systems* are wrestling with one another, in mortal combat. Modernism is bound to build a world of its own from the data of the natural man, and to construct man himself from the data of nature; while, on the other hand, all those who reverently bend the knee to Christ and worship Him as the Son of the living God, and God himself, are bent upon saving the ‘Christian Heritage.’ This is *the* struggle in Europe, this is *the* struggle in America, and this also, is the struggle for principles in which my own country is engaged, and in which I myself have been spending all my energy for nearly forty years” (p. 11).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 38.

its spheres and kingdoms, visible and invisible. A primordial Sovereignty which eradicates in mankind in a threefold deduced supremacy, viz., 1. The Sovereignty in the State; 2. The Sovereignty in Society; and 3. The Sovereignty in the Church.<sup>44</sup>

Kuyper agrees with Aristotle that man is a “political animal” (ζῷον πολιτικόν), and that the state arises from man’s social nature.<sup>45</sup> However, Kuyper notes that the state’s arrival is primarily because sin necessitated government.<sup>46</sup> The government is merely an unnatural and mechanical means to compel order and guarantee the protection of life.<sup>47</sup> For Kuyper, God maintains sovereignty that manifests itself within the authority specific to a social sphere. Therefore, political authority derives its institutional authority from the sovereignty of God—and not principally from the people or from nature.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. Kuyper writes, “First then a deduced Sovereignty in that political sphere, which is defined as the State. And then we admit that the impulse to form states arises from man’s social nature, which was expressed already by Aristotle, when he called man a *Zoou politicho’n*” (p. 79).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 80. On the creation of government as a response to sin, Kuyper writes, “For, indeed, without sin there would have been neither magistrate nor state-order; but political life, in its entirety, would have evolved itself, after a patriarchal fashion, from the life of the family. Neither bar of justice nor police, nor army, nor navy, is conceivable in a world without sin; and thus every rule and ordinance and law would drop away, even as all control and assertion of the power of the magistrate would disappear, were life to develop itself, normally and without hindrance, from its own organic impulse. Who binds up, where nothing is broken? Who uses crutches, where the limbs are sound?”

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. On the mechanical and unnatural nature of the state, Kuyper writes, “Every State-formation, every assertion of the power of the magistrate, every mechanical means of compelling order and of guaranteeing a safe course of life is therefore always something unnatural; something against which the deeper aspirations of our nature rebel; and which, on this very account, may become the source both of a dreadful abuse of power, on the part of those who exercise it, and of a continuous revolt on the part of the multitude. Thus originated the battle of the ages between Authority and Liberty, and in this battle it was the very innate thirst for liberty which proved itself the God-ordained means to bridle the authority wherever it degenerated into despotism” (p. 80).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 81–85. Kuyper notes, “Calvinism has done more. In politics also it taught us that the human element—here the people—may not be considered as the principal thing, so that God is only dragged in to help this people in the hour of its need; but on the contrary that God, in His Majesty, must flame before the eyes of every nation, and that all nations together are to be reckoned before Him as a drop in a bucket and as the small dust of the balances” (p. 81). Thus, he concludes, “1. God only—and never any creature—is possessed of sovereign rights, in the destiny of the nations, because God alone created them, maintains them by His Almighty power, and rules them by His ordinances. 2. Sin has, in the realm of politics, broken down the direct government of God, and therefore the exercise of authority, for the purpose of government, has subsequently been invested in men, as a mechanical remedy. And 3. In whatever form

Kuyper's theses of Calvinistic political faith and the role of God's sovereignty set the foundation for his social theory of sphere sovereignty. The mechanical nature of the sphere of the state stands in distinction from—and often in the encroachment of—the organic sphere of society.<sup>49</sup> Kuyper's theory replicates the three-fold traditional Protestant framework, with the important distinction that Kuyper opts to make society his second ordered category, rather than simply the family. According to Kuyper, this second major sphere consists of society outside of the state's mechanical power, and within this broader notion of "social" and "society" are particular social spheres with their own God-derived authority. Kuyper explains,

In a Calvinistic sense we understand hereby, that the family, the business, science, art and so forth are all social spheres, which do not owe their existence to the state, and which do not derive the law of their life from the superiority of the state, but obey a high authority within their own bosom; an authority which rules, by the grace of God, just as the sovereignty of the State does.<sup>50</sup>

---

this authority may reveal itself, man never possesses power over his fellow-man in any other way than by authority which descends upon him from the majesty of God" (p. 85)

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 93–94. On this distinction, Kuyper writes, "For the government is always included, with its mechanical authority, to invade social life, to subject it and mechanically to arrange it. But on the other hand social life always endeavors to shake off the authority of the government, just as this endeavor at the present time again culminates in social-democracy and anarchism, both of which aim at nothing less than the total overthrow of the institution of authority."

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 90–96. Kuyper breaks down the social, corporative, domestic, and communal spheres and their sovereignties where he writes, "In relation herewith, and on entirely the same ground of organic superiority, there exists, side by side with this personal sovereignty, the sovereignty of *the sphere*. The University exercises scientific dominion; the Academy of fine arts is possessed of art-power; the guild exercised a technical dominion; the trades-union rules over labor—and each of these spheres or corporations is conscious of the power of exclusive independent judgment and authoritative action, within its proper sphere of operation. Behind these organic spheres, with intellectual, aesthetical and technical sovereignty, the sphere of the family opens itself, with its right of marriage, domestic peace, education and possession; and in this sphere also the natural head is conscious of exercising an inherent authority, —not because the government allows it, but because God has imposed it. Paternal authority roots itself in the very lifeblood and is proclaimed in the fifth Commandment. And so also finally it may be remarked that the social life of cities and villages forms a sphere of existence, which arises from the very necessities of life, and which therefore must be autonomous.... In many different directions we see therefore that sovereignty in one's own sphere asserts itself—1. In the social sphere, by personal superiority. 2. In the corporative sphere of universities, guilds, associations, etc. 3. In the domestic sphere of the family and of married life,

The presence of the traditional Protestant theory's emphasis on the familial institution is not lost in Kuyper's revision. Kuyper's treatment actually strengthens the social and political significance of the family. Kuyper notes "the family retains its position as the primordial sphere in sociology."<sup>51</sup> According to Kuyper the family—and not the individual or the village or the state—is the most basic and primary social unit.<sup>52</sup> Kuyper illustrates this in *Our Program*, where he begins a discussion of the organic formation of the state—and a justification for its decentralization—by examining a society's most basic unit. Kuyper writes,

[I]f we descend still lower and go down to families, it is true even there that the village is composed of families and not that the families are cut from the village. The family was there first, and only then could the village take shape. Finally, if the village vanished there would still be families; but if the households were to disband the village too would come to an end.<sup>53</sup>

According to Kuyper, to move past the family and prioritize the individual errs in the opposite direction, as this leads to a wrong he describes as "at odds with the givens of nature."<sup>54</sup> There are no individuals outside of the God-ordained and God-empowered

---

and 4. In communal autonomy. In all these four spheres the State-government cannot impose its laws, but must reverence the innate law of life. God rules in these spheres, just as supremely and sovereignly through his chosen *virtuosi*, as He examines dominion in the sphere of the State itself, through his chosen *magistrates*" (p. 96).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>52</sup> Kuyper's arguably most important disciple, Herman Bavinck, illustrates the type of importance credited to the family, as well as acknowledging the three institutions of traditional Protestant social theory. In Henry Bavinck, *The Christian Family* (Grand Rapids, MI; Christian's Library Press, 2012), 115, Bavinck writes, "Family, state, and church each share this feature, that each is independent of the other, each has its own origin and purpose, and none came forth from the other. They differ, however, in the fact that the family is the oldest institution and came into existence immediately with the creation of the first human couple; the state and the church, however, were instituted after the fall, and in such a way that the church owes its existence to special grace, while the state owes its existence to common grace. Society corresponds most closely to the family, and the relationships within which society is manifested are expansions and indications of the fundamental forms found in the family."

<sup>53</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Our Program: A Christian Political Manifesto* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 142.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 143.

familial institution and its twofold ordinances (marital relation and procreation). Therefore, Kuyper writes, “[T]he basic unit for us is not the individual, as with the men of the Revolution, but the family.”<sup>55</sup> Individuals belong to a family “willy-nilly, *by birth*, by the fact that he exists. However weak that bond may be, everybody has a mother, and without that mother he would not exist.”<sup>56</sup> The family, in its relations and its related parts, places man directly before God, in that both the individual and society depend on the God-ordained institution for its original and continued existence.

The examination of Kuyper’s emphasis of family as the basic social unit reveals more than just the origins of the individual and the village. It reveals what Kuyper means by the sphere of society in distinction from the sphere of the state, and further the particular social sphere’s respective authority. Kuyper posits three questions to illustrate what this means for the nature of the state and society, asking,

(1) Does the responsibility for good order in the family rest with the head of the family or with the head of the state...? (2) Did you receive the power to exercise authority in your household from the state, or do you have this power by the grace of God...? (3) Were you a father given authority over your children because they charged you with this by majority vote; or did you possess this authority independently of their consent, long before they could tell you their mind or inclination? Did they appoint you as father, and therefore also have the right to depose you as father...?<sup>57</sup>

Kuyper connects the obvious answers to these questions, with the insights from his treatment on family, to draw two important sphere-related conclusions. First, the sphere of the state may only act with authority in those areas not already being cared for by the smaller social spheres of life, but may sometimes act as a “*temporary curator*” in those

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

areas where society's life-spheres are attempting to abuse one-another or neglect their responsibilities.<sup>58</sup> Second, the state must respect and nourish the life-sphere divisions derived from history and reality, and not some geographical measurement.<sup>59</sup> In *Lectures on Calvinism*, Kuyper encapsulates the implications these conclusions have towards the development of his social theory of sphere sovereignty, where he writes,

[I]n all these four spheres the State-government cannot impose its laws, but must reverence the innate law of life. God rules in these spheres, just as supremely and sovereignly through his chosen *virtuosi*, as He exercises dominion in the sphere of the State itself, through his chosen *magistrates*.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to the first two spheres of state and society, Kuyper posits a third in line with the traditional Protestant social theory: the church. His development of the ecclesial sphere is an extension of classical Calvinist ecclesiology, with an important critical distinction that departs from Calvin on the question of religious liberty. As with the social sphere, the state has a tendency to encroach upon the church's sovereignty (and vice versa).<sup>61</sup> To help define the Church's spherical sovereignty, Kuyper again compares the

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 145. In summarizing the role of government, Kuyper writes, "In the first place, the central government may only take on and carry out what is not (and for so long as it is not) properly taken care of in the smaller spheres of life.... If all we were in the state, if people were as they should be and things were normal, the task of the central government would consist exclusively of two things: (1) to take care of those things that flow directly from the connection of the provinces to the one state; and (2) to defend, whenever abuse of power crept in, the rights of individuals over against the family, of the family over against the municipality, and of the municipality over against the region. However, if the subordinate spheres in many respects still evince a deplorable lack of energy, then the central government has the additional right and duty to intervene in family, municipality, or region and attend to whatever should never be left unprovided for yet continues to be neglected or poorly looked after" (p. 145).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. As an example, Kuyper writes, "If there is first a family, then a town or village arising from families, then municipalities that combine to form regions, and a group of such regions that gradually give birth to the higher State unity, then the central government has no business making divisions and incisions in the land but must simply respect the divisions and groupings which it finds there" (p. 145).

<sup>60</sup> Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 96.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 103. Kuyper points critically to his own tradition as an example, and offers the image of the pile of sticks and Servetus to illustrate the problem, writing, "The difficulty lies in the fact that an article of our old Calvinistic Confession of Faith entrusts to the government the task 'of defending against

sphere against the state. Kuyper argues that the role of the state is to suspend its own judgment “and to consider the multiform complex of all these denominations as the totality of the manifestation of the Church of Christ on earth.”<sup>62</sup> In the name of this religious liberty, Kuyper concludes that the ecclesial sphere has its own sovereignty:

In Christ, they contented, the Church has her own King. Her position in the State is not assigned her by the permission of the Government, but *jure divino*. She has her own organization. She possesses her own office-bearers. And in a similar way she has her own gifts to distinguish truth from the lie. It is therefore her privilege, and not that of the State, to determine her own characteristics as the true Church, and to proclaim her own confession as the confession of the truth.<sup>63</sup>

In summary, Kuyper contrasts the sphere of the mechanical and unnatural state against the sphere of the organic and natural society, and the sphere of the invisible and visible church, to articulate his spherical social theory. This second major sphere which Kuyper calls society is birthed by and erected upon the family, and consists of additional particular life-spheres each of which maintain God-appointed sovereignty and shape based off their respective intellectual, aesthetical, technical, and domestic dominions. The state is to respect these natural boundaries, and ensure an environment where neither the state or the social sphere undermine each other, nor where the social sphere’s particular life-spheres ignore or abuse their responsibilities. Kuyper further emulates this method of revealing the character and boundaries of spherical dominion by contrasting the third major sphere of the church with that of the state. The comparison reveals that the church

---

and of extirpating every form of idolatry and false religion and to protect the sacred service of the Church.’ The difficulty lies in the unanimous and uniform advice of Calvin and his epigones, who demanded intervention of the government in the matter of religion. The accusation is therefore a natural one that, by choosing in favor of liberty of religion, we do not pick up the gauntlet for Calvinism, but that we directly oppose it” (p. 99).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 105. Kuyper makes the distinction clear: “The sovereignty of the State and the Sovereignty of the Church exist side by side, and they mutually limit each other” (p. 107).

too maintains its own God-given sovereignty distinct from the other two spheres. In all, the revision is another modified example of the traditional Protestant social theory's three-fold institutional emphasis, yet as masterfully appropriated by Kuyper within the Dutch Reformed tradition.

#### Troeltsch's Main Social Organizations (Church, Family, State, and Economic Society)

A fifth major example of the utilization of the traditional Protestant social theory framework is Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923). As a student of Albrecht Ritschl, a pupil of Paul Legarde, a colleague of Max Weber, and a friend of Abraham Kuyper, Troeltsch's main contribution to the Protestant social tradition comes in his masterful synthesis of Ritschlian theological liberalism, Legardian historicism, and Weberian sociology to survey the social teaching of the Christian churches. Like Kuyper—his colleague and neighbor—Troeltsch lived out his political and social ethic, which drew him into service as a member of parliament, as a professor at various institutions, as an advocate of Germany's entrance into WW1, and as a participant in the politics of the Weimar Republic. However, Troeltsch's approach to social theory and theology are markedly different from Kuyper's. Whereas Kuyper sought to produce a Christian manifesto that addressed the socio-political questions as a committed conservative and Calvinist, Troeltsch sought to contribute a sociological work that examined the social teachings and their impact on the institutions of family, economy, and state. Troeltsch's contributions for the dissertation are twofold: first, Troeltsch provides an example of the traditional

---

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 105–106.

Protestant social theory in the liberal Protestant tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; second, Troeltsch is the most sociologically-sensitive theologian among the paper's seven examples. Troeltsch is especially valuable for the social insights and questions he derives from his sociological project, and the great contribution his historical survey makes to the analysis of the Church's interactions with family, economy, and the state.

In *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, Troeltsch sets out to examine “What is the basis of the social teaching of the churches? From the point of view of their essential nature in principle what is their attitude towards the modern social problem? And what should be their attitude?”<sup>64</sup> Troeltsch is primarily concerned with how the Church has, and how the Church now should, address the important social questions of its day. In Troeltsch's historical context, the rise of industrialization, socialism, divisions of labor, and the nation-state posed important social questions that asked how man ought to organize himself, his society, and its social organisms. As a religious organization with ideals on the interrelationship of the individual and the community, the Church throughout its history has had to address multiple contextually-specific social questions. However, the Church's address—and the resulting impact it had—varied throughout major historical eras. To pave a way towards understanding how the Church can respond to the social questions of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century modernity, Troeltsch writes that his project sets out to understand

the social doctrines of the Gospel, of the Early Church, of the Middle Ages, of the post-Reformation confessions, right down to the reformation of the new situation in the modern world, in which the old theories no longer suffice, and where,

---

<sup>64</sup> Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 24.

therefore, new theories must be constructed, composed of old and new elements, consciously or unconsciously, whether so avowed or not.<sup>65</sup>

In doing so, Troeltsch reveals the importance of understanding the Church in relation to the familial and political institutions, as well as contributes a more precise understanding and vocabulary for exploring social questions.

To understand Troeltsch's social theory, the reader must first grasp what he means by "social," "the social problem," and "society." Troeltsch starts by adopting a sense of the "social" to mean "a definite, clearly defined section of the general sociological phenomena—that is, the sociological relations which are not regulated by the state, nor by political interest, save in so far as they are indirectly influenced by them."<sup>66</sup> As such, Troeltsch writes that the most basic understanding of the social problem "consists in the relation between the political community and these sociological phenomena, which, although they are essentially non-political, are yet of outstanding importance from the polemical point of view."<sup>67</sup> However, there is a problem with the social problem. Within the social there appears almost an infinite number of groupings of sociological phenomena that make a concept of society almost inconceivable.<sup>68</sup> Such a number makes an analysis of Christianity and the social questions especially difficult,

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 28. Troeltsch goes on to explain examples of the composition, writing, "This sociological section is composed of the various questions which arise out of economic life, the sociological tension between various groups with different customs and aims, division of labour, class organization, and some other interests which cannot be directly characterized as political, but which actually have a great influence on the collective life of the State; since the development of the modern constitutional State, however, these interests have definitely separated themselves from it."

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 29.

and this leads Troeltsch to adopt modern science's definition of society as "primarily the social relationships which result from the economic phenomena."<sup>69</sup>

From the sociological viewpoint, the Christian synthesis of the individual and community create a fundamental sociological theory that addresses the economic understanding of society, and how it even attempts to assimilate it.<sup>70</sup> However, it reveals the church as a religiously-driven social group in distinction from the economically-driven society. This revelation points out for Troeltsch his path to analyzing the social teaching of the Christian Churches, by "investigating the concrete effect of its influence in different social groups."<sup>71</sup> Given the social problem's problem of an infinite number of social groupings, Troeltsch sets out to narrow the social groupings to their most foundational and differentiated level. This narrowing leads him to drawing a similar comparison between the distinctness of the State and Society, which reveals the State as another major social grouping.<sup>72</sup>

Troeltsch emulates Kuyper's own investigation on identifying the distinctness of the social institutions by emphasizing their identity takes shape once contrasted against the institution of the Church. Troeltsch writes, "[I]t is an actual fact of history that from

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 30. He further defined this economic view of society where he writes, "That is to say, it is the Society composed of all who labour, who are divided into various classes and professional groups according to the work they do, which produces and exchanges goods, a Society organized upon the basis of the economic needs of existence, with all its manifold complications."

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 31. In comparing society to the church, in distinction from the state, Troeltsch notes a new problem arises, writing, "Now, however, a quite new and special problem arises when this Society, which is characterized by its separation and difference from the State, is related to the Church or the churches. Obviously through this process of contrast it gains a new meaning. It then becomes a contrast between the sociological group, which is organized from the viewpoint of the religious idea of love to God and man, and those sociological forces which have been organized from an entirely secular point of view."

the beginning all the social doctrines of Christianity have been likewise doctrines both of the State and of Society.”<sup>73</sup> However, Troeltsch’s approach contrasts itself with Kuyper’s in two major ways. First, Troeltsch’s understanding of “society” refers specifically to economy, whereas Kuyper’s understanding references more the family-birtherd social sphere composed of its organic life-spheres (of which industry is but a part). Second, at this point, Troeltsch’s critical comparisons have helped him identify the three primary social groups of Church, Society, and the State; but what of the family? Whereas Kuyper absorbs family into—and pivotal to—the social sphere, Troeltsch identifies it as the fourth major social grouping, writing, “[A]t the same time, owing to the emphasis of Christian thought upon personality, the Family is always regarded as the basis both of the State and of Society, and is thus bound up with all Christian social doctrine.”<sup>74</sup> This leads to Troeltsch’s final understanding of “social,” and its main social organizations of Church, State, Economic Society, and Family, stating,

Once more, therefore, the conception of the “Social” widens out, since in the development of a religious doctrine of fellowship the Family, the State, and the economic order of Society are combined as closely related sociological formations. They do not exhaust the meaning of society in general, but they are the great objects which the religious structure of Society must seek to assimilate, whereas it can leave the other elements to look after themselves.<sup>75</sup>

With these major aspects defined, Troeltsch re-articulates the social problem and his main question, where he asks,

If we admit that the State and Society, together with innumerable other forces, are still the main formative powers of civilization, then the ultimate problem may be

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

stated thus: How can the Church harmonize with these main forces in such a way that together they will form a unity of civilization?<sup>76</sup>

The rest of Troeltsch's work sets out to address the social problem of the Church's relation to the Family, State, and Economic Society, by identifying their interactions across history in the Gospel, the Early Church, the Middle ages, the post-Reformation periods, and modernity.<sup>77</sup> His survey leads him to conclude that the social group of the Church addressed these other main social organizations and the related social problems through two distinct ecclesial approaches, which he calls "church" and "sect."<sup>78</sup> Troeltsch

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 1010. Troeltsch's work is especially helpful for its survey of the Church's interactions with the other social groupings across history. For examples, see his treatment on the Gospel's attitudes towards the social values of the family, state, and economic society (p. 58); Paul's attitude towards the family, state, and economic society (p. 80); early Catholicism's organization of the church and its constitution, and its attitude towards the family, state, and economic society (pp. 89–145); early Medieval's attempted unification of civilization and the formation of the ecclesiastical constitution and arrested development (p. 207); medieval Thomism and its natural law contributions to the family, state, and economic society (pp. 311–312); Protestantism's conception of the Church (pp. 477–494); Lutheranism's attitude towards family (p. 544), state (p. 547), and economic society (p. 554); Calvinism's attitude towards family (p. 652), state (p. 628–640), and economic society (p. 628); and ascetic Protestantism's attitude towards family and sex (p. 809); state (p. 810), and economic society (p. 812). Troeltsch's survey leads him to propose the social problem of his day, which stands in need of address per the insights of his survey's identified two ecclesial approaches, writing, "The social problem is vast and complicated. It includes the problem of the capitalist economic period and of the industrial proletariat created by it; and of the growth of militaristic and bureaucratic giant states; of the enormous increase in population, which affects colonial and world policy, of the mechanical technique, which produces enormous masses of material and links up and mobilizes the whole world for purposes of trade, but which also treats men and labour like machines" (p. 1010).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 461. There is a third approach which he calls "mysticism," however it is excluded from consideration as a viable solution to the social problem given its anti- and non-social nature. Troeltsch introduces two approaches, and defines the "church" approach in particular, where he observes, "Medieval Christianity produced two great classic types of social doctrine: first, the relative type of the idea of Christian Society which is represented by Thomism; and, secondly, the radical idea of Christian Society which was evolved by the sects.... The position of the first type may be stated thus: the Church, which is regarded as a universal institution, endowed with absolute authoritative truth and the sacramental miraculous power of grace and redemption, takes up into its own life the secular institutions, groups, and values which have arisen out of the relative Natural Law, and are adapted to the conditions of the fallen state; the whole of the secular life, therefore, is summed up under the conception of a natural stage in human life, which prepares the way for the higher supernatural stage, for the ethic of grace and miracle, for the spiritual and hierarchical world-organization" (p. 461).

In comparison, he defines the "sect" approach as, "The position of the second type may be thus summarized: the religious community has evolved its social ideal purely from the Gospel and from the Law

notes that the Christian ethos is uniquely able to address modernity's social problem, and he favors the "church" approach above the "sect" for its ability to put forward an independent and visible Christian organization.<sup>79</sup> However, in spite of this conclusion, Troeltsch closes the work by observing that the contemporary social problems cannot be sufficiently responded to by merely adopting either the "church" or "sect" social theories

---

of Christ; according to this type of thought the Christian character and holiness of this ideal should be proved by the unity reigning within the group and by the practical behavior of the individual members, and not by objective institutional guarantees. Therefore, either it does not recognize the institutions, groups, and values which exist outside of Christianity at all, or in a quietly tolerant spirit of detachment from the world it avoids them, or under the influence of an 'enthusiastic' eschatology it attacks these institutions and replaces them by a purely Christian order of society" (p. 461).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 1004–1006. On the advantages of this Christian ethos, Troeltsch writes, "Firstly, The Christian Ethos alone possesses, in virtue of its personalistic Theism, a conviction of personality and individuality, based on metaphysics, which no Naturalism and no Pessimism can disturb.... Secondly: The Christian Ethos alone, through its conception of a Divine Love which embraces all souls and unites them all, possesses a Socialism which cannot be shaken.... Thirdly: Only the Christian Ethos solves the problem of equality and inequality, since it neither glorifies force and accident in the sense of a Nietzschean cult of breed, nor outrages the patent facts of life by a doctrinaire equalitarianism. It recognizes differences in social position, power, and capacity, as a condition which has been established by the inscrutable Will of God; and then transforms this condition by the inner upbuilding of the personality, and the development of the mutual sense of obligation, into an ethical cosmos.... Fourthly: Through its emphasis upon the Christian value of personality, and on love, the Christian Ethos creates something which no social order—however just and rational—can dispense with entirely, because everywhere there will always remain suffering, distress, and sickness for which we cannot account—in a word, it produces charity.... In conclusion: The Christian Ethos gives to all social life and aspiration a goal which lies far beyond all the relativities of this earthly life, compared with which, indeed, everything else represents merely approximate values. The idea of the future Kingdom of God, which is nothing less than faith in the final realization of the Absolute (in whatever way we may conceive this realization), does not, as short-sighted opponents imagine, render this world and life in this world meaningless and empty; on the contrary, it stimulates human energies, making the soul strong through its various stages of experience in the certainty of an ultimate, absolute meaning and aim for human labour. Thus it raises the soul above the world without denying the world.... The life beyond this world is, in very deed, the inspiration of the life that now is" (pp. 1004–1006).

On his conclusion that the "church" type is to be preferred, Troeltsch writes, "The first thing we learn is, that the religious life—on the plane of spiritual religion—needs an independent organization, in order to distinguish it from other organizations of a natural kind.... Secondly, so far as the form of this organization is concerned, it has become evident that the Church-type is obviously superior to the sect-type and to mysticism.... In the third place: the Church-type itself, just because of this element of tension between pure Christianity and adjustment to the world which exists within it, has had a very changeable history, and is to-day becoming entirely transformed.... In the fourth place: precisely because the Church-type is thus connected with the unbroken unity of an instinctive world-outlook of great masses of people the uniform Church-type is inwardly suitable for such periods alone" (pp. 1006–1008).

of the past.<sup>80</sup> The contemporary social problem must be answered by innovating a new approach that appropriates and reformulates the insights of the old.<sup>81</sup>

Bonhoeffer's Four Mandates  
(*arbeit, ehe, obrigkeit, kirche*)

Troeltsch's publication of his *magnum opus* was initially received with a lukewarm response, and it was not until later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* received the attention and influence it was due. Part of this is the fault of the theological giant Karl Barth, and the neo-orthodox movement he ushered in. Barth and his neo-orthodox peers revolted against the type of mainstream Protestant liberalism held by Ritschl-disciples like Troeltsch. Furthermore, Barth was especially critical of the infusion of Thomistic, historical-critical, and social-scientific methodologies into the discipline of theology. Barth wanted his theology to be real theology, and this necessitated a theological centralization away from philosophy and around the revelatory word that is Christ Jesus. Barth said "*Nein!*" to anything that had even a whiff of naturalism, and he sought to expel these influences from the theological

---

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 1012. Troeltsch writes, "Both these powerful types of social philosophy (Medieval Catholicism & ascetic Protestantism), however, in spite of their great and enduring achievements, have now spent their force.... If the present social situation is to be controlled by Christian principles, thoughts will be necessary which have not yet been thought, and which will correspond to this new situation as the older forms met the need of the social situation in earlier ages" (p. 1012).

<sup>81</sup> I believe Troeltsch's open-ended conclusion is still relevant, but needs updates to apply to 21<sup>st</sup> century postmodernity. The social approach to Troeltsch's modernist social questions seems to be already outdated in the rapidly revisionist and community-focused environment of post-modernism. The covenantal approach seems, per the conclusions of this research project, to be especially apt at addressing post-modernism's social problem, and does so by appropriating some of the best insights of both the "church" and "sect" approaches.

task. Two of the most controversial examples of this endeavor was his criticisms of Luther's orders of creation, and his natural law debate with Emil Brunner.<sup>82</sup>

Barth's controversies and criticisms provide the contextual significance of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) as the sixth example of traditional Protestant social theory. Bonhoeffer shared many of Barth's Christo-centric commitments, and he was a rising intellect in the neo-orthodox theological movement. The two contemporaries even shared the challenge of opposing Nazism's attempt to infiltrate and control the German church. However, unlike Barth, Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran who held to a modified version of Luther's orders of creation and two kingdoms. Bonhoeffer represents both the presence of the traditional Protestant social theory in neo-orthodoxy, as well as an example of how the theory was appropriated to mediate between Barth's criticisms and the traditional Protestant social theory.

For these reasons, it is tragic that unlike Troeltsch, Bonhoeffer was never able to finish his *magnum opus*. The social theory that drove Bonhoeffer to mediate between the insights of neo-orthodoxy and Luther's traditional social theory, ultimately led to Bonhoeffer being executed at the hands of the Nazism that Barth in part blamed Luther's social theory for enabling. Bonhoeffer intended to articulate this appraisal in his unfinished *Ethics*. In *Ethics*, Bonhoeffer sets a tone reminiscent of Barth, where he writes early in the work, "The knowledge of good and evil seems to be the aim of all ethical

---

<sup>82</sup> These criticisms all carried elevated sensitivities, given Nazi Germany's appropriation of Lutheranism to buffer and justify the Nazi social agenda. For an example of Barth's criticisms against Luther's orders of creation, see Karl Barth, *Eine Schweizer Stimme, 1938–1945* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1945). For an example of his famous natural law debate with Brunner, see his "Nein!" essay and Brunner's "Nature and Grace" in Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, *Natural Theology:*

reflection. The first task of Christian ethics is to invalidate this knowledge.”<sup>83</sup> For Bonhoeffer, a Christian ethic is essentially how man comes to understand and become “real.”<sup>84</sup> Thus, *Ethics* begins by affirming the Christocentricity of reality, and Bonhoeffer explains this Christocentricity where he writes, “Christ does not carve for himself a dominion in which he deposits his Church. Rather, all of creation is His, and there is no ethic but man and creation’s redemption in, for, and by Christ. The *ecce homo* of Christ is at the root of ethics and society.”<sup>85</sup> Jesus Christ provides the ultimate form of man, and the Church consists of those particular persons who are conforming to this ultimate form; Jesus Christ represents humanity as it was ever intended to be.

From this starting point of the Christocentricity of reality, Bonhoeffer argues that Christian ethics is ultimately Christocentric formation that opposes the decay and void of reality. According to Bonhoeffer, what is “real life” is found in the reconciled relationship of God to man, which restores the social relationships between men. God speaks to man a redemptive word in the Word (Christ), and this restores their communion with God, and effects the redemption of the communications between man and their communities. For Bonhoeffer, the Christian ethic is no more than formation of the real; no more than man living as he was intended to live, and this is accomplished solely through the gracious work of God through Christ. As Bonhoeffer writes,

---

*Comprising “Nature and Grace” by Emil Brunner and the Reply “No!” By Karl Barth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002).

<sup>83</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 21.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 145. Bonhoeffer writes, “The natural is the form of life preserved by God for the fallen world and directed towards justification, redemption and renewal through Christ. The natural is, therefore, determined according to its form and according to its contents.”

Christ does not dispense with human reality for the sake of an idea which demands realization at the expense of the real. What Christ does is precisely to give effect to reality. He affirms reality. And indeed He is Himself the real man and consequently the foundation of all human reality.<sup>86</sup>

All that can exist in opposition to the “real” is the “unreal,” the Augustinian *esse* and *non esse*. The opposite of this Christocentric reality is decay, which moves away from the real by introducing the void of chaos. Therefore, Bonhoeffer defines ethics as Christocentric formation, which “means the bold endeavor to speak about the way in which the form of Jesus Christ takes form in our world, in a manner which is neither abstract nor casuistic, neither programmatic nor purely speculative.”<sup>87</sup>

Bonhoeffer’s next question asks how does this Christocentric reality forms in man, and how does it combat void and social decay? His response comes in his notion of the relationship of the ultimate to the penultimate, and in God’s miraculous and restraining forces.<sup>88</sup> According to Bonhoeffer, the ultimate of human life is the Gospel of man’s salvation; the ultimate relationship is to be reconciled to God. Furthermore, Bonhoeffer proposes the penultimate, which he defines as “everything that precedes the ultimate, everything that precedes the justification of the sinner by grace alone, everything which is to be regarded as leading up to the last thing when the last thing has

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 72. Bonhoeffer writes, “*Ecce homo!* The figure of the Reconciler, of the God-man Jesus Christ, comes between God and the world and fills the centre of all history. In this figure the secret of the world is laid bare, and in this figure there is revealed the secret of God.”

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 89. According to Bonhoeffer, Christian ethics is ethics as formation. The Church is central to this conformation: “Ethics as formation is possible only upon the foundation of the form of Jesus Christ which is present in His Church. The Church is the place where Jesus Christ's taking form is proclaimed and accomplished. It is this proclamation and this event that Christian ethics is designed to serve.”

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 109. Bonhoeffer describes decay as the current condition of the West’s hostility to Christ and reality. He writes, “The west is becoming hostile towards Christ. This is the peculiar situation of our time, and it is genuine decay.”

been found.”<sup>89</sup> From this perspective of the ultimate—and not vice versa—there are certain penultimate relationships derived from this ultimate redemptive orientation. The pattern has biblical support in Jesus’ own ministry, which includes a pattern of combining physical healing—the penultimate, such as healing physical blindness or handicap, with spiritual healing—the ultimate, the opening of the eyes to spiritual salvation. Throughout the Gospels it becomes characteristic of Christ’s ministry to preach and act upon both together, with the core of pointing to Christ’s Gospel mission. The notions of penultimate and ultimate are also made possible by God’s actions to prevent reality from a total plunge into the void, which God accomplishes with the intervention of what Bonhoeffer calls the miraculous and the restraining acts.<sup>90</sup>

For Bonhoeffer, ethics as the Christocentric formation of reality is understood as the formation of penultimate to ultimate relationships that combat the sin-induced decay of reality through God’s miraculous and restraining acts. With this understanding in place, the reader can finally understand Bonhoeffer’s appropriation of the traditional Protestant social theory in his proposal for the actualization of the formation of the one Christocentric reality, by the miraculous and restraining forces, through the four mandates. First, Bonhoeffer adopts a re-articulation of Luther’s two kingdoms that refutes the charge of dualism that undermines the social theological enterprise. Bonhoeffer does this by revisiting his emphasis on the Christocentricity of reality to

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 133. Bonhoeffer continues, “For the sake of the ultimate the penultimate must be preserved. Any arbitrary destruction of the penultimate will do serious injury to the ultimate.” An example he gives would be giving bread to the poor, to alleviate the penultimate concerns of physical hunger in distracting from the ultimate of Gospel-salvation.

argue that the notion of two spheres or kingdoms are to be understood not as the spatial boundaries of secular vs. sacred, but as “the one sphere of the realization of Christ, in which the reality of God and the reality of the world are united.”<sup>91</sup> Second, this oneness is what Bonhoeffer adopts and interprets as Luther’s original intent by the doctrine of two kingdoms, which are descriptive categories to describe the place and relationship of the formation of reality to its ultimate Christ-centered form.<sup>92</sup> God has acted to prevent reality from totally descending into the void through His miraculous and restraining acts. Finally, these two acts take formation in man through Bonhoeffer’s notion of four mandates, which leads to his appropriation of the traditional Protestant social theory.

By mandate, Bonhoeffer means “the concrete divine commission which has its foundation in the revelation of Christ and which is evidenced by Scripture; it is the legitimation and warrant for the execution of a definite divine commandment, the conferment of divine authority on an earthly agent.”<sup>93</sup> According to Bonhoeffer, these

---

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. Bonhoeffer writes, “Two things alone have still the power to avert the final plunge into the void. One is the miracle of a new awakening of faith, and the other is that force which the Bible calls the ‘restrainer,’ *κατεχων* (II Thess. 2.7)” (p. 108).

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. Bonhoeffer writes, “There are not two realities, but only one reality, and that is the reality of God, which has become manifest in Christ in the reality of the world. Sharing in Christ we stand at once in both the reality of God and the reality of the world. The reality of Christ comprises the reality of the world within itself. The world has no reality of its own, independently of the revelation of God in Christ. One is denying the revelation of God in Jesus Christ if one tries to be ‘Christian’ without seeing and recognizing the world in Christ. There are, therefore, not two spheres, but only the one sphere of the realization of Christ, in which the reality of God and the reality of the world are united” (p. 195). Furthermore, “So, too, today, when Christianity is employed as a polemical weapon against the secular, this must be done in the name of a better secularity and above all it must not lead back to a static predominance of the spiritual sphere as an end in itself. It is only in this sense, as a polemical unity, that Luther’s doctrine of the two kingdoms is to be accepted, and it was no doubt in this sense that it was originally intended” (p. 197).

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 282. Special note should be made on why Bonhoeffer preferred the terms “mandate,” instead of the traditional “orders.” His reasoning is evident where he states, “We speak of divine mandates rather than of divine orders because the word ‘mandate’ refers more clearly to a divinely imposed task rather than to a determination of being” (p. 204).

mandates, which evidence God's redemptive and restraining acts, take four forms relative to Christ, when he writes,

The world is relative to Christ, no matter whether it knows it or not. This relativity of the world to Christ assumes concrete form in certain mandates of God in the world. The Scriptures name four such mandates: labour [*arbeit*], marriage [*ehe*], government [*obrigkeit*] and the Church [*kirche*].<sup>94</sup>

The rest of Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* appears to have intended to explore the formation of the Christ-reality within these four mandates, however Bonhoeffer's death brought a premature end to what would have been a masterful development of the traditional Protestant social theory.<sup>95</sup> Regardless, Bonhoeffer charts a helpful course towards

---

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 204. Later, Bonhoeffer treats these four forms with greater detail, writing, "In its unity which embraces the whole of human life and in its undivided claim to man and to the world through the reconciling love of God, God's commandment, revealed in Jesus Christ, confronts us concretely in four different forms which it alone unites: the Church [*kirche*], marriage [*ehe*] and the family, culture [*arbeit*] and government [*obrigkeit*]" (p. 281).

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 205–209. It appears the later chapters of the uncompleted *Ethics* were intended to develop how these mandates operated in social ethics, however they were left prematurely finished. However, 205–209 contains a hint as to where Bonhoeffer would have gone, and it is worth examining his treatments of each individual mandate.

On the mandate of Labor, Bonhoeffer writes, "The mandate of labor confronts us, according to the Bible, already with the first man. Adam is 'to dress and to keep' the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:15). Even after the Fall labour remains a mandate of divine discipline and grace (Gen 3:17–19). In the sweat of his brow man wrests his nourishment from the soil, and the range of human labour soon embraces everything from agriculture and economy to science and art (Gen 4:17). The labour which is instituted in Paradise is a participation by man in the action of creation. By its means there is created a world of things and values which is designed for the glorification and service of Jesus Christ" (p. 206).

On the mandate of Marriage, Bonhoeffer writes, "Like the mandate of labour, the mandate of marriage also confronts us after the creation already with the first man. In marriage man and woman become one in the sight of God, just as Christ becomes one with His Church. 'This is a great mystery' (Eph 5:23). God bestows on this union the blessing of fruitfulness, the generation of new life. Man enters into the will of the Creator in sharing in the process of creation. Through marriage men are brought into being for the glorification and the service of Jesus Christ and for the increase of His kingdom. This means that marriage is not only a matter of producing children, but also of educating them to be obedient to Jesus Christ. The parents are for the child the representatives of God, for they have brought him into the world and are his educators by God's commission. Just as is the case with the new values created by labor, so, too, in marriage it is for the service of Jesus Christ that new men are created" (pp. 206–207).

On the mandate of Government, Bonhoeffer writes, "The divine mandate of government presupposes the divine mandates of labour and marriage. In the world which it rules, the governing authority finds already present the two mandates through which God the Creator exercises his creative power, and is therefore dependent on these. Government cannot itself produce life or values. It is not creative. It preserves what has been created, maintaining it in the order which is assigned to it through the

navigating neo-orthodoxy's criticisms and insights, appropriating the traditional Protestant social theory in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and orienting the traditional theory to address the social concerns of late modernity and postmodernism.

### Henry's Supernaturally-Willed Orders (Family, Church, and State)

Carl F. H. Henry's influence on 20<sup>th</sup> century American Evangelical social thought is akin to Billy Graham's influence on American Evangelical's evangelism. Both individuals contained a passion and an urgency that helped define the evangelical *ethos*.<sup>96</sup> As editor of the largest Christian publication of its day, and as the founder of a number of evangelicalism's flagship intellectual institutions, Henry exemplified an actualized

---

task which is imposed by God. It protects it by making law to consist in the acknowledgement of the divine mandates and by securing respect for this law by the force of the sword.... By the establishment of law and by the force of the sword the governing authority preserves the world for the reality of Jesus Christ. Everyone owes obedience to this governing authority—for Christ's sake" (p. 208).

Finally, on the mandate of the Church, Bonhoeffer writes, "The divine mandate of the Church is different from these three. This mandate is the task of enabling the reality of Jesus Christ to become real in the preaching and organization of the Church and the Christian life. It is concerned, therefore, with the eternal salvation of the whole world. The mandate of the Church extends to all mankind, and it does so within all the other mandates. Man is at the same time a labourer, a partner in marriage, and the subject of a government, so that there is an overlapping of the three mandates in man and all three must be fulfilled simultaneously; and the mandate of the Church impinges on all these mandates, for now it is the Christian who is the labourer, partner in marriage, and subject of a government. No division into separate spheres or spaces is permissible here. The whole man stands before the whole earthly and eternal reality, the reality which God has prepared for him in Jesus Christ" (p. 208).

<sup>96</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 83. The evangelical *ethos* is captured in a quote from Henry's *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, where he emphasizes the primary solution behind the social question being spiritual; particularly, gospel-centered, writing, "The cries of suffering humanity today are many. No evangelicalism which ignores the totality of man's condition dares respond in the name of Christianity. Though the modern crisis is not basically political, economic or social—fundamentally it is religious—yet evangelicalism must be armed to declare the implications of its proposed religious solution for the politico-economic and sociological context for modern life" (p. 83). This dissertation, and most of evangelical theopolitical tradition, strongly agree with this sentiment.

urgency when it came to the importance of social theory for the survival of the Western world.<sup>97</sup> For Henry, the biblical social ethic is

the incisive and universal requisite for survival.... Since Christianity's first attack upon the pagan morality of the Western world, no generation has faced such decisive moral issues as today's. The crises in ethics will determine both the continuance of present-day civilization and the destiny of individuals within our culture.... Either we shall witness the dissolving of all our duties into mere conventions, or we shall mature afresh to the conviction that Hebrew-Christian ethical realities alone can lift the Western world from the mores of paganism.<sup>98</sup>

He wrote *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics* to address this urgency, and the work itself evidences the continued influence of traditional Protestant social theory among one of evangelicalism's founding fathers.

While the influence is clearest where he employs Philip Schaff's statement that "the family, the church, and the state are divine institutions demanding alike our obedience, in their proper sphere of jurisdiction," it is how Henry chooses to open his work that best evidence his influence by the theory.<sup>99</sup> Henry notes that the Church's primary duty is "to expound the revealed Gospel and the divine principles of social duty, and to constraint individual Christians to fulfill their evangelistic and civic responsibilities."<sup>100</sup> To this end, he critiques those who do so by focusing on the church

---

<sup>97</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979): 208. Henry typifies another element of evangelical social ethics that stands, besides its gospel-centricity, at the core of the ethic. An evangelical Christianity social ethic is "a given or revealed ethic. Its basis is transcendent, not an immanent possession of man as fallen in sin. It is a metaphysical and religious ethic. But it is also the ethic of the specially-revealed God. Indeed, it is a covenant-ethic. It is the ethic of the believing church whose task is the rescue of a morally crippled world."

<sup>98</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), book rear cover.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

and state to the ignorance of the family.<sup>101</sup> In Henry's opinion, the mandate in places like Deuteronomy 6's *Shema* charge the believer to put front and center their social commitments to the distinct familial institution. Such passages recall that "the home is the best environment for teaching respect for the law, as rooted ultimately in the divine order of things, and for creating a climate that lifts personal reverence for law above external compulsion."<sup>102</sup>

In addition to this emphasis on the distinct order of the family, Henry upholds early in the work the distinct spheres of the church and the state. He writes, in contrast to the spirit of titanic government, "it is imperative to stress what the New Testament insists upon, namely, that the Church has its own essential life. It is no mere adjunct of the State, nor do its authority and existence flow from the State."<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, "from the New Testament it is equally clear that the State also has its own essential life and an authority not derived from the Church."<sup>104</sup>

The traditional Protestant social theory is finally and especially evident in Henry's thinking when he contrasts the Christian theory against revolution. He defines the

---

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. Henry writes, "I cannot escape the conviction that, immense as the Christian stake in legislation and education and culture may be, the Church is grievously wrong to plunge into these concerns at the expense of neglecting its prior responsibilities toward the family and vocational calling" (p. 10).

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 11. It is also noteworthy that Henry emphasizes the potential fourth sphere of vocation as needing greater focus. As he writes, "The same problem concerns vocational calling. It would be impossible to estimate the spiritual blessings implicit in the universal consecration of work to the Lord. At the same time the failure of the Church in many instances to comprehend work as a spiritual service easily encourages its members to vocational delinquency and perhaps even to engagement in delinquent vocations.... For the Christian Church to think of social action mainly in terms of political influence while discounting or ignoring its influence upon children and the world of work is sheer folly."

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. The quote continues: "The New Testament does not, however, supply a definitive statement of how the separate entities of Church and State are to be ideally related. Because its authority comes from God, the State has an authority even over the believer (Romans 13); but for this very reason also, the believer will resist any State requirement that he disobey what God commands (Acts 5)."

revolution approach as social theories like communism that set out to radically change “social patterns, in their essential constitution, through violence and compulsion.”<sup>105</sup> His critique of the strategy of revolution makes clear his commitments to the traditional Protestant social theory, where he states,

The strategy of *revolution* not only proposes to rectify social evils, but it denies the existence of divinely given structures in history and society. It would destroy and displace *ultimate norms*, whether in respect to marriage, property, or the State. The obvious example in modern times is Communism. In place of the time-honored social forms validated by revealed religion, and still widely accepted as normative by society in general, Communism substitutes novel patterns of social life based on the totalitarian state, which takes control of family, of economic and political life, and of culture itself. Community theory assails the status quo along lines that are anti-Christ (that is, it opposed Christian patterns of marriage, economics, and limited government) and anti-God (since it opposed the whole idea of supernaturally willed orders of responsibility).<sup>106</sup>

In summary, Henry evidences the evangelical inclusion of the continued influence of traditional Protestant social theory by emphasizing the distinct spheres and authorities of family, church, and state, and how these stand in conflict with revolutionary social theories that set out to oppose “the whole idea of supernaturally willed orders of responsibility.”<sup>107</sup>

### **Political Theology and the Critical Social Question**

After surveying seven different examples of Protestant social theories, a general trend emerges that emphasized the development of a Protestant social theory around three or four divinely instituted social orders. While the various thinkers’ theories contained some notable differences, at the core of their social thought seems to be a framework that

---

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

evaluates social questions by examining the ecclesial, familial, and political institutions. O'Donovan acknowledges this approach as a well-established pattern, but it is one he disagrees with. After the earlier section supported the pattern as in fact being “traditional,” what remains in order to understand O'Donovan's criticisms is to understand the political theological frameworks that house his and the traditional Protestant's social theories. The next section will survey Luther and O'Donovan's political theologies as examples of how two political theologies give rise to their respective social theories, which then provides the necessary context for understanding the acquisition of O'Donovan's criticisms against the traditional theory.

Luther's Political Theology:  
On Stations, Kingdoms, and Orders

Martin Luther is widely known for being the embodiment of the Reformation. His fiery rhetoric and intellectual vigor combined to produce one of the defining moments in Western civilization. Although he is well known for this historical role, and his important contributions to soteriology, academics have often overlook his important political contributions. When scholars do happen to stumble upon his political comments, they tend to overemphasize his heated rhetoric in *Against the Murderous and Thieving Hordes of Peasants*, or exaggerate a perspective of his two kingdoms doctrine that is more a product of latter Lutherans than of Luther. The problem with overemphasizing either of these aspects in isolation of their surrounding historical or intellectual contexts is that their controversial results tend to distract from a fuller depiction of Luther's political

---

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

theology. Once these distractions are placed in the context of Luther's wider thought, Luther provides a robust and rich political theology that clearly aims to apply Scripture-discerned Reformation convictions to his political and social settings. It is also helpful that Luther's thought is as rich as his delivery, and for these reasons Luther is selected as a representative of examining his political theology in light of his traditional Protestant social ethic.

In this traditional social ethic, theologians usually organize society into three or four orders: Church, Family, State, and Economy. Luther is a member of this tradition who organizes society into the threefold orders of church (*ecclesia*), family (*oeconomia*), and state (*politia*). Before arriving to his social ethic, and thus O'Donovan's later critiques, it is helpful to organize Luther's thoughts into three conceptual categories as they relate to his political theology. These categories are replicated from O'Donovan's own methodology in *The Ways of Judgment*, which he organizes itself within a Trinitarian shape which argues that both ecclesiology and political theology are found within the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Given the Holy Spirit attests to the Father and the Son, O'Donovan organizes his political theology in the three parts of "judgment, representation, and communication."<sup>108</sup> In light of this organizing method, Luther's

---

<sup>108</sup> O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 239–240. On this Trinitarian organizational device, O'Donovan writes, "As ecclesiology belongs within the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, so does political theology; but since the Holy Spirit always attests the Father and the Son, so political theology, too, properly has a trinitarian shape. That is the reason for setting its content out, as we have done in the three parts of this work, as judgment, representation, and communication" (p. 239). Furthermore, "Under each of these considerations the world is seen from the church's horizon as vis-a-vis to the church. In the first place we speak of the God-given right of judgment within the world, and of the church's deference to that right, not usurping the privileged sphere of secular judgment. In the second place we speak of the God-given representative of mankind, and of the church's challenge to all other political representations. And in the

political theology shall also be ordered as it relates to the political act, the political authority, and life beyond this political act and authority.<sup>109</sup> Luther's political theology can thus be examined by the political act as it relates to his doctrine of stations, the political authority as it relates to his doctrine of the two kingdoms, and the life beyond both as it relates to his doctrine of the three orders/estates. Luther's political theology of stations, kingdoms, and orders helps flesh out his arrival to a type of traditional Protestant social ethic, which then contextually prepares the way for O'Donovan's own critiques and alternative proposals.

### ***The Political Act: On Stations and the Law of Love***

Luther was not a systematician like Calvin, or the dogmatician like Aquinas. His writings mainly came about as he acted out his *sola scriptura* convictions by attempting to faithfully understand biblical passages and apply them to contemporary problems.

Although he does not write a *Summa* or an *Institutes*, there is a system and vocabulary to Luther's genius. As such, Althaus attempts in *The Ethics of Martin Luther* to glean these writings into a collective whole that summarizes and expresses Luther's ethics, and Althaus' work proves helpful in an analysis of Luther's political theology.<sup>110</sup>

---

third place we speak of the eschatological summons to social communication, and of the church's modeling of communication as life beyond judgment" (p. 240).

<sup>109</sup> O'Donovan originally organizes *The Ways of Judgment* into three components: the political act, the political institution, and life beyond this political act and institution. To avoid confusion with the actual three institutions of traditional Protestant social theory, the dissertation has replaced "institution" with "authority." The notion of institutional authority seems to still honor the thought behind O'Donovan's division, which seems to focus on the existence of representative and acknowledged political authority behind the political act.

<sup>110</sup> Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982), was selected for comparison because of its condensed nature, yet heavily primary-sourced footnotes. In it, Althaus attempts to systematically organize Luther's ethical writings, and in addition to its growing

Central to understanding Luther as it relates to a survey of his political theology are three important assumptions: (1) Luther attempts to honestly struggle with and interpret the biblical text, (2) Luther attempts to derive Christian *ethos* and *ethics* on Scripture's emphasis of justification, and (3) Luther's resulting doctrine of stations is the product of these two attempts. For this reason, Althaus calls Luther's social ethics an ethic of "station" and "vocation," as these guiding assumptions produce his doctrine of the two kingdoms, and his doctrine of the three orders.<sup>111</sup> Luther's ethics can be summarized as right actions directed at one's neighbors, and directed with the right motive/faith/religious attitude. Importantly, and grounded upon the first two assumptions, this ethic is not done to merit salvation, but is done in light of salvation, and a newfound gratitude-enriched perspective.<sup>112</sup> Prior to examining Luther's position on the political act being grounded in stations, it is important to survey Luther's Scriptural interactions with a Christian *ethic* and *ethos* that inform the entirety of his political theology.

---

authority, the footnotes alone provide an excellent launching pad for exploring Luther topically. Other Lutheran perspectives worth mention include the American Lutheran Carl Braaten, and the Finnish Lutheran Veli-Matti Karkkainen. Other additional authoritative secondary works on Luther's theology include Roland Bainton's *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1950), and Walther Loewenich's *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, translated by Herbert J. A. Bouman (Minneapolis, MY: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976).

<sup>111</sup> Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, 41.

<sup>112</sup> In his *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518), Luther calls an ethic and soteriology of merit a "theology of glory," which is opposed to a justification by faith ethic and soteriology he calls a "theology of the cross." The latter promotes an attitude of ethics that sees the motive behind good works to be that of gratitude. All of this is summed in the law of love, which undergirds why the Christian engages in ethical behavior. Humans have an innate knowledge of this right behavior, which he calls the law of glory, but humanity's depravity rids him of the ability to properly practice it. Thus God even summarizes the law in places such as the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount, which in essence are all reflections of the same law of love. Sinful men pervert this law, and devise a theology of glory that sets to elevate man's practice of the law. This sinful motive is only dealt with by the work of Faith established by God's grace. From this act, this justification by faith, man may now act out the law of love towards his God and his neighbors, emphasizing the liberty accomplished in God's salvific work. In all this, we see the close attachment between Luther's political theology and his soteriology.

Christian *ethos* describes a Christian's personal existence in relationship with God, and Christian *ethics* describes his activity. Fundamental to this *ethos*, Althaus notes, is "the justification of the sinner through the grace that is shown in Jesus Christ and received through faith alone."<sup>113</sup> Luther presupposes that justification affects the Christian in two ways: negatively (it cannot gain God's approval or win salvation), and positively (it responds in gratitude, knowing that through God's grace He approves man's good faithful deeds).<sup>114</sup> Man cannot perform a truly good deed, for even if the act itself is proper, the motive is still sinful. An act can only be "good" if it is done rightly (*ethics*; obedience to God's command), and in a right religious attitude (*metaethics*; faith in God's justification of my act).<sup>115</sup> The teleological aim of man's acts is love of neighbor. This attitude returns to Luther's central emphasis of justification: Good acts are done from right faith.<sup>116</sup>

Furthermore, Luther asserts, on the basis of Romans 2:15, that man is born with a natural knowledge of what he ought and ought not to do. He calls this "natural law," and it is accessed through man's reason.<sup>117</sup> There is no distinction between divine and natural law, as both express the same will of God. However, sin has corrupted our knowledge of God and the Law, and the Mosaic Law is a reminder and summary of the natural law. This law forms the basis for drafting positive law, and as the pulpit aids in reminding

---

<sup>113</sup> Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, 3.

<sup>114</sup> On the negative affect of justification, Luther writes, "so that nobody thinks he is pleasing to God an account of what he does" (*WA* 6, 263; *LW* 44, 97). On the positive, Luther writes, "All the works of men are evil and sinful, but God considers the works of the righteous to be good" (*LW* 34, 304–305).

<sup>115</sup> Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, 6–7.

<sup>116</sup> *WA* 6, 234; *LW* 44, 60. Luther writes, "In all the commandments the first is the captain, and faith the chief work and life of all other works, without which, as has been said, such works cannot be good."

man of this essential law, the government aids in drafting and executing it. Luther notes that the natural law written on the heart of man is the same law as the first and second tables of the Decalogue. As God wrote the 10 commandments in stone, he Has written them prior on man’s hearts.<sup>118</sup> For Luther, the natural law is then nothing else but the commandment/law of love. Upon these soteriological-informed conclusions, an important guiding principle is thus established: the “law of love” governs and guides the stations, kingdoms, and orders of Luther’s political theology. It is this law of love that connects the individual within both kingdoms, his responsibilities across the orders, and the existence of peace within the world.<sup>119</sup>

Having framed Luther’s political theology in the light of his Scriptural commitments, and the resulting soteriologically informed emphasis of the “law of love,” the first major component of Luther’s political theology can be introduced. In regard to the political act, Luther grounds political actions within an individual’s respective station. For Luther, God calls individuals to apply his authoritative commandments within the unique situations generated by respective relationships. Society is organized according to these existing “stations,” which are defined as the placement where individuals stand in relation to one another.<sup>120</sup> Luther summarizes these stations as consisting of three

---

<sup>117</sup> *WA* 18, 80–81; *LW* 40, 97–98.

<sup>118</sup> *WA* 18, 80; *LW* 40, 97.

<sup>119</sup> As Althaus writes in *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, 33, “The content of the natural law is the Golden Rule, which also constitutes the law of love. This is similar to the law of reason, insofar as it alone makes it possible to preserve peace and order in the world.” Luther writes, “For nature teaches—as does love—that I should do as I would be done by (Lk 6:31) ... that love and natural law may always prevail” (*WA* 11, 279; *LW* 45, 128; *WA* 18, 80; *LW* 40, 97).

<sup>120</sup> *WA* 21, 343. On these social relations, Luther writes, “We ought not to run away from one another and each seek to live for himself; rather, we should stay with one another in all kinds of stations, just as God has joined us together, and each serve the other.”

“orders” or “estates”: church (*ecclesia*), family (*oeconomia*), and state (*politia*).<sup>121</sup>

Individuals can reside in various stations at once. Within their stations (pastor, parent, politician, etc.), individuals are called to perform the tasks immanent within the station. God appoints these stations as a naturally occurring reflection of the “law of love” that makes mankind’s continued existence possible. For Luther, the political act is thus tied to the act of someone acting within his or her respected station, with the authority inherent within that station, in the name of God-inspired and God-honoring love. In specific, the political acts are those actions executed within the political stations such as governor or soldier, and these actions are political in-as-far as they advance the law. According to Luther, a political act is thus properly authoritative when the action does not violate the Law, and when the actor’s act is a proper action of his respective station. What remains in need of expanding upon are what determines the limitations and boundaries of these political actions, and how the stations outside of the political act relate to it. To address the first concern, Luther develops his doctrine of two kingdoms, and to address the second he organizes stations under the orders of Church, Family, and State.<sup>122</sup>

### ***The Political Authority: On Two Kingdoms***

As mentioned earlier, Luther is primarily concerned with dealing honestly with the text of Scripture. From this attempt, Luther approaches upon a perceivable dialectic between law

---

<sup>121</sup> *LW* 54:446. Luther explains, “First, the Bible speaks and teaches about the works of God. About this there is no doubt. These works are divided into three hierarchies: the household [*oekonomiam*], the government [*politiam*], and the church [*ecclesiam*]. If a verse does not fit the church, we should let it stay the government or the household, whichever is best suited to.”

<sup>122</sup> The capitalization of the terms is intentional, given the direction O’Donovan will go in his criticisms of the Church, Family, State estates being able to explain churches, families, and states.

and gospel, between Old Testament and New. In specific, he reads in Matt 5:39 that man should turn his cheek, while in Exod 21:14, Luther also read of the death penalty. His difficulties are not limited to the Old and New Covenant, for in the New alone he also finds the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 taught near the executive “sword” power of Romans 13.<sup>123</sup> These difficulties lead Luther to arrive at his two kingdoms doctrine on the basis of two statements he saw within Scripture: (1) Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount and the Apostolic witness on the usage of force, vengeance, and love in Matthew 5; and (2) the prophetic and apostolic affirmation for the existence and obedience to the state in Romans 13 and 1 Pet 2:13–14, the institution of the sword in Gen 9:6 and Exod 2:14 & 22, John the Baptist’s treatment of soldiers in Luke 3:14, and numerous Old Testament descriptions regarding the divine usage and sanctioning of war.<sup>124</sup> Luther argues from these observations towards two governments, which he calls spiritual and worldly. He defines the spiritual government as the kingdom of God as brought by Christ into the internal lives of individuals, and the worldly government as the order among men brought about by man in the external lives of individuals.<sup>125</sup>

---

<sup>123</sup> Luther speaks to this apparent contrast in *WA* 10<sup>III</sup>, 251 and *WA* 11, 247–48, which detail the appearance of Matthew 5 abrogating the sword, while passages such as Peter’s confirmation of Cornelius’ military station in Acts 10 imply a different message.

<sup>124</sup> *WA* 11, 247–248; *LW* 45, 85–87; *WA* 11, 255; *LW* 45, 96; *WA* 27, 259; and *WA* 41, 638.

<sup>125</sup> *WA* 12, 331; *LW* 30, 76. On the distinctions of these kingdoms, Luther writes, “The secular rule has nothing at all to do with the office of Christ, but is an external matter, just as all other offices and estates are.” Luther goes through two phases on the usage of “kingdom” and “government”. (1) In the first phase, he approaches the terms from an Augustinian theology of history perspective: The two governments are differentiated by and consisting of Christians & non-Christians, law and gospel. Kingdom and government are also distinguished. The worldly kingdom is determined by sin, and secular government is instituted by God to combat sin. (2) In the second phase, he notes that worldly government extends beyond political government, including family and economy. Here he uses the terms worldly kingdom and government interchangeably to refer to the earthly attempt to preserve earthly peace. The difference between Worldly and Spiritual is thus external and internal.

The Christian lives in both kingdoms, and is obligated to the worldly kingdom through his external acts, and the spiritual kingdom through his internal conscience and faith.<sup>126</sup> The Sermon on the Mount reflects this internal emphasis in the spiritual government/kingdom. They reflect the calling of the disciples to freedom and love. According to Luther, they do not reflect laws for a select few (as in Roman Catholics and monasticism), or laws to structure the worldly kingdom (as with the Enthusiasts). The beatitudes reflect the loving and freeing attitudes of the disciples. This perspective does not diminish their severity, for Christians must always be ready to give all and suffer all upon God's initiation. Thus, a Christian may have different responsibilities as they relate to him privately as a person, and publicly as an 'officer' (politician, father, executioner, soldier, etc.). As a person, the Christian should thus suffer ("turn the other cheek," "give up one's cloak"). However, as a secular officer, he should also act in protecting the welfare and person of his neighbor.<sup>127</sup> Both are continuations of the law of love, within their perceptible domains.

---

<sup>126</sup> *WA* 39:2, 81. Luther writes, "A Christian as a Christian is under the First Table of the law, but outside the kingdom of heaven he is a citizen of this world. Therefore he has two citizenships: he is a subject of Christ through faith and a subject of the emperor through his body."

<sup>127</sup> *WA* 32, 393; *LW* 21, 113. Luther writes, "A Christian should not resist any evil; but within the limits of his office, a secular person should oppose every evil." In *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed*, Luther provides a further depiction of his two kingdoms theory, and how it relates to the responsibility of Christians. Luther examines the external and internal dimensions of individuals and this formulates his two kingdoms doctrine and parallels the roles of *ethos* and *ethics* in his doctrine of stations. In *Temporal Authority*, He structures the first part into six questions related to the topic of the Christian in relation to the state, while in the second partition he discusses the limitations of the state. There exist primarily two kingdoms, which he calls the heavenly and the worldly kingdoms. The Christian is not called to live exclusively in one against the other, but one in service to the other. How the Christian operates in the external world is a matter of what his respective station is, and what that station requires of him. In these two kingdoms is thus seen an internal versus external relationship, with internal matters left to the heart as sculpted by Christian faith (*ethos?*), and the other residing in the external physical world (*ethics?*). The former charts the limitations of the government, the later its extent. The Christian can live in both without living in contradiction because of the law of love's call to live for his neighbor. While this

In *The Sermon on the Mount*, Luther explores in more depth the internal aspects of this realm of Christian existence. He sets out to show how the commands in the Sermon of the Mount are not in contradiction with the responsibilities of one's station, or the roles that they acquire in positions of authority respective to these stations. For this reason, Luther argues that were one attacked, they should, by humble and selfless intent, be prepared to give themselves up to their attacker. However, at the same time, a Christian must consider his station in life. Love of neighbor is the golden rule here, and for a Christian father to allow someone to plunder and rape his family, is to reject his parental station, which in conclusion is unloving and in violation of the very law of love. Words such as meekness and poverty in the beatitudes point towards inward conditions and motives of the heart, and they do not call for the type of rigid literalism of the Anabaptists (although this internal condition fundamentally orients the external behavior; motive and act are symbiotic). Luther states the main thesis of *The Sermon on the Mount* where he writes, "I have often said that we must sharply distinguish between these two,

---

develops his two kingdoms theory in relation to the extent of the government, the second partition of the work develops its limitations. Here Luther provides what appears to be a healthy separation/limitation on both church and state, where he writes, "The temporal government has laws which extend no further than to life and property and external affairs on earth, for God cannot and will not permit anyone but himself to rule over the soul. Therefore, where the temporal authority presumes to prescribe laws for the soul, it encroaches upon God's government and only misleads souls and destroys them." Christians are not in need of the government, which rules by the sword, because they have Christ, who rules by the Spirit. However, the eschatological reality of our current condition is that Christ has not returned to claim the Sword in conjunction with the Spirit. Rather, we are left in this intermediary period where we live conjointly within the worldly and heavenly kingdoms. The Christian then does not need the sword, but lives under the state for the service of his neighbors whom need it. However, the reality that Luther acknowledges is that there are few Christians, and fewer are there Christians who actually act like Christ. What we then find with Luther is an upholding of two kingdoms, with laws still needed for the reality that they teach the wrongdoer against wrongs, that they punish the terrorist for his terrors, and they protect and reward the good for their goods.

the office and the person.”<sup>128</sup> This thesis is an attempt to analyze the Christian condition in an eschatologically-situated context, and it attempts to factor for the harmony between the Old and New Testaments that parallels the potential harmony of a Christian living in both the worldly and heavenly kingdom, both as a member of a station and as a person, and as both internally responsible in his *ethos* and externally responsible in his *ethics*. To act outside one’s station, or to act outside the authoritative domain of a respective kingdom, is to violate both the political act, and political authority. This is the root of his political theological genius. What is left to be added is a deeper analysis of his social ethic as it relates to life beyond the political act and authority, which he summarizes as actualized love in stations occurring through three primary orders: the Church, the Family, and the State.

***The Life Beyond the Political Act and Authority: On Three Orders***

Luther’s political theology has been presented as a theology of love-oriented stations. By this it is meant that in examining the political act, Luther appeals to a person’s station to determine whether political actions are available to them. Furthermore, these stations exist to propagate the law of love, and this propagation occurs in the internal and external acts of individuals. This internal and external emphasis, which Luther earlier treats as similar to the difference between a Christian’s *ethos* and his *ethics*, is the formula in which to mark the authoritative and thus institutional boundaries of a political act. Luther thus determines that political actors are individuals stationed within two kingdoms. These

---

<sup>128</sup> Luther, *The Sermon on the Mount*, in O’Donovan’s *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 595–602.

kingdoms are not necessarily the exact equivalents of Augustine's two cities, nor should they be misinterpreted as some earlier opposing dualism. Rather, each of Luther's kingdoms modifies the Augustinian idea to coincide with either the internal or external dimensions of an individual. God the Creator establishes the stations to preserve humanity, and the Christian operates in both kingdoms with the linking motive of executing the law of love. The kingdoms thus coincide with the external and internal aspects of individuals, with the earthly kingdom aimed at controlling the ethical external actions of individuals, and spiritual kingdom at controlling the *ethos* internal motives of individuals in relation to God that ultimately actualize as the external.

With these designations secured, and authoritative political actions and activities established, Luther can now advance his doctrine of the three orders. In "Nature and Institution: Luther's Doctrine of the Three Orders," Oswald Bayer does a fine job of examining Luther's social theory in light of the two kingdoms doctrine and Luther's polemical context.<sup>129</sup> Bayer defines Luther's doctrine of the three orders as "the way in which he [Luther] interprets theologically and ethically the biblical narratives about primordial times in their aspects of creation, sin, and social organization, and how he

---

<sup>129</sup> In Oswald Bayer, "Nature and Institution: Luther's Doctrine of the Three Orders," trans. Christine Helmer, *Lutheran Quarterly* 12:2 (Summer 1998), 126, Bayer outlines his work as follows: "In order to penetrate to the core of Luther's position, I shall give a short introduction to Luther's doctrine of the three orders (II), followed by an analysis of its place in his theology and its relationship to the doctrine of the two governances (III). The doctrine itself will then be examined on the basis of Luther's theological legacy, the Confession of 1528 (IV–X). In this latter part, the polemic necessarily bound up with the theory of the orders is presented (IV), followed by its criterion, love (V). Focal points in the history of Luther's ethics are investigated (VI), and the question of the relationship of love and order is taken up afresh (VII). The next section can then take as its theme the indissoluble bond between 'element and institution' (VIII). The correspondence between station or order and sacrament which thus comes to our attention, will then be considered in its problematic nature as well as in its justification (IX). In the final section the relationship between pagan-philosophical ethics and Christian ethics, the problem of 'natural' theology, in the context of theological ethics, is examined in detail (X)" (p. 126).

applies his interpretation to his contemporary situation.”<sup>130</sup> According to Luther, “these divine stations continue and remain throughout all kingdoms, as wide as the world and to the end of the world.”<sup>131</sup> In addition to the fixed nature of the orders across societies, Luther argues, “[T]he Bible speaks and teaches about the works of God. About this there is no doubt. These works are divided into three hierarchies: the household [*oeconomiam*], the government [*politiam*], and the church [*ecclesiam*]. If a verse does not fit the church, we should let it stay the government or the household, whichever is best suited to.”<sup>132</sup> Therefore, although men are called into a number of stations, these stations can be organized under three orders that provide a framework for continued human existence.

In addition to understanding these estates as a three-fold order created by God, Bayer also notes the importance of these orders’ origin. Chief among the lot is the religious order, which Bayer notes is man’s most basic and universal station. On the importance of this primal order, Bayer writes,

The humanity of a human being lies in the fact that he or she is so addressed and can, therefore, hear and speak in response, while also having to take responsibility and to be accountable. It is this divine address and the expectation of human response which underlies the primeval character of worship and cult, of religion and of the church, understood as an order of creation; this embraces all humanity and all religions. Every human being as a human being belongs—and this defines him or her as a human being—to the ecclesial order of creation, which is, it is true, corrupted by human ingratitude, that is, by sin.<sup>133</sup>

---

<sup>130</sup> Bayer, “Nature and Institution,” 127.

<sup>131</sup> *LW* 13, 369.

<sup>132</sup> *LW* 54:446, no. 5533. See also *LW* 1:103–04. Cf. *LW* 1:115 (for Genesis 2, 18) and *LW* 1:131 (for Gen 2, 21).

<sup>133</sup> Bayer, “Nature and Institution,” 128. On “religion and of the church, understood as an order of creation,” see also Karl Barth, *Ethics*, trans. Geoffrey W Bromiley (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1981), 517; and *LW* 2:197.

Luther seems to parallel the direction of the Decalogue, whose first four commandments focus on man's responsibility for the proper worship of God. The corruption of sin and ingratitude leads to the false worship behind the theology of glory, and thus Christ comes to rescue this disorientation. Within this basic order, Bayer writes,

is the order of creation of the household, or of economy. Luther here addresses the relationships between parents and children, between husband and wife, and between the human being and the soil, that is, labor: the human struggle with nature and the fight for subsistence, for daily bread.<sup>134</sup>

Following the pattern set by the Decalogue, it is no surprise that following the institution of religious worship in the first four commands, the fifth touches upon the institution of family. This notion of family is also much bigger than the modern understanding of the nuclear home, and in his understanding Luther includes the basic functions of education and economy that were, at the time, functions of the extended household.<sup>135</sup>

What remains is explaining the third order of State, which Luther did not consider to be an order from creation.<sup>136</sup> Rather, Luther considers the third order as a response to the fall, and the need to counter the harmful sinful tendencies of humans. Continuing the

---

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>135</sup> Luther combines both household and economy, given most of the economic exchanges were house related. This differs from later protestants such as Baxter who organizes his *Christian Directory* (1673) around "'Christian Ethicks' (on private duties), 'Christian Oeconomicks,' 'Christian Ecclesiasticks,' and 'Christian Politicks.'" This dissertation uses this three-fold framework, for several reasons: (1) Luther's insights on the household's incorporation of economy seem helpful; (2) the threefold division is represented in at least some capacity across the seven samples given in the earlier survey of traditional Protestant social theory section; (3) these three are well supported by scriptural and historical episodes and function well in the covenantal appraisal and response to O'Donovan's criticisms; (4) for the sake of the dissertation's space restrictions. A whole new chapter can be added on the institution of economy/industry/culture, and how covenant can be appraised in this institution, however for the reasons noted above the dissertation has excluded itself to the consideration of Luther's proposed three.

<sup>136</sup> Bayer, "Nature and Institution," 128. Bayer writes, "Luther did not recognize the third order—government or politics—as an order of creation, seeing it rather merely as an expedient made necessary only by the fall, although Luther was definitely aware that politics is grounded in economy, and thus has to

Decalogue pattern, this ordering becomes a continuation of the fifth commandment's emphasis on authority and ethical behavior towards one another, which gets developed in the remaining commandments. In addition to bringing about the need of the state to maintain law and order, Bayer summarizes Luther's thought, writing,

sin also corrupted the two unambiguous orders of creation, the basic order of the church, and the household or the economy. All their corruption notwithstanding, they are not destroyed; even when corrupted, they are embraced by God's promise and thus sanctified. We must penetrate this corruption to perceive in them, and to have faith in, the power of the creative and forgiving Word of God.<sup>137</sup>

The fracturing of the orders is a serious concern exacerbated by the eschatological parenthesis that finds the basic order of the church in a period between the fall and the eschaton.<sup>138</sup> Although the three orders are universal in their existence, Luther sees the eschatological positioning as a reason for the external/internal dimension of the two kingdoms. Bayer notes that this positioning is of extreme importance in understanding Luther's political theology, as the tendency among theologians is to elevate Luther's doctrine of two kingdoms above the doctrine of the three orders to the degree that the latter is interpreted by the former.<sup>139</sup> This prioritization tends to result in interpretations of

---

be considered from the outset as a consequence of the household order of creation, so that in a sense it belongs to it and to its governance."

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 128. Concerning the doctrine of the three orders in the Luther's view of creation, see also Oswald Bayer, *Schöpfung als Anrede: Zu einer Hermeneutik der Schöpfung*, 2d ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1990), 46–61.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 130. Bayer writes, "Hence, the basic order, the church, must be distinguished from the other two orders—which in themselves are not unconnected: the *oeconomia* is more fundamental than the *politici*. The basic order deals with the relationship with God, with belief and unbelief. Nevertheless, the status *ecclesiasticus* is not identical with the spiritual governance. For after the fall and before the *eschaton*, the Christian church is not the pure kingdom of God as the church invisible is; rather, visibility and invisibility permeate one another. In this world and age, the status *ecclesiasticus* is also a governmental order [pastors are paid, dismissed according to a disciplinary procedure, etc.]."

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 129. In the third section of his article, Bayer is focused on proving how Luther was more concerned with elevating the doctrine of the three order than the doctrine of the two kingdoms. Bayer

Luther's political theology that advances a dualistic—if not competing—view of the two kingdoms. Rather, and as Bayer proves by underscoring numerous passages where Luther elevates the three orders in his teaching, the doctrine of two kingdoms is better interpreted in the light of the doctrine of three orders.

Given this eschatological parenthesis, and the effect sin has had upon the orders, Luther's insight produces a view where the Christian operates in both kingdoms, and at times in multiple stations.<sup>140</sup> Salvation is sought only in Jesus Christ, yet the Christian accomplishes the law of love internally by the dimension of faithful discipleship (love of God), and externally by the dimension of faithful service to a station's table of duties. As to make sure that an interpreter does not err by supposing the two kingdoms stand in separation, Luther clarifies,

Above these three institutions and orders is the common order of Christian love, in which one serves not only the three orders, but also serves every needy person in general with all kinds of benevolent deeds, such as feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, forgiving enemies, praying for all human beings on earth, suffering all kinds of evil on earth, etc.<sup>141</sup>

---

points to the 1528 *Confession*, the *Smalcald Articles*, his catechisms and their notion of the *Table of Duties*, and his interpretation of the Fourth Commandment as evidence that the “the doctrine of the three orders is preferred both terminologically and in terms of content.” As he writes in p. 129, “All this shows that in Luther's own witness the doctrine of the three orders is of much greater significance than that of the two governances, which is absent from these summary and testamentary texts.”

<sup>140</sup> *LW* 31:369. Luther writes, “Of the same nature are the precepts which Paul gives in Romans 13:1–7, namely, that Christians should be subject to the governing authorities and be ready to do every good work, not that they shall in this way be justified ... but that, in the liberty of the Spirit, they shall by so doing serve others and the authorities themselves and obey their will freely and out of love. The works of all institutions, monasteries, and priests should be of this nature. Each should do the works of his profession and station, not that by them he may strive after righteousness, but that through them he may ... submit his will to that of others in the freedom of love.”

<sup>141</sup> *LW* 37:365.

The duty to love permeates both the external and internal dimensions of the two kingdoms, and is fulfilled by individuals who pursue what Luther calls the tables of duties.<sup>142</sup>

The duty of love and the table of duties brings Luther's political theology full circle back to the political act and its emphasis on stations, *ethos* and *ethics*, and the law of love. What holds all these together is the superiority of the law of love, which Bayer summarizes in his appendix by treating the notions of discipleship and the table of duties as follows:

The two terms do not address different substantial ethical fields, but refer to different dimensions of one and the same thing. "Discipleship" here means the intensity and radicalism with which the commandment to love is fulfilled. The "table of duties" directs our attention to forms of existence which fulfill basic needs and the applications of which are in a constant process of renewal; the material content of these concerns Christians and non-Christians alike.<sup>143</sup>

Whereas the *ethos/ethics* dimensions and the doctrine of stations clarified the origin of the political act, and whereas the internal/external dimensions of the doctrine of two kingdoms clarified the institutional extent and limitations for legitimate political action, Luther's doctrine of the three orders provides a fundamental social theory that grounds and organizes these activities in estates as they occur in a fallen social setting in parenthesis between the fall and the eschaton.

---

<sup>142</sup> Bayer, "Nature and Institution," 140. On these tables of duties, Bayer writes, "The brief passage quoted from the Confession is very remarkable inasmuch as it shows forth Luther's general orientation, according to which the 'wisdom-like' aspect of the table of duties is not excluded from the radical commandment to love, but rather represents its concrete expression, its embodiment."

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 149.

O'Donovan's Political Theology:  
On Judgment, Representation, and Communication

Luther represents a classical Protestant social theory that focuses the political act within the exercise of the law of love, which he then locates within a biblical notion of stations and orders.<sup>144</sup> The result is an understanding of political authority as framed within the internal/external dimensions of the political stations, and as this political order interacts with the threefold orders existing between the Fall and eschaton eschatological reality. However, Luther's political solution, and in specific his social theory, do not satisfy all Protestant theologians. Specifically, Oliver O'Donovan sees several faults within this approach. Overall, O'Donovan is concerned with what can be termed the problem of particularity and universality. Within Luther's approach to political theology and social theory O'Donovan finds seeds of what could become a political and theological separation. In particular, O'Donovan is concerned that Luther and other Protestant social theorists who adopt the traditional three or four-fold orders lose the ability to address the particular existence of states, churches, and families.<sup>145</sup> Although Luther's notions of eschatological parenthesis between Fall and eschaton are helpful, as well as the universal categories of the social orders, O'Donovan sees a fundamental problem rooted in the ability of such a social theory to explain the particular existences of these social institutions. In addition to an alleged vacancy of theological and exegetical evidences to

---

<sup>144</sup> As Luther himself confesses in *LW* 37:365, "[T]hese three [religious] institutions or orders are found in God's Word and commandment; and whatever is contained in God's Word must be holy, for God's Word is holy, and sanctifies everything connected with it and involved in it."

<sup>145</sup> The upper and lower-case usage of Church, Family, State, and churches, families, and states hints at the ability to explain the universal and particular existence of the orders (both the Family in a universal term, and the Goenaga family in a particular reference).

support such a social theory, O'Donovan is alarmed by a deeper weakness, which can be identified from two points of view:

From the point of view of the church, this seems to undermine ecclesiology by ignoring both the historical identity of the church as the church of Jesus and the eschatological identity of the church as the heavenly city.... From the point of view of the social spheres, government, household, etc., they are not envisaged concretely, as this government or this household. They are therefore liable to assume improper universal overtones.<sup>146</sup>

In other words, what happens when the particular social sphere is argued to be the universal, as arguably occurred during the dominion attempts of Nazi German theology?<sup>147</sup> Furthermore, how can such traditional social theories deal with both the concreteness of particular societies, and the universality of existing social orders? O'Donovan's answer is found "by identifying them in terms of the place in which they are situated. Place is the social communication of space."<sup>148</sup>

Prior to arriving to a deeper analysis of O'Donovan's criticism and proposed solution of place as "the social communication of space," O'Donovan's overall political theology needs to be surveyed. Adopting the triune formula used with Luther, O'Donovan's political theology can be organized across the political act, the political authority, and life beyond this political act and authority. As examined, O'Donovan's political theology centers on the importance of judgment to the political act. O'Donovan clarifies his central thesis where he writes, "The authority of secular government resides

---

<sup>146</sup> O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 254–255.

<sup>147</sup> This reality is ironically evident in the life of Paul Althaus. He is faulted for initially supporting the rise of the Nazi power in Germany. Although he would later critique Nazism's practices, his voice was already weakened by the eroded freedoms of speech. Some scholars have pointed this out as a very real danger of the Lutheran political approach, with Barth and his *Barmen Declaration* being an obvious criticism.

<sup>148</sup> O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 255.

in the practice of judgment. That is the thesis that the argument of this book will sustain, and it summarizes a characteristic effect in shaping the Western political tradition.”<sup>149</sup>

From this act O’Donovan moves towards its legitimate representation, discussing authoritative political actions as occurring within representative institutions that combine a trifecta of power, right, and tradition. Whence political acts find their origin in judgment, and occur in representative political institutions supported by power, right, and tradition, political authority is present. From this, O’Donovan transitions into life beyond political judgment, which enables him to critique the traditional Protestant social theory and instead advance a focus on the communication amongst the institutions that formulate and sustain society. Prior to concluding with his proposed solution of space and place, a survey of his notions of act and instituted authority necessitate advancement.

### ***The Political Act: On Judgment***

According to O’Donovan, the thesis of his work is to develop the claim that the authority of secular government rests upon the act of judgment. Although a more Scripture-intensive exegesis of the concept is at the core of *The Desire of the Nations*, O’Donovan does open up *The Ways of Judgment* with a focus on how this act of judgment is evident in Scripture. He notes that it “has deep roots in ancient Israel’s political experience, where, at an early point in history, the ‘judge’ (*shophet*) was apparently the only standing officer of the Twelve Tribes.”<sup>150</sup> Even when Israel had a king, O’Donovan explains that

under the monarchy the king was conceived as a judge, separating the wicked from the righteous, as appears in the little Psalm 101, a royal oath that ends with

---

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

the alarming promise, “Morning by morning I will destroy all the wicked in the land,”—that is to say, the king will hold judicial assizes daily.<sup>151</sup>

O’Donovan also notes the prevalent theme of judgment as it relates to the political office in Isaiah 16:5, which speaks of the restoration of the throne as “one who judges and seeks justice,” and in Isaiah 42:1 & 4 it speaks of the Servant as a king who will “bring judgment to the nations ... in his law the islands will put their hope.”<sup>152</sup> O’Donovan also turns to the New Testament to make the argument that the authority of government resides essentially in the act of judgment, noting that Paul describes “the function of civil authority as to reward the just and punish the evil (Rom 13:4).”<sup>153</sup>

Interestingly, both Luther and O’Donovan attempt to develop their political theologies from interactions with Scripture. Both are concerned with developing ideas from the Romans 13 passage. For O’Donovan, this meant noting that political authority resides in the judicial act detailed in the government’s servantly responsibilities. For Luther, his concern was more on reconciling the mandate of the sword with the turning of the cheek in the Sermon on the Mount. This passage led Luther to argue that the authority of government essentially resided in the functions of one’s stations. According to O’Donovan, it was an emphasis on the act of judgment, and according to Luther, it was an emphasis on the acting in one’s station. Both also provide limitations to the political act, with Luther defining the limits in terms of the internal and external dimensions that lead to his two kingdoms, and O’Donovan defining the limits in terms of what he calls

---

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. This is also interesting when comparing where Luther begins his political theology. He too develops a political theology from an engagement with Romans 13. For Luther, his concern was

securing the “higher” and “lower goods” via judgment.<sup>154</sup> A final introductory parallel between Luther and O’Donovan is that both position the authority of government within the eschatologically-oriented parenthesis between Fall and Eschaton. For Luther, this means that the two kingdoms are not one until the coming of Christ, while for O’Donovan this means that the lower goods of judgment have a “passing usefulness,” which he takes to mean that “the rulers of the nations still have, pending the final revelation of Christ’s sovereignty: they maintain a distinction within their societies between the just and the unjust.”<sup>155</sup>

With this matrix of lower and higher goods, and the passing usefulness of judgment within its eschatological position, O’Donovan concludes that authoritative political action chiefly resides within “the discipline of enacting right against wrong.”<sup>156</sup> By its very nature, “judgment is an act of moral discrimination that pronounces upon a preceding act or existing state of affairs to establish a new public context.”<sup>157</sup> In the political setting, O’Donovan writes that official judgment focuses on serving the public good and acting on behalf of the public.<sup>158</sup> In order to have a political act of moral discrimination, it must pronounce upon preceding acts in an established public context,

---

reconciling the mandate of the sword, with the beatitudes, and from this he develops the doctrines of stations and kingdoms that places the authority of government as essentially residing in one’s station.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 4. By this O’Donovan means that the higher goods of man’s social destiny are secured in the proclamation of Christ, leaving the lower goods of judgment to the earthly princes.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 4–5.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 7. O’Donovan further clarifies this definition of judgment with four additional comments: “(1) Judgment is an act of *moral discrimination*, dividing right from wrong ... (2) Judgment *pronounces upon a preceding act*, or on an existing state of affairs brought about by action ... (3) Judgment *establishes a public context*, a practical context, that is, in which succeeding acts, private or public, may be performed ... (4) The object of judgment is the *new public context*, and in this way judgment is distinct from all actions that have as their object a private or restrictive good” (p. 7).

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 11.

and it must do this as a legitimate representative of the community being acted upon.<sup>159</sup> The resulting judgment thus establishes a new public context, which the people operate in.

Another way O'Donovan summarizes the role and limitations of political judgment is his understanding of political judgment through the historical lens of the reactive principle. O'Donovan defines the reactive principle as the understanding that political judgment "is a response to a wrong as injury to the public good."<sup>160</sup> This parallels the earliest understanding of Christians on the origins of civil government, which located it *post lapsum* as a function to discipline and restrain sin.<sup>161</sup> In addition to the reactive principle, Christians such as Aquinas proposed an Aristotelian architectonic principle that argued political government was more akin to a conductor's ordering of a consort, or an architect conceiving the entirety of a building.<sup>162</sup> O'Donovan notes that

---

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. O'Donovan writes, "To put our finger on this narrowly political role, we must single out its representative function: a political act with political authority occurs where not only the interests of the community are in play, but the agency of the community as well" (p. 11).

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>161</sup> Samples of government as *post lapsum* occur with Irenaeus, Chrysostom, and Augustine. According to Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* as supplied in *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 17, Irenaeus states, "For since man, by departing from God, reached such a pitch of bestiality as even to look upon his kinsman as his enemy, and engaged without fear in every kind of disordered conduct, murder, and avarice, God imposed upon mankind the fear of man, as they did not acknowledge the fear of God; in other that, being subjected to the authority of men, and under the custody of their laws, they might attain to some degree of justice, and exercise mutual forbearance through the dread of the sword suspended full in their view." According to Chrysostom in *Homily on 1 Corinthians* as quoted in *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 59, Chrysostom wrote, "there was only one kind of government, that of the man over the woman. But when our race had run adrift into every kind of disorder, [God] instituted other kinds, those of masters, rulers, etc." According to Augustine in *City of God*, as quoted in *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 60 and 157, Augustine states, "the rational creature made in God's image was given dominion over irrational creatures, no more: not man over man, but man over beast."

<sup>162</sup> Fenelon, *Les Aventures de Telemaque 17*, Oeuvres II, ed. J. Le Brun (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 294. Fenelon illustrates the conductor understanding of government, where he writes, "Someone who sings a given part in a consort may sing very well, but is only a singer; only the conductor of the whole consort who commands all the parts at once is the master of music. Someone who carves the columns and raises a

these two views later converge upon a consensus which argued “that while powers of association, organization, and management are among the creaturely possibilities of human existence, the crystallization of these into political functions of command and restraint presupposes a threat to social relations.”<sup>163</sup> O’Donovan sides with the reactive principle, arguing that “wrong, and nothing else, is the necessary condition, but also the sufficient condition, for government intervention.”<sup>164</sup> O’Donovan does not mind speaking of a prospective judgment that is “at once reactive to wrong and proactive to avert the threat of harm,” but essentially O’Donovan argues that the limits of the act of political judgment is restrained to the incident of threat.<sup>165</sup>

### ***The Political Authority: On Representation***

Judgment is the act of making a moral discrimination on a preceding act that establishes a new public context, and political judgment is a reactive act that restrains and punishes wrongs committed against the public good. Although these aid in understanding O’Donovan’s emphasis on the political act, what remains is understanding O’Donovan’s notion of common good, and the legitimate authority in which this political act occurs. In other words, the remaining question is what makes an actor authoritative? Since Machiavelli, modern political theory has had the tendency to emphasize power as the

---

wall of building is a mason; only the one who conceives the whole building and has all the proportions in his head is the architect” (p. 294).

<sup>163</sup> O’Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 60.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 60–62.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 62, 66. O’Donovan writes, “Where there is no threat, there is no reason for government action. Not everything that ought to be done by someone ought to be done by governments. The doctrine that a government ought to have a policy for absolutely everything is one of the aspects of totalitarianism” (p. 66).

hallmark of legitimate authority.<sup>166</sup> O'Donovan parts from that position, arguing instead that power “is simply the capacity to accomplish something, by whatever means, and in this innocuous sense authority is a species of power. But in a narrower use, ‘power’ is the power to compel, which is not what authority is, though political authority does depend on power as a precondition.”<sup>167</sup> Rather, power is simply the necessary means of defending the common good, which includes within it the aspects of right and tradition. As members of society, O'Donovan writes that something is “owed to the neighbor before anything is owed to the ruler. This is the duty to preserve the public truth of social engagements by exercising candor in the public realm, a candor which necessarily includes appraisal of the conduct of political authority.”<sup>168</sup> From these mutual duties are established rights—such as freedom of speech—that are beyond being conferred or refused by fellow citizens and their formulated constitutions. In addition to the common good consisting of the protection of these rights, the common good also consists of the flourishing of a respective tradition.<sup>169</sup> O'Donovan defines this tradition as “‘what is established’; and ‘what is established’ is not the past, but the present as determined by the

---

<sup>166</sup> It is no surprise that Leo Strauss' *History of Political Philosophy*, 314, points out Machiavelli's position in his *Discourses* on believing all religions to be of human origin. As Machiavelli says in *The Prince*, “[I]t is necessary for a prince who wishes to maintain himself, to learn to be able not to be good, or use goodness and abstain from using it according to the commands of circumstances.” Machiavelli echoes this thinking in *Letter to Piero Soderini*, Niccolò Machiavelli, “Piero Soderini,” in *The Living Thoughts of Machiavelli*, ed. Carlo Sforza, Doris E. Troutman, and Arthur Livingston (New York; Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1940), 114, where Machiavelli states, “In judging policies we should consider the results that have been achieved through them rather than the means by which they have been executed.” This formulates the core of modern political theory from Hobbes onward; the focus was on power and producing results, not the moral/religious legitimacy of the method and/or outcome of the *polis* as a whole.

<sup>167</sup> O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 130.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

past.”<sup>170</sup> Both right and tradition formulate the key aspects of the common good, and represent the essence of political authority.<sup>171</sup> Therefore, O’Donovan concludes, “Political authority arises where power, the execution of right, and the perpetuation of tradition are assured together in one coordinated agency.”<sup>172</sup>

Having defined the three elements that formulate political authority as it relates to upholding the common good, O’Donovan next identifies those individuals being represented and defended. He first engages with several modern solutions for identifying the represented. First among these is the idea of a “nation,” which he defines as “tied to the historical phenomenon of the ‘nation-state’ of early-modern times.”<sup>173</sup> However, this understanding of a nation is problematic, given it is “unsuitable for use either of the ancient *polis* or of an ancient empire, and it is hardly appropriate either to culturally heterogeneous peoples formed by immigration, e.g., the U.S.A. and Canada, or to peoples formed of parts of larger quasi-national groups, e.g., Austria and Bangladesh.”<sup>174</sup> A second popular modern solution is to define the represented as belonging to a common territory,<sup>175</sup> however a territory does not make the group being represented, but rather helps identify “the largest practical unit within which communications can be sustained is

---

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. As O’Donovan writes, “Authority belongs to those who, embodying the identity of the community, enact right on its behalf. With these two components, the idea of political authority is given. Yet for the idea to become actual a third component must be present, power” (p. 140).

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 150–151. Regarding the notion of territory, O’Donovan writes, “In framing the possibilities of a common action, one feature has come to assume special significance: a defined territory. The more complex the content of the tradition, the more varied culturally and racially it has grown, the more depends on this formal mode of demarcation.”

the one that can gather the appropriate resources for defending them.”<sup>176</sup> O’Donovan’s point in his analysis of concepts such as nation-states and territories is that they do not “make” a people, but “find” them; in other words, states exist to defend the people, not the state.<sup>177</sup> This focus returns to the represented, which he defines as people in

a complex of social constituents: of local societies, determined by the common inhabitation of a place; of institutions, such as universities, banks, and industries; of communities of specialist function, such as laborers, artists, teachers, financiers; of families; and of communities of enthusiasm such as sports clubs and musical organizations.<sup>178</sup>

What keeps this complex assortment of individuals together is that they share a social tradition encompassing common languages, religions, beliefs, mythologies, literature, administrations, laws, and economies.<sup>179</sup> The social communication amongst individuals that formulate a people group is a natural product of God’s creation, and according to O’Donovan not a byproduct of political construction. Therefore, O’Donovan concludes that political acts of judgment occur with authority when they are enabled/empowered to protect the rights and prosper the tradition of the common good of the people they legitimately represent.<sup>180</sup> Political authority is more-so discovered than created.

### ***The Life Beyond the Political Act and Authority: On Communication***

Thus far, O’Donovan has centered his political theology on the act of political judgment.

The political act occurs with authority when it is exercised in a recognized institution

---

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 180. O’Donovan writes, “The substantial proposal to which this critique [of democracy] leads is this: representation is not a preliminary to government, but the substance of government. Securing the relation between government and people is the aim of all political activity.”

with legitimate authority. It derives its legitimacy first from the empowered defense of the common good in securing rights and prospering a tradition. As for those whose common good is being secured, O'Donovan identifies them as a people whose social communications occur within "the largest practical unit within which communications can be sustained" and which "can gather the appropriate resources for defending them."<sup>181</sup> With this political act and authority identified, the notion of a society and a people provide a transition to O'Donovan's critiques against Protestant social theory, and thus his own alternative proposal.

Prior to engaging with the social communicative dimensions outside of the political institution, O'Donovan notes the importance of our contemporary eschatological positioning. As evident in Luther's own exegetical dialectical wrestling between Romans 13 and Matthew 5, O'Donovan notes that his emphasis on the act of judgment comes into direct contact with the counter-political charge made in Matt 7:1 to "Judge not, that you will not be judged!"<sup>182</sup> O'Donovan sees the transition between the political and counter-political as a defining closure of the act of judgment, and this is marked by the command towards obedience.<sup>183</sup> Political theology occurs as the Church operates in a parenthesis that reflects pre-political society, and post-political divine judgment.<sup>184</sup> Political theology

---

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 233. O'Donovan writes, "It is the decisive test of a political theology, whether and how clearly it can articulate this counter-political moment in the New Testament proclamation of the cross, with its moral implication: 'Judge not, that you be not judged!' (Matt 7:1)."

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 238. O'Donovan writes, "A society that refrains from judgment does so because it has the judgment of God to defer to.... Such an earthly society is 'unpolitical' in a helpful sense, because its politics of expectancy has gone to the heart of the political and emerged into life beyond judgment. Through the lens of this post-political society, political theology can view as in a mirror the pre-political society of God's creation, and can understand political judgment as a moment in parentheses between the

thus occurs as “an intellectual enquiry located on the horizon of the theology of the church.... It is on this missionary horizon that political theology arises.”<sup>185</sup> The church becomes a model for all society of what post-political post-judgment human society and communication look like.<sup>186</sup> In essence, the church reveals the final form of human society. From this political judgment and ‘judge not!’ dynamic, O’Donovan treats the interaction of these elements within parenthetical society.

Central to the interactions that occur within this parenthetical period is social communication.<sup>187</sup> O’Donovan defines this act of social communication as “to hold some thing as common, to make it a common possession, to treat it as ‘ours,’ rather than ‘yours’ or ‘mine.’”<sup>188</sup> This act of common communication is grounded in God’s own exercise of communicating himself through creation, which He shares universally with humanity. In addition to describing the theocentric origins of communication, O’Donovan points to the market as the primary institution of society. Whereas Luther points to religion as the primary institution that gives birth to the others, O’Donovan instead argues in favor of an understanding of market that develops the idea of the act of social communication across the ruling principle of exchange.<sup>189</sup> O’Donovan rejects the

---

two, an interim service that is a ‘definite something,’ with its defined beginning and its defined end. In political theology—for the first time, we may say, in the light of the proclamation of the kingdom of God—the vis-a-vis of the political act and the social life comes clearly into view.”

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>187</sup> On the subject of communication, Althusius writes in *Politica methodice digesta* (1614), 1.7, trans. F. S. Carney (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fnd, 1995), 19, “things, services, and common rights (*iura*), by which the numerous and various needs of each and every symbiote are supplied, the self-sufficiency and mutuality of life and human society are achieved, and social life is established and conserved.”

<sup>188</sup> O’Donovan, *Ways of Judgment*, 242.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 255. O’Donovan writes, “The primary institution of society, through which it maintains the differentiation of spheres, is the market and its ruling principle, exchange. The market is driven by

position of Aristotle and others that consumption formulates the origins of societies, instead arguing that the market is driven by a cultural growth that sees individuals sharing a cultural space where they can socially communicate in neighborhoods.<sup>190</sup> Even the household itself was modeled off this sphere of communication, and both shared in an existing locality where sharing occurred.<sup>191</sup>

O'Donovan comes to the conclusion that the place where our social communications occur is the origin of identifying the spheres of social communication.<sup>192</sup>

He dismisses the idea that place is to be construed as the product of material spaces, instead arguing that place is a function of how individuals communicate in localities.

Place, O'Donovan argues,

is an abstract concept, but precisely in its abstractness lies its importance. It stands for a totality of diverse communications that cannot be defined by any material description. It is posited in the reflective awareness of our participation in many communications that somehow, despite their diversity, cohere. Our place is not the space we presently occupy, where our bodies happen at this moment to displace the air; it is a function of our social communications, extending as far as they extend.<sup>193</sup>

From this understanding, the larger collective identity of social communication occurs within a layered concept of localities within a “people,” which he defines as “the largest

---

cultural growth, not, as Aristotle thought, by the need to consume. The fundamental social reality that underlies it is not exchange, but the sharing of a common space to move around in, a neighborhood.”

<sup>190</sup> In addition to parting with figures like Aristotle and Locke, O'Donovan also parts with several traditional theologians, who saw consumption as the origins of civil society. Chrysostom saw the market as foundational to the city, arguing in his *Homily on 1 Corinthians*, as quoted in O'Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius*: “If someone that wanted a physician or a carpenter or any other craftsman had to set off on a long foreign journey, the whole of society would have come to nothing. Here, then, is why God founded cities, and brought a multitude together in one place.”

<sup>191</sup> O'Donovan, *Ways of Judgment*, 255.

<sup>192</sup> Luther also talks in *WA 40<sup>III</sup>*, 299, about place, which has some resonance with O'Donovan. Luther argues that place is occurs within one's station, and the obedience to God's commands within said station: “God's commandment take on specific form for us in terms of our station and vocation. Our station is the place—although not the only place—where we are to obey God.”

collective agency that we can practically conceive, embracing all the smaller local communities with their various specialist communities.”<sup>194</sup> Returning to his treatment of the political act and authority, the largest collective agency is tied to the identity of the legitimate acting political authority whose acts of judgment seeks to protect the people’s tradition and common good by punishing wrong and preserving rights.<sup>195</sup> The largest collective agency of multiple local and specialist communities thus finds its apex at O’Donovan’s initial starting point, which is at the political authority whose legitimate boundaries coalesce with the protection of a people group consisting of a combination of tradition and rights.

O’Donovan’s theory of place parts with traditional Protestant social theory in rejecting the emphasis of the three or fourfold visible and relational orders, in favor of the concept of placed social communication. Although the concept of place is more abstract, O’Donovan claims that it enables him to explain the particularity of a specific familial or ecclesial or political home/church/government whose social communications occur within a household, which then enables O’Donovan to explain the wider identity of these combined/layered localities as formulating the people whose identity is thus the subject of the political authority’s protection. In other words, he can explain both the particularity of the Goenaga family and the country of the United States, not by appeals to concepts of federalism or nation-states, but through the abstract concept of social communicative places collectively followed to their largest organizing boundary, which is met by a

---

<sup>193</sup> O’Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 256.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

political authority whose responsibility it is to oversee the acts of judgment which keep the people's rights and tradition intact.

The point of this chapter thus far has ultimately been two-fold. First, the chapter sought to affirm the validity of O'Donovan's claim towards the existence of what could be called "traditional" Protestant social theory. The dissertation supported O'Donovan's claim through presenting seven examples of the traditional Protestant social theory across a diverse selection of influential theologies and theologians. The survey revealed a common trend to utilize a three-fold framework of family, church, and state to theologically addressing social questions. Second, the chapter sought to give additional context to traditional Protestant social theory, and an alternative approach, by presenting how two Protestant thinkers apply political theologies to arrive at their respective social theories. With both of these supplements in hand, the dissertation may now proceed towards a deeper evaluation of O'Donovan's criticism, and then the later chapters' corresponding response through an appraisal of covenant within the three-fold framework of traditional Protestant social theory.

### **Survey of O'Donovan's Criticisms and the Problem of Particularity and Universality**

In the third section of *The Ways of Judgment*, O'Donovan writes, "To describe the different spheres of communication, then, and their interdependence on one another, is the first task of an account of society."<sup>196</sup> More importantly,

---

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 154. O'Donovan writes, "The largest practical unit within which communications can be sustained is the one that can gather the appropriate resources for defending them."

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 253.

[T]here is a second task to be performed alongside the first. This is to give an account of the social whole that keeps the spheres of communication together—and especially an account of what makes them concrete, particular and plural, in contrast to the universal fellowship of the human race. Why, after all, is there more than one society? It is one of the oldest questions of political reflection, as the answer given to it in Genesis 11:1–9 may suggest. And since there is more than one, how can we believe in the unity of the human race? It is at this point that ecclesiology becomes critically important to social theory; for the church differs from all societies that we know otherwise in representing the kingdom of heaven, the universal humankind subject to God’s rule.<sup>197</sup>

O’Donovan proceeds in the work to criticize a pattern of social theory in Protestant theology that identifies Church, State, and Family/Household as basic spheres of social communication.<sup>198</sup> In particular, O’Donovan raises two criticisms against the traditional Protestant position, claiming that the traditional social theory

appears to be based on nothing stronger than intuition, with no exegetical or doctrinal argument to support it; but this is true of many great insights, and is not fatal. In this case there is a deeper weakness, which is that it ranges the church among a number of elementary social forms.<sup>199</sup>

O’Donovan’s second criticism against the traditional Protestant social theory is further clarified by addressing it from the viewpoint of the church and the viewpoint of the social spheres. Basic to O’Donovan’s criticism is that from the view of the church, ecclesiology is undermined by “ignoring both the historical identity of the church as the church of Jesus and the eschatological identity of the church as the heavenly city.”<sup>200</sup> The result of this assimilation is that “the church ceases to be the universal community, the ‘catholic church,’ and becomes instead merely the ‘particular church’ that rises and falls with the

---

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, 253–254.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

social unit that embraces it.”<sup>201</sup> From the view of the social spheres, “government, household, etc., they are not envisaged concretely, as this government or this household.”<sup>202</sup> Whereas the danger for the church is robbing it of its universal identity, the danger for the social spheres is that “they are therefore liable to assume improper universal overtones.”<sup>203</sup>

Given the importance that a proper social theory has in explaining both the universal and particular aspects of the Church and the “other” it addresses in mission (the “social spheres”), O’Donovan proposes an important critical question: “How are we to understand the concreteness of particular societies?”<sup>204</sup> In response, O’Donovan proposed an alternative solution that consisted of “identifying them in terms of the place in which they are situated. Place is the social communication of space.”<sup>205</sup> While O’Donovan’s contribution of the “place,” “communication,” and “space” is a creative answer to the problem of the particular and the universal within ecclesiology and social theory, perhaps he is too quick to cast aside the traditional Protestant framework.<sup>206</sup> Perhaps the answer to

---

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 254–255.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid. The quote continues addressing the very real danger of this view in light of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its wars: “‘The nation has induced men and women to commit crimes that would never have been perpetrated in the name of ‘this’ nation, i.e., one nation among others before the horizon of a catholic humanity’” (p. 255).

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 250. Important to understanding O’Donovan’s alternative proposal is his concept of “communication.” O’Donovan writes, “In its earliest sense ‘communication’ was a broad enough term to encompass every kind of good that might be held in common by two or more people” (p. 250). O’Donovan adopts Althusius’ concept of communication from Johannes Althusius, *Politica*, ed. Frederick Smith Carney and Daniel Judah Elazar (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1995), 19, where Althusius defines communication as “things, services, and common rights (*iura*), by which the numerous and various needs of each and every symbiote are supplied, the self-sufficiency and mutuality of life and human society are achieved, and social life is established and conserved” (p. 19). From the modern understand of society’s usage of “communication” to describe the exchange of information, O’Donovan makes a helpful insight.

O'Donovan's critical question is found within an ecclesiology-inspired appraisal of the traditional theory. In particular, O'Donovan notes,

The idea of divine judgment presupposes a context of covenant relations, in which "I shall be your God and you shall be my people" (Lev 26:12; Jer 7:23). YHWH's covenant with Israel constitutes the political relation in which he rules, and so judges; judgment is part of that covenant activity to which he has sovereignly bound himself.<sup>207</sup>

Unfortunately, the idea of covenant is under-utilized throughout O'Donovan's work.

Although the occasional mentioning of covenant is used to support some major components of his political theology—such as grounding judgment itself in the above quote—it is quite unfortunate that O'Donovan does not develop the idea in any depth.

When O'Donovan's peers raised the criticism of the absence of the idea of covenant in his work, O'Donovan responded, "I plead guilty, on the other hand, to saying too little about 'covenant'."<sup>208</sup> As Puritans and Baptists have learned, covenant is a significant and beautiful idea to help explain both the particularity and universality of the ecclesial

---

"To communicate anything, material or spiritual, is to give it a meaning. The paradigm object of communication, transmitted in common between two or more people, is the word. Words underlie every form of human communication. The sharing of food may constitute a shared meal, a sign of fellowship; as a sign of fellowship, the meal may be an affirmation of common understanding or purpose; as an affirmation of purpose, it may be a pledge of loyalty, and so on. Which meanings are appropriate to any given sharing of food will be indicated by the words that connect and comment on the material features of the performance. To communicate goods, then, is to invest them with layers of social significance. They are enhanced as they are communicated" (O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 250). O'Donovan's comments are especially interesting in light of the contributions covenant can make to synthesizing the traditional Protestant social theory, and O'Donovan's proposal. In a covenant, words create literal concrete particulars. Through the covenantal exchanging of the words of the vows, what was formerly two becomes a particular one. Leonard Goenaga and Katrina Martinez become the Goenagas. The idea of covenant seems to absorb well O'Donovan's emphasis on the importance of words for establishing communications, yet with a biblical idea that generates its communities across covenants we find in categories matching the traditional Protestant social theory's framework.

<sup>207</sup> O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 11.

<sup>208</sup> See, Craig F. Bartholomew, Jonathan Chaplin, and J. Gordon McConville's criticisms in *A Royal Priesthood?: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically: A Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew (Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster Press; Zondervan, 2002), 81, 106, and 272–273. Also see O'Donovan's self-criticism and response on p. 89.

institution. Perhaps the theopolitical idea of covenant has something to say in response to O'Donovan's criticisms, and perhaps even an answer to the problem of particularity and universality.

### CHAPTER 3 AN APPRAISAL OF COVENANT AS AN ECCLESIAL IDEA

One of the best ways to understand the value of appraising covenant as an ecclesial idea is to examine its utilization in the context of an individual who attends a church they dislike. When I resided in Miami Florida, I attended a church that became disordered by conflict and drama. The tensions had grown so high, that at one point the Portuguese-speaking members—who made up one third of the church’s membership—decided to leave *en masse*. The reasons for their angst and exodus are unfortunately rather common. It included disorder caused by intrapersonal leadership disputes, character conflicts, and problems related to the church’s constitution and ecclesial polity. During this trying period, the church began to experience additional fallout. Friends of the Portuguese members began to attend other churches, and they took their finances and families with them. Furthermore, gossip became widespread, and the overall Sunday experience was quite uncomfortable. My wife and I got to the point where we truly desired to begin attending another church. However, something bothered us about acting on that aspiration. The church’s conflict was primarily relational. There was no presence of heresy or heterodoxy at the pulpit. The problem seemed primarily rooted in persons’ personas. Furthermore, we recalled entering into a covenant with the church to be part of their fellowship. As recent newlyweds, the notion of a covenantal union where participants were bound “through the good times and the bad” was still fresh on our

mind. To simply get up and leave because of “bad times” seemed to be a violation of our covenant with the local assembly. Thus, we decided to remain within the fellowship, which did not get any easier.

After a couple of years, we moved to North Carolina and were attending seminary. We had transferred our good-standing church membership from our Miami church, to a church called Glory of God Christian Fellowship, which was made up primarily of Southern Baptist Filipinos. Overall, it was a vibrant and ironic display. The Southern Baptist church consisted predominantly of Filipinos, was located in a downtown building in a capital city in the American South, and now had a Cuban American pastor and his Puerto Rican wife. Unfortunately, the phantom of personal conflict visited this church as well. Like the Miami church before, the Filipino church suffered from disorder caused by intrapersonal issues and a nebulous constitution and polity. When the senior pastor and his wife left—who were themselves Filipino—they left behind them a noticeable vacuum. Having served as the supreme justice and parliamentarian of my former university’s student government, and with a crisis-induced fascination with ecclesiology, I shepherded and led the church to mutually develop and approve a written church covenant, constitution, and bylaws, to which the membership collectively vowed to uphold.<sup>1</sup> However, the church was still left with the senior pastor’s vacancy, which they decided to fill by forming a pastoral search team. The process ensued for nearly a year, and a candidate was finally chosen by the committee and presented to the church in a series of guest sermons. The man was an average white Southern Baptist pastor. Again,

during his visit no heresy or heterodoxy was preached at the pulpit. When the time came later for the congregation to vote, one third voted against calling the man to be their shepherd. The needed majority fell one vote short, and this shocked the oneness of the congregation. A series of long and dramatic church member meetings ensued. Upon exploring the reasons why members voted the way that they did, the congregation came to find out that a number of Filipinos simply did not like the idea of having a white senior pastor. A Filipino church, with a Cuban American already serving as a pastor, in the downtown city of a Southern state, voted against a shepherd because of his skin color. The xenophobic irony is not lost here. After multiple fights and meetings, the church ultimately convinced some of the dissenters to change their vote, and the man was called to serve as the church's senior pastor. However, at this point the similarities with the Miami church end. The one-third of the church that initially disagreed with having a white pastor did not leave *en masse*. This did not mean the church skipped the "bad times." Through a series of very painful and awkward church family fights, and very long church member meetings, God healed the fractures of our fellowship. The dissenting members even went as far as to publically repent of their racism and plead forgiveness from their brethren. At the church's heart was a conscious commitment to faithfully uphold their mutually-pledged covenantal vows. Covenant was seminal towards preventing an exodus, establishing order, and healing their significant social wounds. The results served to strengthen the church's fellowship, all to the glory of God.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 6, "Praxis: Ecclesial Covenant & Constitution" for the document we ended up drafting.

In the American West, an attitude of commercialization and individualistic atomism plagues the notion of church membership. Far too many people go to a church to be served, rather than to serve. Far too many cities have churches with “First” and “Second” in their name, and are the product of church schisms. The same attitude is even evident in American marriages, of which half end in divorce. Across these institutional episodes, there seems to be a common attitude that the relationships are perceived to be predominantly contractual. When members believe that their needs are not being fulfilled, they terminate their perceived contractual obligations, and move on to another church or marriage. They reflect the experience of the Miami church. However, covenants are distinctly social and relational ideas. By their very nature, they pose stark differences with the contractual approach and its individualism. Covenants are morally-bound relationships where participants vow to uphold the terms of the covenant “through the good times and the bad.” Covenants sustain marriages, but also sustain churches like Glory of God Christian Fellowship.

Through these subjective experiences, I experienced firsthand the difference covenant can make as an ecclesial idea. Furthermore, the contractual approach in marriages and churches seems to warrant O’Donovan’s suspicions and criticisms. This invites the question on what else can a more formal appraisal of covenant as an ecclesial idea reveal towards a response to O’Donovan’s criticisms of traditional Protestant social theory, and towards addressing the social questions of particularity and universality. This chapter sets out to appraise covenant as an ecclesial idea across Scripture and history, and examine the significant contributions it makes towards the dissertation’s thesis. However,

prior to such an appraisal, a guide is needed to introduce the topic of ecclesial origination, and its surrounding questions. Such a guide is found in O'Donovan and his works, to which the chapter now turns.

### **An Introduction to Ecclesial Origination**

The core of O'Donovan's theological program consists of three major works:

*Resurrection and Moral Order*, *The Desire of the Nations*, and *The Ways of Judgment*.<sup>2</sup>

O'Donovan's program begins first with *Resurrection and Moral Order*, which sets out to build an evangelically-grounded and eschatologically-oriented Christian ethic.<sup>3</sup>

According to O'Donovan, Christian ethics finds its objective reference point in its concern with God's creation of an objective order of things, and finds its evangelical characteristics in Christ's role enabling man "for the first time to assume his proper place within it, the place of dominion which God assigned to Adam."<sup>4</sup> Divine authority is rooted in the historical redemptive event of Christ, and with this event, the vindicated authority of creation. Therefore, according to O'Donovan, the foundation of Christian ethics is in the incarnation. As O'Donovan writes, "Since the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, transcendent divine authority has presented itself as worldly moral

---

<sup>2</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986). Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Oliver O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005). While these three works formulate the core of his thinking, works such as Oliver O'Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius, A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), are noteworthy important supplements that provide the type of historical political theological source books that undergirds much of his work.

<sup>3</sup> O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 11, writes, "the foundations of Christian ethics must be evangelical foundations; or, to put it more simply, Christian ethics must arise from the gospel of Jesus Christ."

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

authority.”<sup>5</sup> After establishing this moral framework, O’Donovan proceeds to discuss types of authority in the Christ-revealed order of creation, and he notes that “political authority” occurs “when one whose possession of *might* is in accord with the *established order* of a society takes responsibility for the *rightings of wrongs* within that society.”<sup>6</sup> The understanding of the act of justice as “public right action” depicts at an early stage what later becomes the core of O’Donovan’s political theology.<sup>7</sup>

*Resurrection and Moral Order* lays the foundation for O’Donovan’s understanding of a Christian ethic and introduces types of authorities within a post-incarnation order. *The Desire of the Nations* then develops these ideas by providing the theological groundwork for a political theology. O’Donovan approaches the topic with a focus on an exegetical, historical, and theological framework, arguing that a positive reconstruction of political theology occurs when readers look back to the rich history between the Patristics and Reformers on political theological discourse. In the introduction of *The Ways of Judgment*, he summarizes *The Desire of the Nations*, saying,

I outlined what I called a “political theology,” the purpose of which was to show how the political concepts wrapped up in Jewish and Christian speech about God’s redemption of the world still had political force, generating expectations for political life that found one type of expression, though not the only possible

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 134. As O’Donovan writes, “Since the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, transcendent divine authority has presented itself as worldly moral authority.”

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 128. In his address on political authority, O’Donovan proposes his type of authority as an alternative to two traditional views: (1) A view that emphasizes the “immediacy of the natural authorities,” and (2) a view that emphasizes “the critical reflectiveness of moral authority” (p. 127). The former view pertains to the school in political thought that emphasizes power as the grounds of political authority. The latter view pertains to the school that emphasizes natural-law as an assimilation of political to moral authority (p. 128). O’Donovan finds neither satisfactory, and instead argues that his notion of “public right action” establishes a moral principle requiring deference to political authority in the threefold existence and dependence of tradition, might, and right.

<sup>7</sup> O’Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 142, notes, “Political theology arises where power, the execution of right, and the perpetuation of tradition are assured together in one coordinated agency.”

one, in the political ideals of “Christendom,” the European civilization that bridged the gap from late antiquity to early modernity, from which our modern political ideals have sprung.<sup>8</sup>

Luke Bretherton recaps the implications of O’Donovan’s work, and constructs the following thesis in his introductory article to a series in the journal *Political Theology* that celebrated O’Donovan’s work, writing,

whether one accepts his particular account or not, some account of Christian political liberalism (as distinct from, say, the rationalist political liberalism of Rawls and Habermas) is properly the best account of political theology that can help the Church both seek the welfare of our contemporary Babylon (that is, the imperative to be loving neighbours wherever we find ourselves), while at the same time remaining faithful citizens of the city of God.<sup>9</sup>

Bretherton sees O’Donovan as continuing Barth’s unfinished attempt in *Church Dogmatics* IV/4 to approach politics “solely from the point of view of the Church’s mission,” and believes O’Donovan can be read as “picking up this baton and developing a fully-fledged political theology that takes mission as its starting point.”<sup>10</sup> Bretherton believes this approach helps explain why O’Donovan is concerned with a recovery of political theological history, because it aids the church to “faithfully address the contemporary context fully armed with the wisdom of millennia of experience and reflection.”<sup>11</sup> It is the faithful address of being “at the disposal of the Holy Spirit in making Christ’s victory known” that O’Donovan understands to be the mission of the

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., ix.

<sup>9</sup> Luke Bretherton, “Introduction: Oliver O’Donovan’s Political Theology and the Liberal Imperative,” *Political Theology* Jul2008 Vol. 9 Issue 3 (2008), 266–267.

<sup>10</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, tr. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburg: T. & T. Clark, 1956). Also see Bretherton, “Introduction: Oliver O’Donovan’s Political Theology and The Liberal Imperative,” 267.

<sup>11</sup> Bretherton, “Introduction: Oliver O’Donovan’s Political Theology and The Liberal Imperative,” 267.

church.<sup>12</sup> This recovery and mission is why *The Desire of the Nations* concludes with a discussion of what O'Donovan calls "Christian Liberalism," which is what O'Donovan sees as being the rightful possessor of millennium's worth of close engagements between church and state.<sup>13</sup>

O'Donovan's attempt at recovering political theology's history, and hope to continue Barth's missional political approach, must be interpreted within a broader project to restate an Augustinian attitude towards Church-State relations. O'Donovan also sees this approach as contrasting with Liberationist, Thomist, Anabaptist, and Liberal Protestant perspectives. Bretherton notes that in common with some of these perspectives, O'Donovan's project shares an ecclesial starting point which sees "the Church as having its own specific political life and contribution to the broader body politic, one that should not be policed or determined by some external discourse or public reason."<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Chaplin's summary of *The Desire of the Nations'* basic thesis helpfully brings O'Donovan's evangelical, historical, ecclesial, and missional elements together, writing,

What God has done in Jesus Christ is focused in the life and mission of the Church, which is called to bear witness to the triumph of Christ before the world and its rulers, and to summon them to obedience to him.... [I]t is fundamental to the grand sweep of his theological vision that it is the victory of Christ which creates the church, and that ecclesiology is prior to political theology (or, rather, is

---

<sup>12</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 214.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 228–229. On the importance of this "Christian Liberalism" to the Western political heritage, O'Donovan writes, "The liberal tradition... has right of possession. There is no other model available to us of a political order derived from millennium of close engagement between state and church. It ought, therefore, to have the first word in any discussion of what Christians can approve, even if it ought not to have the last word.... We cannot simply go behind it; it has the status of a church tradition, and demands to be treated with respect."

<sup>14</sup> Bretherton, "Introduction: Oliver O'Donovan's Political Theology and The Liberal Imperative," 269.

an integral part of it). In this respect, O'Donovan lines up with narrative theologians like Hauerwas in asserting that the foundation of the church's witness to the world must be the existence of a faithful witnessing community. Where he departs from them is in his denial that the mere existence of such a community is the church's political witness to the world.<sup>15</sup>

In *Resurrection and Moral Order*, O'Donovan provides the foundation for evangelical ethics and an introduction to political authority. In *The Desire of the Nations*, he develops the notion of authority from primarily theological and ecclesial perspectives.<sup>16</sup> These two works prepare the way for *The Ways of Judgment*, where O'Donovan develops a more political perspective that in the end returns to the ecclesial emphasis. Whereas *The Desire of the Nations* stresses the more theological elements of a political theology, *The Ways of Judgment* stresses the more political theoretical components.<sup>17</sup> It examines these political components in three parts: (1) the main political act as rooted in the act of judgment; (2) the proper usage of that political act in representative institutions; and (3) life beyond that act in the church and its missional audience.<sup>18</sup> Nigel Biggar considers the significance of

---

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Chaplin, "Political Eschatology and Responsible Government: Oliver O'Donovan's 'Christian Liberalism'," in *A Royal Priesthood? The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically: A Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan*, eds. Craig Bartholomew et al. (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), 269.

<sup>16</sup> *The Desire of the Nations* greatly focuses on a rigorous exegetical framework that eludes the limitations of this dissertation. In all, O'Donovan manages to reference an impressive 56 out of the 66 books of the Bible during his formulation of a political theology.

<sup>17</sup> Nigel Biggar, "On Defining Political Authority as an Act of Judgment: A Discussion of Oliver O'Donovan's Ways of Judgment (Part I)," *Political Theology* Jul2008 Vol. 9 Issue 3 (2008), 274. Of the shared and different apologetic approaches between *The Desire of the Nations* and *The Ways of Judgment*, Neil Biggar writes, "In *The Desire of the Nations* Scripture was interpreted so as to yield an orthodox theological narrative, and thereby a political theology. Here in *The Ways of Judgment* this political theology is brought to bear on contemporary political ideas and institutions, and its power to illuminate, whether in criticism or in support, is displayed."

<sup>18</sup> O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, x. O'Donovan outlines *The Ways of Judgment*, writing, "In other ways the two books have a certain parallelism, both beginning with an examination of the political act, the act of judgment, and only then proceeding to the institutions of judgment in the political community. The second section of this work explores the shape of these institutions, and the third section takes up, as a theme for which the groundwork was laid in the first book, the formal opposition between political institutions and the church."

O'Donovan ordering *The Ways of Judgment* starting with the political act and then proceeding with the representative element. Biggar explains,

What it means, in part, is the assertion of a conception of political life that is born of moral realism rather than social contractarianism. According to the contractarian conception, institutions are the primary political phenomena, issuing from a peace treaty between originally warring parties.... According to O'Donovan, however, the primary political phenomenon is the moral ordering of "political" space by an act of judgment—a judgment that is subject to the claims of public goods given in and with the fact of original human sociality and therefore common to everyone. The key to the significance of "judgment" here is that it refers to an act that is responsible to the universal moral reality that is given in and with the created world.<sup>19</sup>

The emphasis on the political act of judgment is a major theme discovered early in O'Donovan's work.<sup>20</sup> Biggar connects O'Donovan's emphasis on judgment with his criticisms against social contractarianism, and these criticisms are found throughout O'Donovan's earlier work, in his structural ordering of *The Ways of Judgment*, and in his decision to close his project with a section on ecclesiology.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Biggar, "On Defining Political Authority as an Act of Judgment," 278.

<sup>20</sup> O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 128. O'Donovan's emphasis on the political act of judgment is evident in his notion of political authority as might, tradition, and right. He writes, "The distinctive form of authority which we call 'political' is, then, at its simplest, a concurrence of the natural authorities of might and tradition with that other 'relatively natural' authority, the authority of injured right" (p. 128). He summarizes the significance of this emphasis as it pertains to political authority, writing, "They are exercised together when the first two are put at the disposal of the third; that is, when one whose possession of might is in accord with the established order of a society takes responsibility for the rightings of wrongs within that society" (p. 128).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 129–130. O'Donovan provides an early critique against contractarianism where he writes, "The myth [social contractarianism] was clumsy because in representing the community's will to have government as a self-conscious device, it confused morality with planning, and represented the whole sphere of political existence, even communal existence, as the invention of man's will." As the dissertation's current chapter evidenced in its opening illustrations, O'Donovan's criticisms have some merit. In *The Desire of the Nations* O'Donovan links this critique to individualism and Israelite polity, writing, "The various ideas associated with 'individualism' in Western thought—the individual contracting into society from a state of nature, the primacy of the self-interested will etc.—are all quite inappropriate to Israel's self-understanding" (p. 73). O'Donovan actually goes as far as to claim that social contractarianism is one of the reasons for the development of an indifferent, indeterminate movement for 'free choice' that led to modernity's departure away from Christian political theology. While blaming heterodox Arminian thinkers of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, O'Donovan writes about the alleged "myth" of the

O'Donovan clarifies his central thesis in *The Ways of Judgment*, where he states, “the authority of secular government resides in the practice of judgment. That is the thesis that the argument of this book will sustain, and it a characteristic effect in shaping the Western political tradition.”<sup>22</sup> O'Donovan's basic argument in the first part of *The Ways of Judgment* is to continue *Resurrection and Moral Order's* idea of justice as “public right action.” He develops this idea by first showing judgment to be a central biblical theme in the lives of the Israelites, the Judges, David, and Moses, as well as Romans 13's description of “the function of civil authority as to reward the just and punish the evil.”<sup>23</sup> O'Donovan then proceeds to focus particularly on the act of judgment, which he defines as “an act of moral discrimination that pronounces upon a preceding act or existing state of affairs to establish a new public context.”<sup>24</sup> What makes this act of judgment politically authoritative is a judge's attainment of a representative function, which he describes occurring “where not only the interests of the community are in play,

---

social contract, stating, “They lie also in the myth of the social contract, the tradition of political reflection which achieved ascendancy in the two centuries before Kant: society derives from an original free compact of individuals, who have traded in their absolute freedoms for a system of mutual protection and government. So obviously is this myth unhistorical that it is easy to underestimate its hold on the modern mind” (p. 275). In addition to the structure of *The Ways of Judgment*, O'Donovan also directly criticizes the constitutionalism and social contractarianism, writing, “Any political failure is traceable to a failure to grasp the fact of popular unity prior to political constitution, the constitutionalist approach failed to see that this popular unity was a moral unity, comprised by a common good rather than by a political structure” (p. 156). I am suspicious that O'Donovan's criticisms against contractarianism are one of the reasons for the lacking presence of covenant in his political theology. To be clear, O'Donovan's criticisms against contractarianism are not completely off-base (although he is incorrect to assume the social contract is merely a historical event). However, covenant seems to appropriate the voluntarist components of a contractual approach, without sacrificing the necessary moral unity O'Donovan argued for. As Daniel Elazar will later show, covenantalism is distinct from contractarianism, and may have played a large part in influencing the rise of contractarianism. If anything, covenantalism contains the type of moral assumptions that alleviate O'Donovan's major anti-contractarian criticisms, while maintaining the particular social origination components that make contractarianism appealing.

<sup>22</sup> O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 3–4.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

but the agency of the community as well.”<sup>25</sup> According to O’Donovan, and against the modern liberalism he critiqued in *The Desire of the Nations*, the political act creates a new public context and precedes the formation of institutions.

From the authoritative political act of judgment, O’Donovan moves towards its legitimate representation. He does so by discussing authoritative political actions as occurring within representative institutions that combine a trifecta of power, right, and tradition.<sup>26</sup> Where political acts find their origin in judgment, and occur in representative political institutions supported by power, right, and tradition, political authority is present.<sup>27</sup> As Jonathan Chaplin observes of O’Donovan’s work, “The central purpose of political institutions is to ‘represent a people,’ and the author’s striking and counter-modernist thesis is that political representation is something done by governments before it is done by popular assemblies.”<sup>28</sup> In place of what he calls the “myth” of contractarianism, O’Donovan argues that political representation is attained not from a social contract, but from a moment of recognition where the community sees themselves and their history represented in their political authorities.<sup>29</sup> Chaplin calls this an “expressivist” conception of representation, which differs from the “voluntarist”

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 140. On the trifecta that grounds authoritative political actions in a represented tradition, O’Donovan writes, “These two aspects of the common good, ‘right’ and ‘tradition,’ represent the essential ground of political authority. Authority belongs to those who, embodying the identity of the community, enact right on its behalf. With these two components, the idea of political authority is given. Yet for the idea to become actual a third component must be present, power.”

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 142. On the agency of the representative political institution, O’Donovan writes, “Political authority arises where power, the execution of right, and the perpetuation of tradition are assured together in one coordinated agency.”

<sup>28</sup> Jonathan Chaplin, “Representing a People: Oliver O’Donovan on Democracy and Tradition” *Political Theology* Jul2008 Vol. 9 Issue 3 (2008), 296.

<sup>29</sup> O’Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 160–161.

approach of modern contractarianism.<sup>30</sup> He describes O'Donovan's "expressivism" as the understanding that "Government represents a people, then, not by serving as a conduit of the popular will, but by symbolizing the people to itself: the representative 'stands for' our consciousness of our common association."<sup>31</sup>

In Part 3 of *The Ways of Judgment*, O'Donovan discusses the importance of our contemporary eschatological positioning in relation to judgment and representation.<sup>32</sup> The act of judgment comes into direct contact with the counter-political charge made in Matt 7:1 to "Judge not, that you will not be judged!"<sup>33</sup> O'Donovan sees the transition between the political and counter-political as a defining closure of the act of judgment, and one marked by the command towards obedience.<sup>34</sup> Political theology occurs as the Church operates in a parenthesis that reflects pre-political society, and post-political divine

---

<sup>30</sup> As will be developed later, one of the strengths of the covenantal approach is that it synthesizes both the "expressivist" and "voluntarist" components. In a mere contract, you have voluntarism—the strength of identifying the mutually-agreed upon allocation of authority and power. However, in a covenant, you not only have the voluntary elements of individuals covenanting with one-another, but you also have the expressivist moral component represented in God's participation. God participation in covenants appears by the particular covenant's assumption of God's moral order and judgment. It brings expression and recognition to this moral order through the voluntarist confession of obedience and obligation.

<sup>31</sup> Chaplin, "Representing A People," 301.

<sup>32</sup> An important component of O'Donovan's political theology and wider political program is the eschatological positioning of authority. One area where the ramifications of his conviction is evident is in a Christian's conception of the secularity of political Society. In Oliver O'Donovan, *Common Objects of Love: Moral Reflection and the Shaping of Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 24, O'Donovan writes, "The Christian conception of the 'secularity' of political society arose directly out of this Jewish wrestling with unfulfilled promise.... Secularity is irreducibly an eschatological notion; it requires an eschatological faith to sustain it, a belief in a disclosure that is 'not yet'.... Secularity is a stance of patience in the face of plurality."

<sup>33</sup> O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 233, writes, "It is the decisive test of a political theology, whether and how clearly it can articulate this counter-political moment in the New Testament proclamation of the cross, with its moral implication: 'Judge not, that you be not judged!' (Matt 7:1)."

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

judgment.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the Church becomes a model of what post-political post-judgment human society and communication looks like.<sup>36</sup> In essence, the church reveals the final form of human society through this political judgment/‘judge not!’ dynamic, and the role of the political act of judgment and representative authority inside this parenthetical eschatological context.

It is in *The Ways of Judgment*’s final parenthetical treatment that O’Donovan makes his earlier summarized criticisms against the traditional Protestant social theory. It is also where he offers his alternative of the communication of place and space. While a summary of how O’Donovan’s thought progresses across his three works is helpful to further understand where his criticisms are coming from, they have two other contributions towards the subject matter of this current chapter’s ecclesial appraisal. First,

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 238. O’Donovan helpfully develops this understanding of the parenthetical perspective, where he writes, “A society that refrains from judgment does so because it has the judgment of God to defer to.... Such an earthly society is ‘unpolitical’ in a helpful sense, because its politics of expectancy has gone to the heart of the political and emerged into life beyond judgment. Through the lens of this post-political society, political theology can view as in a mirror the pre-political society of God’s creation, and can understand political judgment as a moment in parentheses between the two, an interim service that is a ‘definite something,’ with its defined beginning and its defined end. In political theology—for the first time, we may say, in the light of the proclamation of the kingdom of God—the vis-a-vis of the political act and the social life comes clearly into view.”

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 240. See also Ben Quash, “Life Beyond Judgment Communication. Response to Section III of *The Ways of Judgment* by Oliver O’Donovan” *Political Theology* Jul2008 Vol. 9 Issue 3 (2008): 309–318. Quash provides a useful summary of the book’s focus on the church and communication, writing, “This final section of his book—gathered under a consideration of the theme of ‘Communication’—pushes beyond considerations of the penultimacy of political institutions to the ultimate vision of the Kingdom of God, a vision which the church already embodies in the historical realm, although not without its ambiguities. All necessary but provisional instruments of judgment will one day yield to that perfect state of affairs which at their best they gesture to and at worst seek to substitute for: a state of affairs in which God’s own judgment is so enacted in the creation’s complete and uncoerced fellowship with God that we can confidently defer our own judgment to His. For the time being, the church models that eschatological ‘high mark of our calling’; it shows ‘the social humanity that the world is summoned by the Spirit of God to become’ (p. 240). ‘The church as the “end” of political community is the matrix within which the created shape of human sociality emerges into view’ (p. 241). And it is the Holy Spirit, in this society the church, who ‘does what the rulers of the nations do in their societies’ (p. 318). The medium for its work of judgment, O’Donovan will argue, is ultimately the human heart” (pp. 309–310).

as Chaplin noted in his “expressivist” vs. “voluntarist” description, O’Donovan intentionally reverses the emphasis so that the act of judgment precedes the act of representation. O’Donovan seems especially interested in undermining a contractarian argument. He does so by arguing that authority is a moral qualifier where the represented perceives themselves and their history in already-existing political representatives who use their judicial power to protect a people’s rights and tradition. Second, O’Donovan is a useful model of approaching social and political questions from the ecclesial perspective. Combined, these two trends raise a number of important questions that encourage an appraisal of the ecclesial idea of covenant. How does O’Donovan derive his ideas from the Bible, and what else does Scripture and history reveal about the ecclesial covenantal idea? What can the ecclesial concept of covenant contribute to O’Donovan’s expressivism, and his earlier noted criticisms? Does covenant offer a synthesis of both “expressivism” and “voluntarism”? What can an emulation of O’Donovan’s ecclesial-starting point, which instead begins with the ecclesiological idea of covenantal assemblies, contribute to building a political theology? And finally, how can it help address the critical social questions of universality and particularity? With these inquiries in mind, it now seems helpful to survey O’Donovan’s ideas, and the ecclesial notion of covenant, in Scripture and history.

## Ecclesial Covenant and Constitution in Scripture

Central to O'Donovan's understanding of political authority is the act of judgment, which occurs when right, tradition, and power are all present in one coordinated agent/agency.<sup>37</sup> While this idea is introduced within O'Donovan's larger discussion of an evangelical authoritative ethics in *Resurrection and Moral Order*, and treated politically in *The Ways of Judgment*, the scriptural foundation is found primarily in the second chapter of *The Desire of the Nations*. In the chapter, O'Donovan explores the important idea of YHWH's kingship, and he identifies major political words in Hebrew that are often grouped together: יְשׁוּעָה (*yeshu'ah*, "salvation"), מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*, "justice, judgment"), and נַחְלָה (*nachalah*, "possession").<sup>38</sup> The political implication of YHWH's kingship and salvation are found within the usage of *yeshu'ah* in passages reflecting on God's deliverance of the Israelites, and their "power to win military engagements, especially engagements against the odds."<sup>39</sup> O'Donovan notes that these victories were often a sign of YHWH's חֶסֶד (*khesed*, "favor" Pss 13:4; 85:7), and an exercise of YHWH's צְדָקָה

---

<sup>37</sup> For an evolution of O'Donovan's notion across his three main works, see the roles of "public" "right" and "action" in *Resurrection and Moral Order* (p. 129), "salvation" "judgment" and "possession" in *The Desire of the Nations* (p. 36), and "right" "tradition" and "power" in *The Ways of Judgment* (p. 140).

<sup>38</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 36. Also see Strong's #3444 יְשׁוּעָה (*yeshu'ah*, "salvation"), #4941 מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*, "justice"), and #5159 נַחְלָה (*nachalah*, "inheritance"), in James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: With Main Concordance, Appendix to the Main Concordance, Topical Index to the Bible, Dictionary of the Hebrew Bible, Dictionary of the Greek Testament* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990). O'Donovan also adds a fourth important term to these three, which is Strong's #8416 תְּהִלָּה (*tehillah*, "praise"), "which identifies the human response and acknowledgment of YHWH's reign" (p. 36).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 36. The paradigm of this usage is seen in the miraculous and providential deliverance of the Israelites in Exodus, as well numerous victory passages such as Ps 21:1 and Ps 44:4. "O LORD ["YHWH", יְהוָה], in your strength the king [מֶלֶךְ] rejoices, and in your salvation [יְשׁוּעָתְךָ] how greatly he exults!" (Ps 21:1, ESV).

(*tsedeq*, “vindication” or “justification” Isa 51:5).<sup>40</sup> While the *צדק* (*tsdq*) words often appear in connection with the *ישׁוׁ* (*ysh*) words, “they are continually associated with words formed on the root *shpt* [שפט], which have to do with judging.”<sup>41</sup> To judge, writes O’Donovan, “is to make a distinction between the just and the unjust, or, more precisely, to bring the distinction which already exists between them into the daylight of public observation.... *Mishpat* is primarily a judicial *performance*.”<sup>42</sup> What makes the theological notion of divine judgment especially political is when *yeshu’ah* and *mishpat* (“salvation” and “judgment”), are used in conjunction with the third concept of *nahalah* (“possession”).<sup>43</sup> The introduction of a common possession, handed down from generation to generation, produces the political scenario where God’s judgments structure, sustain, and give direction to a specific community.<sup>44</sup>

At this point O’Donovan is able to define what Scripture means when it talks about YHWH ruling as king. He writes that “[YHWH] gives Israel victory; he gives judgment; he gives Israel its possession.”<sup>45</sup> The exegetical concept not only helps

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 37. As the prophet Isaiah writes, “My righteousness [צדק] draws near, my salvation [ישׁוׁ] has gone out, and my arms will judge [שפט] the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait” (Isa 51:5). Also see *Strong’s* #2617 *חֶסֶד* (*khesed*, “favor”), and *Strong’s* #6664 *צֶדֶק* (*tsedeq*, “vindication” or “justification”).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 38–39. The biblical notion of justice is neither “receiving one’s own” or “being in social equilibrium.” It is something done, which is why when Amos calls for *mishpat* to “roll on like a river.” O’Donovan claims he is imagining actual judicial activity (Isa 5:16).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 41. In the case of the Israelites, O’Donovan notes regarding this “possession” that “originally and fundamentally the existence of Israel as a people was mediated through the land.” W.D. Davies notes in *The Gospel and the Land* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 58, that the law itself was “an effective symbol of the land” which “served as a perpetual call to the land.” As I will later argue, covenant seems to be an even more basic foundation for common “possession,” as well as land and law being symbols of—and a guide to—obedience of the covenant.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 45.

O'Donovan understand God's kingship in the Old Testament, but also makes an important theoretical claim. O'Donovan connects the concept of *khesed* as not only being a momentary disposition of God's goodwill, but "It is His enduring commitment to those who lived within His covenant."<sup>46</sup> A "covenant" is typically defined as "a compact or agreement between two parties binding them mutually to undertakings on each other's behalf."<sup>47</sup> Theologically, it is defined as "a gracious undertaking entered into by God for the benefit and blessings of humanity, and specifically of those who by faith receive the promises and commit themselves to the obligations which this undertaking involves."<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, covenant conveys definitional connotations as it relates to its usage across the social institutions. Gordon Hugenberger provides a helpful definition of covenant as it

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>47</sup> G. L. Archer Jr., "Covenant" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (ed. Walter A. Elwell; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 299. Another short definition of "Covenant" is found in Ricker Berry, "Covenant, in the Old Testament," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* 2:727–729. Berry writes, "In essence a covenant is an agreement, but an agreement of a solemn and binding force.... '[P]rimarily the covenant is not a special engagement to this or that particular effect, but bond of troth and life-fellowship to all the effects for which kinsmen are permanently bound together.'" Berry's article is helpful in considering the extra-biblical influences and ancestors of the covenantal idea, specifically the emphasis that the "community of life" resulted "from the covenant."

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. Legally, covenant is defined by Archer as "An agreement between two or more parties, reduced to writing and executed by a sealing and delivery thereof, whereby some of the parties named therein engage, or one of them engages, with the other, or others, or some of them, therein also named, that some act hath or hath not already been done, or for the performance or nonperformance of some specified duty." Politically, it is defined in Daniel Judah Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel: Biblical Foundations & Jewish Expressions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 1, as "a coming together (con-gregation) of basically equal humans who consent with one another through a morally binding pact supported by a transcendent power, establishing with the partners a new framework or setting them on the road to a new task that can only be dissolved by mutual agreement of all the parties to it." See William Blackstone, "Covenant" in *Black's Law Dictionary*, <http://thelawdictionary.org/covenant/>, for a classic political and legal definition of covenant that helped secularize and popularize its usage. Also see Cedric D. Bell, *The Law of Real Property* (London: Old Bailey, 2000); and Margaret F. Brinig and Steven Nock, "Covenant and Contract" (Regent University Law Review 12, 1990 Spring): 9–26.

relates to marriage, writing, “A covenant, in its normal sense, is an elected, as opposed to natural, relationship of obligation under oath.”<sup>49</sup> Elazar defines covenant theo-politically

[as] a promise that is sanctioned by an oath accompanied by an appeal to the Deity to “see” or “watch over” the behavior of the one who has sworn and to punish any violation of the covenant by bringing into action the curses stipulated or implied in the swearing of the oath.<sup>50</sup>

Covenant combines moral, social, and transcendent elements in a way that makes it distinct from modern legal definitions of covenant. It is also quite different from more secularized notions of contract and compact.<sup>51</sup>

A second important and related term is “constitution.”<sup>52</sup> Typically, constitution is used to describe the constituent parts that make up a thing or person. From a theo-

---

<sup>49</sup> Gordon Paul Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 11. A second definition that Hugenberger provides is one taken from Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned; a Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 16, where Kline defines covenant as “sanction-sealed commitment to maintain a particular relationship or follow a stipulated course of action. In general, then a covenant may be defined as a relationship under sanctions.” Kline’s emphasis on the relational component captures well the spirit of the covenantal idea. In particular, his work *By Oath Consigned* distinguishes covenant from a law code such as *Hammurabi* because biblical covenants—which he calls “kingdom covenants”—consecrate the vassals (God’s people) relationship to the “Suzerain” (God), whereas a law code such as *Hammurabi* stipulates from a superior how the vassals ought to behave with one another. As Kline illustrates, “We may point up this fundamental difference between covenant stipulations and ordinary laws by the observation that Moses was not a lawgiver but a covenant mediator. He was not an Israelite Hammurabi but the agent through whom the Great King of heaven bound a people to himself in a relationship of service” (pp. 38–39).

<sup>50</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 23.

<sup>51</sup> Douglass, R. Bruce, Joshua Mitchell (eds.), *A Nation under God? Essays on the Future of Religion in American Public Life* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000) 72. Covenant, compact, and contract are all three unique terms. While they tend to be used interchangeably, it is helpful to note how they differ. Elazar observes the difference in his essay contribution, “Recovenanting the American Polity,” where he writes, “A covenant differs from a compact in that its morally binding dimension takes precedence over its legal dimension. In its heart of hearts, a covenant is an agreement in which a higher moral force—traditionally God—is a party, usually a direct party or a guarantor of a particular relationship, whereas when the term compact is used the moral force is internal to the pact itself.”

<sup>52</sup> Legally, constitution is defined in Blackstone, “Constitution,” in *Dictionary of Law*, as “The set of laws, usually written down, under which a country is ruled.” Politically, it is defined in “Constitution,” *Palgrave Macmillan Dictionary of Political Thought*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 2007), as “The body of rules governing the structure, organization and procedure of any corporate body. A constitution sometimes has a special form, as in the charter of a university, or the articles of association of a

political perspective, constitution can emphasize two different aspects. Legally, constitution can address God's Law which creation is ultimately ruled and designed by. Politically, it can address the structure adopted by humans in their civil, social, and ecclesial bodies. A constitution may or may not take written form. God's moral Law is a Constitution *par excellence*, while man's constitutions are the authoritative structures of organizing themselves as informed and directed by three traditionally held theories of origination.<sup>53</sup> As they relate to each other, a covenant constitutes the inception/origination of universal and particular institutions, while a constitution consists of the rules, structures, and boundaries which shape it.

Given O'Donovan's overall universal and particular theoretical criticisms, and his emphasis on starting with ecclesiology, the remainder of the chapter shall survey the theological concept of covenant across the Old and New Testaments, and across history. In specific, what can an appraisal of the ecclesial understanding of the covenanted and constituted *ekklēsia* contribute to the question of institutional origination. Furthermore, what can it contribute to undermining O'Donovan's criticisms against traditional Protestant social theory? To those ends, the chapter needs to first turn to an appraisal of the covenantal idea in the Bible.

---

company. Or it may have to be inferred from practice, being encapsulated in no particular document or authority.”

<sup>53</sup> These three theories of origination are traditionally known as conquest, organic, and contract. It is the hope of this dissertation—alongside the spirit of the works of Elazar, Hugenberger, Wellum & Gentry, and Deweese—that covenant will be recognized as a unique and Biblically-informed alternative to conquest, organic, and contract.

## Ecclesial Covenant and Constitution in the Old Testament

In *Sojourners and Strangers*, Greg Allison provides a helpful exploration of covenant as an ecclesiological idea. He writes that covenants “(1) are unilateral (established by God and God only); (2) create or formalize a structured relationship between God and his covenant partners; (3) feature binding obligations; and (4) involve covenantal signs or the swearing of oaths.”<sup>54</sup> Allison sees covenants as an important relational concept, claiming that “from the created order to human beings, every relationship in which God has been engaged has been structured according to some type of covenant.”<sup>55</sup> These covenantal relations form what Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum call “the backbone of the metanarrative of Scripture,” and they argue that it “is essential to ‘put them together’ correctly in order to discern accurately the ‘whole counsel of God’ (Acts 20:27).”<sup>56</sup>

Allison is especially helpful towards understanding the ecclesial importance of the covenantal idea. In particular, Allison makes an excellent attempt at putting together the “backbone” metanarrative of Old Testament covenants. However, prior to reviewing Allison’s treatment of the covenantal metanarrative, one important clarification needs to be made. In his earlier definition, Allison notes that covenants are “unilateral (established by God and God only).”<sup>57</sup> While God’s relation to the covenantal idea is absolutely foundational, there are a number of incidents in Scripture where covenants are initiated

---

<sup>54</sup> Greg Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 64.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 21, 57. On the metanarrative importance of covenant in the Bible, see also, Michael Horton, *God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 13–14; and Michael Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 16–17.

between humans.<sup>58</sup> It is true that the types of covenants present in the Universal (Adamic and Noahic), Special (Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic), and New Covenant are unilateral and established by God.<sup>59</sup> However, men are also found initiating covenants amongst themselves for a number of reasons.<sup>60</sup>

While imperfect, the terms “vertical” and “horizontal” are used throughout the dissertation to illustrate the direction and environments in which covenanting takes place.<sup>61</sup> *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* captures the idea behind

---

<sup>57</sup> Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64.

<sup>58</sup> For example, a covenant of friendship is made between David and Jonathan, where the two make “a covenant before the LORD” (1 Sam 23:18).

<sup>59</sup> Francis Brown et al., *The Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Coded with the Numbering System from Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2015), 136–137. Examples of covenants “between God and man” include, “2. Covenant, as a divine constitution or ordinance with signs or pledges (see אָוֶן). a. with Noah, Genesis 9:9–17; Isaiah 54:10; Jeremiah 33:20, 25; a divine promise that there would be no other deluge. b. with Abraham, Genesis 15:18; 17:2–21; Exodus 2:24;... a promise to multiply their seed, give them the land of Canaan, and make them a blessing to the nations. c. with Israel at Sinai = Horeb, with a covenant sacrifice, Exodus 19:5; Exodus 24:7, 8; Exodus 34:10, 27, 28; Exodus 31:16;... a divine constitution given to Israel with promises on condition of obedience and penalties for disobedience, in the form of tables of the covenant, Deuteronomy 9:9;... d. with Phinehas, Numbers 25:12, 13; a constitution, establishing an everlasting priesthood in his line;... e. with Joshua and Israel, Joshua 24:25; an ordinance or constitutional agreement to serve Yahweh only. f. with David, Psalm 89:4;... a divine promise to the seed of David of an everlasting kingdom, the relation of sonship, and the superintendence of the temple (compare Psalms 2). g. Jehoiada and the people, 2 Kings 11:17; 2 Chronicles 23:3; a constitutional agreement to be the people of Yahweh. h. Hezekiah and the people, 2 Chronicles 29:10; a constitutional agreement to reform the worship. i. Josiah and the people, 2 Kings 23:3; a constitutional agreement to obey the book of the covenant. j. Ezra and the people, Ezra 10:3; a constitutional agreement to put away foreign wives and observe the Law. k. the prophetic covenant, a divine promise through a series of prophets to establish a new constitution, בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה, Jeremiah 31:31; with new institutions and precepts” (pp. 136–137).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 136. Examples of covenants “I. between men. 1. treaty, alliance, league: Abraham and Amorites, Genesis 14:13; Edom and its allies, Obad 1:7; with Philistines, Gen 21:27, 32; Gen 26:28; Jacob and Laban, Gen 31:44; Joshua and Gibeonites, Joshua 9:6, 7, 11, 15, 16; Israel and Canaanites, Exodus 23:32;... 2. constitution, ordinance, between monarch and subjects: David and Abner, 2 Samuel 3:12, 13, 21; David and the elders of Israel, 2 Samuel 5:3; 1 Chronicles 11:3; Zedekiah and his people, Jeremiah 34:8–18; hostile prince and Israelites, Daniel 9:27. 3. agreement, pledge: Jehoiada and captains, 2 Kings 11:4; 2 Chronicles 23:1; with oneself, Job 31:1;... 4. alliance of friendship between David and Jonathan, 1 Samuel 18:3;... 5. alliance of marriage, Proverbs 2:17; Malachi 2:14.”

<sup>61</sup> See Table 2, “Model: Vertical and Horizontal Covenant Passages.” Covenants occur across the following categories: (1) Horizontal covenants between men; and (2) Vertical covenants between God and men that consists of (A) the Universal covenants in the Old Testament (Adamic and Noahic covenants), (B)

the “vertical” and “horizontal” terminology where the lexicon’s entry for בְּרִית (*berith*, “covenant”) organizes the usages of covenants as those occurring “I. between men ... [and] II. between God and man”.<sup>62</sup> Covenants can be “horizontal” because they initiate horizontally between men who desire to enter into morally-framed compacts. What makes them solemn and covenantal—as opposed to merely secular and contractual—is that they occur on a *horizon*. Horizons are formed at the point in which the earth and the heavens meet. They are not simple one-dimensional lines between two points, but the three-dimensional point of convergence between horizontal and vertical elements. A horizon can be physically seen in the distance as a sun vertically tucks itself into a horizontal hillside. It can also be physically experienced when individuals try to move from a state of standing, to a gravitationally-bound jump. Individuals are anthropologically-grounded to operate horizontally. A human cannot, by nature, fly off into the sky, or inanimately phase through physical space. Rather, humans need the vertical heavens to identify and experience the horizontal point of contact. As a simile likening the vertical to the heavens, the transcendent LORD of Heaven is crucial to the possibility of men covenanting with each other. It is the presence of the theocentric, transcendent, religious, and objective reality that brings solemnity and morality to horizontal covenants. Horizontal covenants must exist within, and presuppose, God’s vertical order. It is what gives them objective moral meaning. God is present at the

---

the Special covenants in the Old Testament (Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants), (C) the Prophetic Renewal of covenants in the Old Testament (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Joel), and (D) the New Covenant in the New Testament.

covenantal exchanging of vows because men and women are horizontally present in His created universe; and with it, all the moral fetters God's order entails. Without the religious moral reality—without God and His Law—the solemnity of the covenant becomes a secularized contract, which resides in a vacuum that can presuppose no moral and religious legitimization and enforcement mechanism.

Without the moral mechanism, covenant ceases to be, by nature, a covenant, and instead becomes a contract. Without the theocentric and religious component, a covenant loses the three-dimensional imagery derived from the horizontal and vertical convergence (God & men), and merely degrades to being a flattened one-dimensional line imitative between two contracted points of exchange (men). In extension of the illustration, a vertical covenant represents the unilateral covenants evidenced throughout Scripture. These covenants initiate vertically from a superior down to the inferior, and they are—and only can be—established by God. Humans cannot rise vertically and commit God to behave in a specific way anymore than someone can will themselves to float. Men respond to God's vertical initiative with worship and obedience, or in idolatry and rebellion. Furthermore, humans must presuppose God's promises and His established moral ordering of the Universe into the horizontal covenants they make with one another. There is a constitutional hierarchy rooted in moral and spiritual reality; the horizontal must recognize and refract the vertical.

---

<sup>62</sup> See *Brown-Driver-Briggs*' #285 בְּרִית (*berith*, "covenant"). The twofold division is also captured in Berry, "Covenant, in the Old Testament," *ISBE*, 2:727–729. Berry divides covenant into those occurring "II. Among Men" and those occurring "Between God and Men."

The term for covenant often used in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word בְּרִית (berith, “covenant”), which occurs 286 times.<sup>63</sup> While the root of the Hebrew word is often debated,<sup>64</sup> it seems reasonable that the etymology of the term is related to the Hebrew word for “choose” and “cut” (בָּרָא, bara), and the Akkadian *biritu*, which Elazar notes “means to bind together or fetter, an appropriate description of what covenanting is.”<sup>65</sup> As for the phrase for making a covenant, the Hebrew often uses a form of כָּרַת (karath, “to cut off”) in conjunction with בְּרִית to denote the act of “cutting/making a

---

<sup>63</sup> Klaus Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary: In Old Testament, Jewish, and Early Christian Writings* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971), 6. For the etymology and definition of “covenant,” see *Strong’s* #1285 בְּרִית (berith, “covenant”), *Brown-Driver-Briggs’* #285 בְּרִית (berith, “covenant”), and *Strong’s* #1241 διαθήκη (diathēkē, “covenant, testament”). *Strong’s* #1285 entry for berith notes the word is derived from *Strong’s* #1254 בָּרָא (bara, “choose, cut”), in the sense an animal was chosen and cut up to symbolize the covenantal obligation, with the two individuals usually working through the created divide. Interestingly, *Brown-Driver-Briggs* provides the Greek and Latin translations as διαθήκη and *constitutio* in entry #285. It was earlier noted that the metanarrative value of covenant is hinted in the fact that the “Old” and “New” “Testaments” derive their name from the Greek διαθήκη, which can be translated as “testament” or “covenant.” However, *Brown-Driver-Briggs’* provides the Latin *constitutio*. It is interesting because covenant is usually translated into Latin as *foedus*, or *testamentum* (see Genesis 9:13 as an example of the usage of בְּרִית, διαθήκη, and *foedus* [*foederis*]; or Daniel 11:32 as an example of the usage of בְּרִית, διαθήκη, and *testamentum*). The covenantal theology of the Reformed movement—who arguably best utilized covenant to develop their social theory—were known as *Federaltheologie*, which derived from the Latin *foedus*, and is where the English word “federalism” comes from. A search for *constitutio* revealed no canonical passages in the *Clementine Vulgate*; instead only a handful of passages using a variation of *constitutio* in the form of *constitutione* or *constitutionem*, which is better translated as “foundation” (see Matt 13:35, 25:34; John 17:24; Eph 1:4). The etymology of the Middle English word “constitution” (“denoting law, or body of laws or customs”), is derived from the Latin word *constitutio*, and the older English “constitute.” *Constitutio* is itself derived from the Latin word *constituere* (“establish, appoint”). While someone should not commit an etymological fallacy here, there is something interesting about the semantic range of constitution and covenant. In short, the English words for covenant, constitution, testament, and federalism have a strong lexical and political theological relationship. It is especially interesting given the important contributions a covenantal perspective can make to constituting a particular institution, as well as framing it with a constitution. Further research could not reveal why *Brown-Driver-Briggs’* sought to supply the Latin *constitutio* instead of *foedus* or *testamentum* in their entry for בְּרִית, which is unfortunate, given it is an interesting occurrence.

<sup>64</sup> Refer back to G. L. Archer Jr’s definition of “Covenant,” 299–300, for an introduction to the disagreements of the origin of the Hebrew word. Also see *Strong’s* #1254 בָּרָא (bara, “cut”).

<sup>65</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 64–65. Ricker Berry also states, in “Covenant, in the Old Testament,” *ISBE*, 2:727, that “It is probable that the word is the same as the Assyrian *biritu*, which has the common meaning ‘fetter,’ but also means ‘covenant.’”

covenant.”<sup>66</sup> The Hebrew often employs the verb שָׁמַר (*shamar*, “to keep”) to denote man’s keeping of a covenant, and the verb זָכַר (*zakar*, “to remember”) to denote God’s faithfulness to a covenant.<sup>67</sup> The operative mechanism of the covenant is found in the associated Hebrew word חֶסֶד (*khesed*, “favor, lovingkindness, covenant love”), which when used with *berith*, is best translated as “the loving fulfillment of a covenant obligation.”<sup>68</sup> The relational and tender aspect of *khesed* is noteworthy, and its usage with *berith* prevents covenant from being seen as merely a legal contractual obligation of exchange. Finally, the relational emphasis is also seen in the anti-relational root verb often used to describe the violation of a covenant, עָבַר (*abar* “to alienate”).<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> See *Brown-Driver-Briggs*’ #3772 קָרַת (*karath*, “to cut off”). An example of this type of usage is seen in the phrase *likrot berith* (“to cut a covenant”) in 2 Chronicles 29:10: עַם-לִבִּי לְכַרֹּת בְּרִית לַיהוָה (“Now it is in my heart to *make a covenant* with the LORD,” ESV). A second word used in phrases to denote covenant making is *Strong’s* #6965 קוּם (*qum* “to arise”), which connotes “establishing” a covenant in Genesis 9:9, which says מְקִים אֶת-בְּרִיתִי (“I establish my covenant”). קוּם may also connote “confirming” a covenant, as in Leviticus 26:9, which says וְהִקְיַמְתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם (“and will confirm my covenant with you”). Also, somewhat noteworthy is the shared notion of “cutting” behind one of *Strong’s* proposed roots for the Hebrew בְּרִית (*Strong* proposes בָּרָא, *bara*, “to cut, to choose,” as a root), and the verb usually used in phrases to denote covenant making (קָרַת, *likrot*, “to cut off”). According to the *ISBE*, the Hebrew word *karath* is used in all cases of horizontal covenants, except Jer 34:10 and Dan 9:27. As Elazar explains in *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 65, the notion of “cutting a covenant” hints at the Old Testament covenantal act by which two parties sacrificed an animal, divided it in half, and walked through the divide, which symbolized their fate should they break their covenantal vows.

<sup>67</sup> See *Strong’s* #8104 שָׁמַר (*shamar*, “to keep”), and #2142 זָכַר (*zakar*, “to remember”). Also see 1 Kings 11:11 for an example of covenant keeping on the part of man, and Genesis 9:15 for an example of covenant keeping on the part of God.

<sup>68</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 71. Also refer to Nelson Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible*, trans. Alfred Gottschalk and ed. Elias L. Epstein (New York, NY: Ktav, 1975) and Paul F. Palmer, S.J., “Christian Marriage: Contract or Covenant?,” *Theological Studies* 33 (1972): 617–665. Also see *Strong’s* #2617 חֶסֶד (*khesed*, “favor”).

<sup>69</sup> See *Strong’s* #5674 עָבַר (*abar*, “to alienate”).

Biblical covenants are the creation of morally-bound relationships.<sup>70</sup> They are by nature deeply social and relational, as evidenced in the covenantal role of loving kindness and alienation. They are formed horizontally between men and men—or vertically between God and men—for the loving fulfillment of some stipulated covenantal obligation. The violation of the covenant does not simply produce some agreed-to penalties, but more importantly yields alienation. Between men, these covenants ordinarily consisted of four parts: (1) a declaration of the agreed upon terms (Gen 26:29; 31:30; 31:52); (2) a vow/oath made before God to observe these terms (Gen 26:31; 31:48–53; Ezek 17:13);<sup>71</sup> (3) a curse imposed upon each party member should they break their covenantal terms (Deut 27:15–26);<sup>72</sup> and (4) a formal ratification by external

---

<sup>70</sup> One of the most intriguing things about the sheer relational emphasis of a covenant is its ability to incorporate the transcendent and immanent elements of human and Divine participation. One of the essential things about humanity is—as Aristotle put it—that man is a social and political animal. An anti-social man seems like a very inhuman concept. In a fascinating Ted Talk by Susan Pinker entitled “The Secret to Living Longer May be Your Social Life,” Pinker’s concludes in her research that “Social Integration” and “Close Relationships” are the most important contributors to a longer life. These two factors even beat out quitting smoking and drinking, which came in respectively at number three and four. Covenants are noteworthy here because they—by their intrinsic nature—lead to social integration and close relationships. That is what they do: create socially-integrated, morally-bound relationships. They literally create “relations” in the form of originating “relatives,” as is done when a marriage covenant turns two humans into different ontologically-related beings, and re-relates how two families now exist as kin (“my girlfriend’s dad” now becomes “my father-in-law”; or better, my father-in-covenant!). A covenant marriage literally propagates individuals who then become “relatives.” As the foundation for a social and political theory, covenant seems quite seminal. It has the ability to incorporate the fullest sense of socially-integrated relationships, as it incorporates men and God. As a concept, it seems helpful to explaining the origins of society and state. Furthermore, its violation and opposite is deeply-antihuman. The violation of a covenant as later exposed in the Hebrew term *abar*, is an “alienation.” That is an incredibly strong concept, especially in light of an increasingly atomistic society in the American West that perhaps overemphasizes the individual to the point of his alienation.

<sup>71</sup> It is notable that the term “oath” was often used interchangeably with “covenant,” which expresses the importance of the concept of oath and vow making to the covenant idea. As it is written in Ezekiel 17:13, “And he took one of the royal offspring and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath (the chief men of the land he had taken away).”

<sup>72</sup> The component of a curse is somewhat absent in the covenants among humans in Scripture. However it is inferred by Deuteronomy 27:15–26. It makes sense that this element is absent, given man’s finite capabilities. Instead, punishment is appealed to God’s own admission in Deuteronomy 27:15–26, that lawbreakers are cursed. Breaking God’s moral law brings a curse in-and-of-itself.

signs/acts (Gen 31:54).<sup>73</sup> While covenants were made between individual men and between collections of men, the majority of incidents within the larger social units consisted of individuals representing nations and tribes. Acts of covenanting were often associated with some ritual seal, with animal sacrifice being prominent, alongside common meals, name-changes, and oath taking. Examples of covenants occur: (1) between individuals in a covenant to marriage (Mal 2:14); (2) between individuals in a covenant to friendship (David and Jonathan in 1 Sam 18:3); (3) between individuals or small groups in a covenantal agreement or pledge (Jehoiada, the Carites, and the guards in 2 Kgs 11:4); (4) between a king and his subjects in a covenantal ordinance (King David and the elders of Israel in 2 Sam 5:3); and (5) between individuals and tribes in a covenantal alliance or treaty (Abraham and Abimelech in Gen 21:27–32).<sup>74</sup>

Whereas the horizontal covenants established among men assumed an equal standing between the parties, vertical covenants established by God are always at His initiative. Vertical covenants usually consist of (1) God declaring the terms and promises through His commands; (2) men agreeing to keep said commands; (3) God enacting punishment upon man's disobedience of these commands; and (4) God evidencing the covenant with signs and pledges. Vertical covenants are the variety Allison "puts

---

<sup>73</sup> Some examples of signs used to express the ratification of a covenant include the giving of the hand (Ezra 10:19; Lam 5:6; Ezek 17:18); the loosening the shoe (Ruth 4:7–11); the writing or seal of a document (Neh 9:38; Jer 32:10–12); the giving presents (Gen 21:27–30; 1 Sam 18:3–4); the holding of a feast (Gen 26:30); the creation of a monument (Gen 31:45–46, 49–53); the act of salting (Lev 2:13; Num 18:19; 2 Chr 13:5); the offering of a sacrifice (Gen 15:9–17; Jer 34:18–19); and the making of oaths (Gen 14:22–23; 26:26–2).

<sup>74</sup> George Ricker Berry, "Covenant, in the Old Testament," *ISBE* <http://www.internationalstandardbible.com/C/covenant-in-the-old-testament.html>. For additional covenants between a ruler and his subjects, see 2 Sam 3:11; 18:2; 1 Chr 11:3; Jer 34:8–18; Dan 9:27. For additional

together” to help uncover the covenantal metanarrative of Scripture. He notes these covenants occur in two main categories: universal, and special.<sup>75</sup> Universal covenants consist of those that are universally binding across time and humanity, such as the Adamic and Noahic covenants found in Genesis 1–3 and 6–9.<sup>76</sup> Special covenants differ in that they are made with particular people, which in the Old Testament’s case are usually the people of Israel. While special covenants contain revealing expositions into God’s moral and spiritual reality, they especially bind the acting covenanters to obedience. Such examples include the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12–17), the Mosaic covenant (Exodus 19–24), the Deuteronomic covenant rehearsal (Deuteronomy 28–30), and the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7).<sup>77</sup> These “universal” and “special” covenants are forms of the “vertical” covenant category. In addition to Allison’s terminology, a third category of “particular” covenants exist, which are those earlier noted covenants initiated between men, and which populate the “horizontal” covenant category.

---

covenants between tribes, see Gen 26:28; Exod 23:32; Deut 7:2; Josh 9:6–16; Judg 2:2; 1 Sam 11:1; 1 Kgs 3:12; 2 Chr 16:3; Ps 83:5; Isa 33:8; Ezek 16:61; Ezek 17:13–19; Dan 11:22; and Amos 1:9.

<sup>75</sup> Jonathan Leeman, *Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christ’s Rule* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 136, hints at the importance of a broad and narrow understanding of covenants, as well as the implications of horizontal and vertical covenant, where he writes, “We can therefore define politics as the mediating of God’s covenantal rule, a definition that encompasses the concept both broadly conceived (in reference to all of life) and narrowly conceived (in reference to a society’s governing institutions). Narrow conception of politics: The justice mechanism of the Noahic Covenant (Gen 9:5–6) and elements of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants establish the public-wide, coercive governing institutions in society. Broad conception of politics: The Adamic Covenant and the larger share of the Noahic Covenant (Gen 9:1–3, 7–17) place all of life within the jurisdiction of God’s comprehensive rule.”

<sup>76</sup> Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 65.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 65–68

While it is beyond the limitations of this work to examine each vertical covenant in detail, it is important to note that they share several major themes.<sup>78</sup> One such theme is the failure on the part of human participants to keep their vertical covenantal obligations.

As Allison notes,

First, the Mosaic covenant is a failure (because of the people of Israel's sin) and will one day become obsolete. Second, the old covenant will be replaced by a new covenant. Third, this new covenant will be associated with a fresh, new, unprecedented out-pouring of the Holy Spirit.<sup>79</sup>

All three of Allison's claims become apparent through the prophetic ministries heralding the New Covenant in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and Joel. Jeremiah prophesies of a day where the divine law will be inscribed on the hearts of the people, and where a superior new covenant relationship will exist between God and His people (Jer 31:31–34). Ezekiel prophesies of the dawning of a new relationship with God where He restores His people for the sake of His name, and where there will be the forgiveness of sin, the renewal of the people's hearts, and the promise of an unprecedented work of the Spirit (Ezek 36:24–27). Hosea heralds the coming of a day where the Abrahamic covenantal promises are

---

<sup>78</sup> In addition to Gentry and Wellum's *Kingdom through Covenant*, Jonathan Leeman's book, *Political Church*, does a fine job of exploring these covenants as they relate to developing a political theology. He surveys politics according to creation, fall, the new covenant, and the Kingdom, and uses covenants as a guide to develop political theological insights. His thesis sets to "argue that the institutional essence of the local assembly is a political unity," and he endeavors "to present a case for the political nature of the local church using a theological methodology that individuals and churches working within my own evangelical tradition would find compelling, specifically, a theological method driven by the biblical covenants" (pp. 3, 14). According to Leeman, covenants "constitutionalize or institutionalize relationships, and this is the basis of a political society. Covenants bring together both a political and institutional conceptuality, which, to return to the earlier discussion, is what is lacking in so much theology today" (pp. 19–20). Where he ultimately ends up is in arguing that the power of the sword and the power of the keys of the kingdom evidence the institutionalization of God's authority, writing, "The sword is God's authorized gift to humanity for protecting life under the Noahic Covenant. The keys of the kingdom are Jesus' authorized gift to the members of the new covenant for the purpose of administering that covenant by establishing churches" (pp. 20–21). In the end, politics is defined by Leeman as "the mediating of God's

fulfilled, and where “in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ it shall be said to them, ‘Children of the living God,’” (Hos 1:10).<sup>80</sup> Finally, Joel also prophesies of a future day where God “will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;” (Joel 2:28–29). The prophets’ heightened anticipation of a promised messianic King/Priest/Prophet, and the hope of an unprecedented outpouring of the Holy Spirit, is ultimately captured with John the Baptist’s heralding of the arrival of the prophesized New Covenant in Luke 3:15–17.

### Ecclesial Covenant and Constitution in the New Testament

Throughout the exilic period, God promises a restoration of his *עדה* (*edah*, “congregation, people”) through a Messiah who will fulfill the promises of the Old Testament covenants and redeem God’s people.<sup>81</sup> The New Testament begins with the Messiah’s arrival, and portrays Jesus as the promised messianic figure who comes as the second Adam, the King/Prophet/Priest, the sacrificial lamb, and the true Davidic king. Even the transition between Old and New “Testaments” illustrates the covenantal metanarrative. The word *διαθήκη*—which is the word used to derive “Testament”—itself is invariably rendered as “covenant.” The canonical partitions can literally be translated

---

covenantal rule” (p. 136). His work, and its emphasis on constituted institutions, provides a kindred supplement to this dissertation emphasis of covenantal ideas.

<sup>79</sup> Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 70.

<sup>80</sup> Commenting towards this verse in Hosea, Paul writes in Romans 9:22–25, “What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? As indeed he says in Hosea.” The prophetic theme of opening the covenant to Gentiles is also present in the promises of an offspring who will undo the work of the evil one and bless the Gentiles in Gen 3:15 and 22:17–18; in Nineveh’s repentance in the book of Jonah; in Zeph 3:9–10’s conversion of the nations; and in Matt 28:18–20’s and Luke 24:47’s Great Commission.

as the “Old Covenant” and the “New Covenant,” and this hints at the metanarrative importance of the Old Testament’s covenantal themes throughout the New.

The New Testament references διαθήκη (*diathēkē*, “covenant, will, testament”) around thirty-three times. Half of these verses reference Old Testament passages, such as Rom 11:27, Acts 3:25, and much of Hebrews.<sup>82</sup> The New Testament acknowledges the prophetically-heralded failure of Israel to uphold the terms of her covenants (Heb 8:6–12), and appeals to Christ as the “mediator of a new covenant [διαθήκης καινῆς], so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant [πρώτη διαθήκη]” (Heb 9:15). Christ comes as the messianic king who fulfills the “πρώτη διαθήκη” of the Old Testament, and who opens the covenantal *edah* to all of humanity through the “διαθήκης καινῆς” of the New Testament.<sup>83</sup> Like the Adamic and Noahic covenants, the New Covenant is universal in scope. However, where the New Covenant significantly differs from its universal and special predecessors is that God meets the terms of obligation *and* punishment on behalf of the New Covenant’s partners (Gal 3:13). Thus, the crown *and* the cross. Furthermore, He not only meets the terms of punishment and obligation through the Messianic propitiatory sacrifice, but also through the unprecedented giving of the Holy Spirit, who aids new covenanters to respond in

---

<sup>81</sup> See *Strong’s* #5712 עֵדָה (*edah*, “congregation, people”).

<sup>82</sup> See *Strong’s* #1242 διαθήκη (*diathēkē*, “covenant, will, testament”).

<sup>83</sup> As Hosea prophesied, “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ it shall be said to them, ‘Children of the living God’” (Hos 1:10). Paul picks up on this promise where he quotes Hosea 1:10 in Romans 9:25–26.

gratitude to the gospel of the New Covenant by empowering their God-and-neighbor-loving adherence of the Law.

Whereas these universal covenants had all of humanity as their recipients, the special covenants in the Old Testament sought the particular people of Israel at their various exilic, tribal, national, and post-exile stages. The covenantal participation of these particular persons was usually marked by covenantal signs such as circumcision. The active participants of the New Covenant also adopted terms and signs that stressed a new and particular covenantal relationship. Those members of Christ's covenantal fulfillment consisted of what the apostolic authors call the *κοινωνία* (*koinōnia*), which is a fellowship or community of believers.<sup>84</sup> As Elazar observes,

Paul referred to the fellowship of Christian believers as a *koinōnia*, the Greek term that is closest to describing a federal relationship or, in other words, a confederacy of believers. In essence, *koinonia* is the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew *hever*, a term used at that time by the Pharisees to describe a similar phenomenon in Judaism. Both are clearly covenantal terms.<sup>85</sup>

The role of the two sacraments also hints at the nature and newness of this covenant, as well as helped identify the participants of the *koinōnia*. A participant's entrance into the *koinōnia* came through the sign of baptism, and their continuance was evident in the good-standing participation of the Lord's Supper. Both were initial and continued signs of the *sacramentum* vows of covenantal obedience. Elazar acknowledges this covenantal connection between the concepts of the *koinonia* and the sacraments, writing,

---

<sup>84</sup> See Kittel's meaning of *koinōnia* in *Theological Dictionary* vol. 3, 804ff. Also see *Strong's* #2842 *κοινωνία* (*koinonia*, "participation, communion, community, fellowship").

<sup>85</sup> Daniel Elazar, *Covenant & Commonwealth* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996), 41.

Paul's use of *koinōnia* to describe a human social organization is far more covenantal in the sense used here than his discussions of covenant as a theological principle. He uses *koinōnian* as a synonym for *societatem* (I Cor 1:9). Paul emphasized the confederacy based upon communion that unites those who partake of the wafer and the wine as a cultic feast, thereby uniting with Christ's body and blood; thus, becoming part of the Christian community of *koinōnia* involved taking the sacraments. The original meaning of the term *sacramentum* itself was oath, promise, or contract.<sup>86</sup>

These *sacramentum* signs even carried over themes from Old Testament covenants, such as the sign of the Lord's Supper paralleling the confirmation of blood in the Mosaic covenant (Exod 24:8).

Whereas the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper marked the covenantal community's boundaries, the arrival of the prophetic outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts marked the promised fulfillment of the *edah* in the New Covenant.<sup>87</sup> The Greek word used for both the Universal Church and particular churches, ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*, “assembly, congregation, church, the Church”), also contains rich covenantal elements.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. The semantic connections are quite important as they relate to the broader social question. As O'Donovan states, a community is the place where individuals come together to commune and communicate over things they have in common. The covenantal understanding of *koinōnia* and *ekklēsia*—and with it the covenantal perspectives on the communion/ordinances—enrich the depth of ecclesiological understanding.

<sup>87</sup> I am in agreement with Allison that the Church began with the fulfillment of the promised outpouring to the Holy Spirit. See chapter 2 of *Sojourner and Strangers* for Allison's arguments. Other views as to the Church's origin argue that it (1) began with Adam, or (2) with the calling of the disciples, or (3) with the appearance to the disciples, or (4) with pious households in the patriarchal period. For proponents of these views, see (1) Henry Leighton Boudge, *The Church of England and Reunion* (London: SPCK, 1983), 93–94, as cited in James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology, Biblical, Historical, Evangelical*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 2:465; (2) Newton Flew, *Jesus and His Church: A Study of the Idea of the Ecclesia in the New Testament* (New York, NY: The Abingdon Press, 1938), 35–39; (3) Emil Brunner, *The Mediator: A Study in the Central Doctrine of the Christian Faith* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1934), 65, and George Johnston, *The Doctrine of the Church in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943), 56; and (4) Louis Berkof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 570–571.

<sup>88</sup> See *Strong's* #1577 ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*, “an assembly, congregation, church; the Church, the whole body of Christian Believers”).

*Ekklēsia* parallels the Hebrew *edah* in its emphasis of a public gathered congregation created by covenant. In his definition of the church, Allison notes,

The sovereign headship that Jesus Christ exercises over and through his body, the church, possesses a covenant-relationship structure, demands a confession of faith/the faith, creates a sent people engaged in the mission of God, and providentially gathers Christ-followers in space and time as pilgrims in this world.<sup>89</sup>

Specifically, Allison notes the church is “covenantal, or gathered as members in (new) covenant relationship with God and in covenant relationship with each other.”<sup>90</sup> Allison supports his covenantal ecclesial notion with a number of indirect evidence that includes

passages about church discipline (e.g. Matt 18:15–17); the metaphor of the church as the bride of Christ (Eph 5:23); Paul’s reference to himself and other Christians as “ministers of the new” (2 Cor 3:6); possible verbal covenants made at baptism (Rom 6:4; Gal. 3:27; 1 Tim 6:12; 1 Pet 3:21); and the covenantal structure of the Lord’s Supper (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24).<sup>91</sup>

At this point, there seems to exist a parallel between the vertical covenantal nature of the New Covenant, and the vertical nature of the Old Testament covenants. In particular, the above survey begins to reveal some helpful contributions towards addressing O’Donovan’s objections. While the following illustrations are not meant to be rigid, drawing some immediate comparisons is conceptually helpful. The earlier treatment of “διαθήκης καινῆς” seems to parallel in its universality the “Universal Covenants” of the Old Testament, with the noted difference that it redeems them by having Christ meet

---

<sup>89</sup> Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 123.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 125. Allison acknowledges that some opponents of the covenantal ecclesial notion argue that “no biblical imperative or example can be marshaled in support of this community aspect of the covenantal nature of the church, though attempts to mount such a defense have been offered.” A more recent example of such an attempt has been made by Peter Gentry, who appeals to Ephesians 4–6 to argue for the presence of relational instructions and the *Haustafeln* duties as evidence of a covenantal relational

their demands. Furthermore, the covenantal notions behind *κοινωνία* and *ἐκκλησία* seem to carry over some notion of covenantal particularity of the *edah* of the Old Testament's special and particular covenants. Special covenants such as the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, as well as the earlier treated particular covenants between individuals, helped create particular people, families, and nations. With these people, families, and nations came covenantal signs that evidenced the boundaries and participants of the covenanted partners across history. Why not a particular church as well?<sup>92</sup>

### **Ecclesial Covenant and Constitution in History**

The carrying over of covenantal ideas into the New Testament brings with it some important explanatory power towards understanding the particular and universal insights of the ecclesial covenantal idea. Can the concept of covenant be appraised to help explain both the universal and particular existence of the Church and the churches? Besides the noted biblical appraisal, is there any historical evidence for ecclesiological attempts at incorporating the covenantal notion to explain the particularity and universality of the *ἐκκλησία*? An answer is perhaps found in the history of Anabaptists, Baptists,

---

framework built into New Testamental relations. See Peter J. Gentry, "Speaking Truth in Love (Eph 4:15): Life in the New Covenant Community," *SBJT* 10/2 (Summer 2006): 70–72.

<sup>92</sup> One of the biblical passages that lends itself to the liberty of exploring covenant as grounds for identifying the particularity of a church is Matt 18:15–20. The passage is most famously known for the binding and loosing authority of the church and her discipline. However, the passage arguably supports notions of the particularity of church authority, given the role of neighboring brethren (Matt 18:16), and the local assembly (Matt 18:17), in disciplining a fellow covenant member. The authority and discipline in this particular ecclesial model bubbles up from the collected believers, and caps at the local ecclesial entity. The passage's closing statement then identifies a verse particularly welcoming to the appraisal of covenant as a particular ecclesial idea, where it states, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matt 18:20). Therefore, Christ Jesus' ecclesial sovereignty is present in the gathering of multiple believers in Christ's name, which is exactly what the covenantal origination of particular ecclesial assemblies accomplishes. The covenantal signs further evidence that this gathering is in fact "in his name."

Congregationalists, and Separatists who appealed to covenantal notions to explain the universal invisible Church, and their particular visible churches. These covenantal notions even led them to create what they called a church covenant, which served as an explanation of the origination and constitution of particular churches.<sup>93</sup>

However, these denominations are relatively late historical movements in the total history of the church. In addition to the biblical covenantal overtones evident across the Old and New Testament, the emphasis of covenantal communities is extra-biblically evident as early as the Qumran communities and their *Dead Sea Scrolls*—particularly the *Zadokite Document*.<sup>94</sup> Regardless, opponents of Allison’s covenantal idea object to the historicity of such an ecclesiology. It is true that—outside of the canonical evidence—the type of congregationalism and church covenants utilized by Baptists and the Free Church movements were a relatively late development in church history that sought to work through the implications of their anti-establishment ecclesiology. Specifically, the emphasis on particular ecclesial covenants is especially lackluster during periods where the plenary papacy held its Medieval superiority. However, to dismiss the covenantal ecclesial ideas of the Free Church movements simply for being a later historical achievement is as foolish as dismissing the truths of the Reformation because of its age.

In short, the social consolidation of the papacy, the problematic fusion of church-and-state relations, and the popularity of paedobaptistic sacramental theology all contributed to an environment that the free churches and their covenantal ecclesiology

---

<sup>93</sup> See an example of a church covenant in Appendix 6, “Praxis: Ecclesial Covenant & Constitution.”

<sup>94</sup> Charles W. Deweese, *Baptist Church Covenants* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1990), 16.

sought to address as a corrective. Regardless of whether a reader theologically agrees with their conclusions, there is value in reviewing the historical context that led to their ecclesial covenantal counter proposal. As Kuyper and Troeltsch noted earlier in their Protestant social theories, a lot can be learned about the church by viewing it against the state. Church and state relations formulate an important drama throughout the Church's history, and the unfolding engagements between the two provide an interpretative key to a deepened understanding of Protestant social theory. Furthermore, they provide the necessary historical context for the later formulation of the Free Church's ecclesial covenantal idea. And who better to serve as a guide of the political theological history of church-state relations than Oliver O'Donovan? As such, the next sections will summarize O'Donovan's survey of political theological history, and afterwards append to it the political theological contributions of the "Radical Reformers," thus preparing the way for an articulation of their ecclesial covenantal idea, and a summary of its implications.

#### Ecclesial Covenant and Constitution in the Classical Era

Although Jesus preached the coming of the Kingdom of God, O'Donovan makes the observation that the apostolic Church did not. According to O'Donovan, what they did preach was "what happened when the Kingdom came: its conflict with the established principalities and powers and its vindication at God's hand through Jesus' resurrection."<sup>95</sup> The triumph of the Kingdom in the Exaltation of Jesus Christ greatly alters the shape of political theology, and for this reason O'Donovan claims that "political theology has an

---

<sup>95</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 120.

ecclesiological mode, which takes the church seriously as a society and shows how the rule of God is realized there.”<sup>96</sup> With this triumph, the reign of God is manifested in the Church, and this manifestation is eschatologically situated prior to Christ’s second coming. Recalling O’Donovan’s earlier exegetical and political themes, “In the Christ-event we found the elements of God’s rule: an act of power, an act of judgment and the gift of possession.”<sup>97</sup> Within this eschatological and Christological framework, “the description of secular authority in the New Testament follows from the understanding that the authority of the risen Christ is present in the church’s mission.”<sup>98</sup> For O’Donovan, the role of this secular authority post-Exaltation is to secure that “space” in which the Church can conduct its mission by communicating Christ’s triumph; or adopting more Scriptural language, the state conducts this space according to 1 Tim 2:1–7 by facilitating a “quiet and peaceful life” that profits an environment for people to come “to the knowledge of the truth.”<sup>99</sup>

O’Donovan claims the Gentile mission of the church engages in two frontiers, with the first addressing society, and the second addressing its rulers.<sup>100</sup> Political

---

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 123, 146. O’Donovan writes, “That must be the primary eschatological assertion about the authorities, political and demonic, which govern the world: they have been made subject to God’s sovereignty in the Exaltation of Christ. The second, qualifying assertion is that this awaits a final universal presence of Christ to become fully apparent. Within the framework of these two assertions there opens up an account of secular authority which presumes neither that the Christ-event never occurred nor that the sovereignty of Christ is now transparent and uncontested.”

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. This notion of “peace” as the secular authority’s primary responsibility post-Exaltation, and *ala* Romans 13, is a very Augustinian idea. In Augustine, *City of God* (New York, NY: Crown Publishing Group, 1958), Augustine argues that the place where the two cities meet is in a common need for what Augustine calls conventional peace. Augustine writes regarding man in *City of God*, “By the very laws of his nature, he seems, so to speak, forced into fellowship and, as far as in him lies, into peace with every man” (XIX.12).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 193.

theology's mission addresses both in that order, and the results of this engagement prior to modernity is known in the West as an era called "Christendom."<sup>101</sup> O'Donovan does not believe that Christian political order is "a project of the church's mission," but is rather a response of the Church's mission to "witness to the Kingdom of God."<sup>102</sup> The Church does not seize alien powers, but in Christendom the alien secular power becomes "attentive to the church."<sup>103</sup> For this reason, it is profitable to the study of political theology and ecclesiology to observe how the Church and the State in Christendom interacted. O'Donovan provides six helpful historical categories to summarize these episodes.

The first of these categories O'Donovan calls "the rout of the demons."<sup>104</sup> It consists of the perspective of the Church at the height of the Constantinian moment, and is represented in its enthusiastic form by Eusebius of Caesarea's 4<sup>th</sup> century speeches entitled *Laus Constantini*.<sup>105</sup> Eusebius portrays the view of an apologist of empire, and argues that "the beginning of the Roman empire coincided with the Christ event as a sign of the rout of the demons."<sup>106</sup> For Eusebius and others in the pre-Nicene Church, the creation of a single empire that routed the plurality of national governments was akin to

---

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 195. On Christendom, O'Donovan writes, "I use the term 'Christendom' (in keeping with a good deal of current discussion) to refer to a historical idea: that is to say, the idea of a professedly Christian secular political order, and the history of that idea in practice. Christendom is an era, an era in which the truth of Christianity was taken to be a truth of secular politics.... Let us say that the era lies between AD 313, the date of the Edict of Milan, and 1791, the date of the First Amendment to the US Constitution."

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>105</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Laus Constantini (Oration in Praise of Constantine)* and *Vita Constantini (Life of Constantine)*, NPNF 11.1.

<sup>106</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 198.

the battle of monotheism against polytheism, and attributed to being the victory of God through the “eternal” empire.<sup>107</sup>

The second of these categories O’Donovan calls “Redefining the boundary,” and consists of those post-Eusebian thinkers who sought to contrast the boundaries of God and Caesar.<sup>108</sup> The view was seen in thinkers like the anonymous Roman theologian Ambrosiaster, who claimed, “a king bears the image of God, a bishop the image of Christ.”<sup>109</sup> Ambrose of Milan took the argument further, and called for complete independence of the Church’s affairs from the emperor’s secular jurisdiction.<sup>110</sup> Augustine later sought to soften Ambrose’s aggressive posture with his development of society as consisting of “two cities” made of those who love God and those who do not.<sup>111</sup> While these two cities were distinct in their orientation, the citizens of both co-existed in an earthly realm where they held in common the pursuit of conventional peace.<sup>112</sup>

The third of these categories O’Donovan calls “Two rules,” and it proceeds after Augustine’s death, after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, and after the rise of the responsibilities of bishops to oversee the crumbling political structures in their diocese.<sup>113</sup> O’Donovan summarizes it neatly in Gelasius’ famous saying that moves Augustine’s duality “from the level of *society* (‘Two loves made two cities’) to the level of

---

<sup>107</sup> Eusebius, *Laus Constantini*, 6.

<sup>108</sup> O’Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 199.

<sup>109</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones veteris et novi testamenti*, ed. A. Souter, *CSEL* 50, 35.

<sup>110</sup> Ambrose of Milan, *Epistles*, translated by M. M. Beyenka, *FTC* 26, 75.22. Ambrose states that “only bishops should judge bishops, only priests, and that in cases of other kinds as well, where moral allegations are made against a bishop.”

<sup>111</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, XIV.28.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX.12.

*government* ('Two there are by whom this world is ruled as princes'). Sacred and secular rulers function within one universal society."<sup>114</sup> This saying became the spirited mantra of the Carolingian age, but was changed to instead say 'two there are by whom the *church* is ruled.' During this period the synthesis of the Church and Crown progressed gradually, and Isidore of Seville captures the progression where he wrote in *Sententiae*, "what the priest does not achieve with the authority of his teaching, secular power may command with the terror of discipline."<sup>115</sup>

The fourth of these categories O'Donovan calls "the supremacy of spiritual authority," and consists of the "Gregorian Reforms" of the late eleventh century.<sup>116</sup> These reforms sought to synthesize ecclesial and political powers beneath the office of the papacy; "Spiritual rule must have priority over secular."<sup>117</sup> While the Gelasian idea was arguing for an increased priority of the spiritual over the secular, Pope Gregory VII claimed juridical and constitutional supremacy.<sup>118</sup> Gregory VII's *Dictatus Papae* lists a number of these papal political prerogatives, including the right to "depose emperors," "be judged by no one," and "[be] the only one whose feet are to be kissed by all princes."<sup>119</sup>

The fifth of these categories O'Donovan calls "The authority of word alone," and occurs after several generations of developed natural law theory in the Roman Catholic

---

<sup>113</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 203.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. See Gelasius I's *Epistula ad Anastasium Imperatorem* in E. Schwartz' *Publizistische Sammlungen* (Paris: Garnier, 1963).

<sup>115</sup> Isidore, *Sententiae*, 3.51, PL 83.

<sup>116</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 205.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Gregory VII, *Letter 8.21*, in Oliver O'Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 243.

<sup>119</sup> Gregory VII, *Dictatus Papae*, in Oliver O'Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 242.

and Aristotelian traditions.<sup>120</sup> The changes came after a quarrel developed between Franciscan friars and the papacy on spiritual authority and the possibility of absolute poverty. Out of the controversy “came an attempt to articulate a different concept of spiritual authority, one based on the authority of the word,” and that saw “a word of Gospel truth” as having “its own distinct authority, different from the authority of threat or command.”<sup>121</sup> The idea was taken up by imperialist theologians like Marsilius of Padua, who argued in *Defender of the Peace* that because Christ’s judgment still remained in a future-tense, it was impossible to represent it fully here-and-now.<sup>122</sup> The Lutheran and Anglican Reformers developed the Marsilian pattern and word-based authority, arguing for an Augustinian “two kingdom” division “between opposed, coexisting social realities whose interaction creates history.”<sup>123</sup> Luther’s main contribution here is that the two kingdoms are in reality an ideal, needing the functional distinction of “two governments” that recognize Christians as both righteous and sinner.<sup>124</sup> This spiritual and secular distinction led Luther to distinguish between the inner-outer realms “of the mind and heart, on the one hand, and the realm of the social relations, on the other.”<sup>125</sup> Luther’s development of the Patristic doctrine of “Two”

---

<sup>120</sup> O’Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 206.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 208. On the eschatological orienting of authority, O’Donovan writes, “Earthly political authority represents Christ’s judgment in one way, but it lacks the claim to finality and ultimacy; its concern is to ensure the sufficient life simply within the scope of this passing age. Ecclesiastical authority represents Christ’s judgment in another way, by publishing the law which ensures the ultimate welfare of the community and of each soul, but it lacks the decisiveness of present coercion.” For an example of Marsilius’s contribution to this notion, see Marsilius Padua, *Defensor pacis*, translated by A. Gewirth (New York, NY: University of Toronto Press, 1956).

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>124</sup> Martin Luther, *On Secular Authority*, translated by J. J. Schindel and W. I. Brandt in *Luther’s Works*, Vol. XLV (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1955) 196, 1.3f.

<sup>125</sup> O’Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 209.

towards an emphasis of persons was a hallmark of a Protestant anthropology, and the corresponding implications led to Luther's doctrine of two kingdoms, station/vocations, and the threefold orders, all of which help birthed the Protestant social theory that O'Donovan critiques.

The sixth and final category O'Donovan calls "Restoring the balance," and focuses on the efforts of the final phase of Christendom to recover the equilibrium of the Marsilian pattern.<sup>126</sup> From the Roman Catholic side, adherents to the Salamanca school argued that secular power was "supreme in its own order."<sup>127</sup> They sought to separate secular power from papal jurisdiction, arguing, "So long as a thing is not incompatible with the salvation of souls and religion, the pope's office is not involved."<sup>128</sup> Instead, the Salamanca school argued that Christ's kingship was purely spiritual, and political order was grounded solely in Natural Law. On the Protestant side, Calvin sought an alternative ecclesiastical authority that developed Luther's ideas, and he sought to replace the papacy with a legal exercise and administration "solely by the word."<sup>129</sup> Calvin's attempt resulted in the establishment project at Geneva, which adopted an Augustinian, Gelasian, and Marsilian model of corresponding secular and ecclesial structures within a municipal format.<sup>130</sup> The city-state magisterial Reformers had as their theoretical task "to show that

---

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 209–210.

<sup>127</sup> Francisco Suarez, *Defensio fidei catholicae adversus Anglicanae sectae errores*, ed. by J. B. Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944), III.5.6.

<sup>128</sup> Francisco de Vitoria, *De potestate ecclesiae*, in A. Pagden and J. Lawrence's *Vitoria: Political Writings*, translated by J. Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1.5.9.

<sup>129</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, translated by F. L. Battles in *Library of Christian Classics* (London: SCM, 1961), IV.3.1.

<sup>130</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 210. Also see Calvin's *Institutes*, III.19.15, regarding Calvin's statements on the "twofold government in man" with one having "its seat in the soul" and the other only regulating "external conduct."

this authority could *extend into* a structured church authority which was subject to the exegesis of Scripture yet possessed sufficient social objectivity to provide effective institutional government.”<sup>131</sup> According to O’Donovan, Reformed churches sought to accomplish this theoretical task by stressing two characteristic features:

First, there was the claim for a scripturally ordained structure of ministry. This claim limited appeals to scriptural authority to a ministry which itself conformed to Scripture’s requirements, so curbing the free-floating apostolate of the preacher armed with a Bible. Secondly, there was the “jurisdiction”, which maintained the “discipline” (no longer in the intellectual sense!) over lay and ordained members of the church. This was supported by a modest element of church law.<sup>132</sup>

In summary, the six episodes reflect fluctuations in Church-State relations that gradually developed a refined notion of the two-fold authoritative institutional spheres. In this ebb-and-flow, some historical periods sought to absorb the authority of the Church beneath the State, while others sought the reverse. When it came time for the Protestant Reformers to appropriate these insights in a post-papal Protestant environment, Luther and Calvin sought to carry over many of the Church-State synthesis ideals into a magisterial model. O’Donovan at this point brings the summary to a close, however perhaps there is a helpful addendum to be made.

#### Ecclesial Covenant and Constitution in the Modern Era

It appears that the earlier section on “Ecclesial Covenant and Constitution in the Classical Era” is blatantly lacking treatment of the classical historicity of the covenantal idea. This was intentional. The earlier section did not set out to argue that a particular ecclesial idea

---

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 211.

of the Free Church Reformers was a notion held in some chain of historical continuity.<sup>133</sup> Rather, the earlier section serves the purpose of revealing a notable gap deriving from the problem of Church-State synthesis—a problem which the Protestant Reformers seemed to inherit with their magisterial proposals of establishment churches. Although O’Donovan brings his historical survey to a close with his sixth category, there are good reasons to add a seventh that focuses on the “Radical Reformers.” Overall, O’Donovan’s survey of Christendom attempts to glean insights from Church and State relations across political theological history, but his work suffers by ignoring a significant contributor to these relations through the Anabaptist, Baptist, and Free Church movements. The proposed seventh category provides an important bridge between inheriting the noted “Two” concepts developed throughout Christendom’s first six categories, and applying them to a contemporary pluralistic and post-modern setting. The Radical Reformers were inheritors of the apostolic, Augustinian, and Gelasian “Two” models, as well as Luther’s anthropology and Calvin’s reliance on the authoritative Word. The place where the

---

<sup>133</sup> I thought about focusing on a historical survey that pointed out examples of particular “church covenant” type approaches across the classical period. While it is in fact the approach taken to similar sections in the forthcoming marital and political chapters, such a survey as it pertains to the ecclesial chapter seemed better left as a separate future project. The concern is that the survey here would be taken to show the historicity of the “church covenants” idea, when in fact it was the gap left by the Church-State synthesis noted in O’Donovan’s six categorical periods that gave rise to the Radical Reformers and their development of particular ecclesial proposals. Even if the reader were to significantly disagree with the Radical Reformer’s ecclesiological convictions, the point the section serves to the wider chapter is in showing how Christian political theological history gives birth to an approach that sought to answer the problems inherent in the establishment church-state synthesis, through appraising the covenantal idea to understand the universality and catholicity of the Church, and to explain the particularity of the ecclesial institution in the form of “church covenants.” There exist other noteworthy Protestant attempts to utilize the covenantal idea to develop rich ecclesiologies, however limitations and needs required a narrowing to the formulations that came out of the Radical Reformers. The Reformed tradition represents an example of such an alternative and masterful example of a serious appropriation of the covenantal idea to develop a rich ecclesiology (and the Reformed tradition is present in both the cited Separatists, and Reformed

Radical Reformers differ with—and reform—Christendom is by parting with the magisterial and establishment church tradition, and instead arguing for an ecclesiology that emphasized the autonomous local church and believer-based ordinances.

The Radical Reformer Balthasar Hubmaier is both a father of Anabaptist and Baptist movements, and someone who inherits many elements of Christendom’s political-theological experience. Hubmaier sought to extend the Reformation’s ideals into the areas of polity and sacrament.<sup>134</sup> In his work *On the Sword*, Hubmaier recalls Christendom’s twofold emphasis, writing that “the state alone . . . [has] the right to bear the sword, and to the church alone . . . [has] authority in spiritual matters.”<sup>135</sup> Unlike many later Anabaptists, Hubmaier believed members of Anabaptist churches should fully participate in society, which included serving in the governmental functions of policing and warfare.<sup>136</sup> Whereas the state utilized coercion, Hubmaier noted the church utilized its ban, “without either infringing on the office of the other.”<sup>137</sup> While he seemingly inherited many of the magisterial Reformers own convictions, Hubmaier parts with them and wider Christendom by strengthening the division between church and state, and

---

Baptists). However, it is my opinion that certain attachments within the tradition to paedobaptistic sacramentalism water down some of the covenantal insights.

<sup>134</sup> The main reason for selecting Hubmaier as representative of this seventh category is because he is uniquely located within Christendom, is in dialogue with the Magisterial Reformers, and precedes the later Anabaptist and Baptist movements. Later Anabaptists will differ with Hubmaier in his position on the sword, and will instead emphasize a “peace church” typified in the works of Yoder. Baptists, on the other hand, will maintain Hubmaier’s acceptance of the sword, and their emphasis ultimately led to the first “Baptist,” Thomas Hewllys, to part with his more Anabaptist-minded brethren. Hubmaier was both an Anabaptist, and a Proto-Baptist.

<sup>135</sup> William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1963), 61.

<sup>136</sup> Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology An Introduction* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1995), 58–59.

<sup>137</sup> Balthasar Hubmaier, “On The Sword (1527),” in *The Radical Reformation*, ed. Michael G. Baylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 193.

argued in *Concerning Heretics and Those Who Burn Them* for complete freedom of religion.<sup>138</sup>

Hubmaier and other Radical Reformers saw themselves extending the Reformation's principle of *sola scriptura* into neglected matters of polity and the sacraments. Against the Magisterial Reformers and Medieval Christendom, Hubmaier pledged "to prove that the baptism of infants is a work without any ground in the divine word."<sup>139</sup> In *On the Christian Baptism of Believers*, Hubmaier supports his pledge by providing an impressive account of New Testament baptism passages that show a distinctly credobaptistic pattern. Hubmaier writes, "This now is the order put down in these passages: (1) word, (2) hearing, (3) change of life or recognition of sin, (4) baptism, (5) works."<sup>140</sup> From this pattern, Hubmaier argues,

Baptism in water in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, or in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, is nothing other than a public confession and testimony of internal faith and commitment by which the person also testifies outwardly and declares before everyone that he is a sinner.<sup>141</sup>

The inferences of Hubmaier's order are that faith must be actively present in the life of the believer, thus excluding the baptism of the infant.<sup>142</sup> The overall ecclesiological

---

<sup>138</sup> Balthasar Hubmaier, "Concerning Heretics and Those Who Burn Them (1525)," in *Balthasar Hubmaier The Leader of the Anabaptists*, ed. Henry C. Vedder (New York, NY: AMS Press, 1971), 86. Balthasar states in article 22, "The secular power rightly and properly puts to death the criminals who injure the bodies of the defenseless (Rom 13:3-4)... It is a small thing to burn innocent paper, but to point out an error and to disprove it by Scripture, that is art.... Now it is clear to every one, even the blind, that a law to burn heretics is an invention of the devil. 'Truth is immortal'."

<sup>139</sup> Hubmaier, "The Open Appeal of Balthasar of Friedberg to All Christian Believers," 107.

<sup>140</sup> Hubmaier, "The Christian Baptism of Believers," in *The Writings of Balthasar Hubmaier*, ed. G. D. Davidson (Liberty, WV: Reproduced by microfilm, 1939), 106. In this work Hubmaier examines passages describing baptism under John, Jesus, and the Apostles, and notes throughout the consistency of the baptismal pattern.

<sup>141</sup> Hubmaier, "The Christian Baptism of Believers, 100.

<sup>142</sup> Hubmaier utilizes humor and wit to get his point across. "You say: It is forbidden to baptize donkeys because Christ told us to baptize people. Well, then, let us also baptize a Jew and a Turk. You say:

implications are important. If baptism marked entrance into the church, then believer's baptism produced a church of regenerate members. Ultimately, Hubmaier's notion of a regenerative church of believers conflicts with many of the magisterial proposals of earlier Christendom. A believer-based approach to the church and her sacraments complicates the particular geographical authority and territory of the establishment church synthesis. However, it also opens the door to the consideration of other explanations for the particularity of the believers' church.

The addition of the seventh category of Radical Reformers is an important addendum to O'Donovan's understanding of Christendom and political theology's history. The work of Balthasar Hubmaier and later Anabaptist, Baptist, and Free Church theologies developed an emphasis on a locally autonomous church composed of baptized and regenerate church members who help mutual obedience to the Gospel of Christ. As an Anglican, O'Donovan arguably finds himself within the magisterial tradition, and perhaps this is a reason for the absence of the Radical Reformers—as well as his criticisms against traditional Protestant social theory—in his work. Or perhaps he simply did not think of them as significant enough to merit additional treatment. Regardless, if the traditional Protestant social theory is problematic in explaining and distinguishing between the particular and universal aspect of various social spheres, perhaps it is because the problem in part lies with the magisterial formulation of an establishment

---

Yes, one should baptize people who believe. Answer: Why, then, do you baptize infants?" (p. 136). This one is especially funny: "Look at what your child knows or what it answers when one asks, 'Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?' Then it cries or wets its diapers" (p. 138). "Now certainly at that time infants ate meat and drank wine as little as in our times. How then could they have been baptized?" (p. 139).

church. After all, the synthesis of state and church seems to find common ground in infant baptism, and this synthesis makes it difficult to distinguish between the social spheres. It also blurs the line between particular and universal. The synthesis arguably merits O'Donovan's criticism that the particularity of the state can be confused for universality, and that the universality of the Church can be confused for particularity. In contrast, the Baptist understanding of *ekklēsia* emphasizes the local believing assembly, which is the sense used in the super majority of the New Testament's 109 occurrences of ἐκκλησία.

The emphasis of the local believing assembly may actually provide a partial alleviation of O'Donovan's social theoretical criticisms.<sup>143</sup> O'Donovan comes to the conclusion in *The Desire of the Nations* that the post-Exaltation Church is a political society.<sup>144</sup> This political character is hidden and "to be discerned by faith as the ascended Christ who governs it is to be discerned by faith."<sup>145</sup> This is O'Donovan's reason for the ecclesial turn. He sees the Church as representing "God's Kingdom by living under its rule, and by welcoming the world under its rule. It recapitulates the Christ-event in itself, and so proclaims the Christ-event to the world."<sup>146</sup> O'Donovan understands this Christ event as the structuring principle for ecclesiology, and "in response to the Advent of Christ, the church is a gathering community."<sup>147</sup> O'Donovan sees the Church's mission

---

<sup>143</sup> John Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005), 28.

<sup>144</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 159.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

and catholicity in her call to the world to acknowledge and live beneath Christ's rule.<sup>148</sup> The unity of the Church is rooted in acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God, and O'Donovan sees the signs of this gathered Church as rooted in the sacraments of baptism and communion.

Although O'Donovan proposes in *The Ways of Judgment* the idea of "place" and "space" as a solution to the problem of particularity and universality, perhaps there is a solution in a Baptist extension of O'Donovan's notion of the Church as "gathered community." Hubmaier's criticisms of magisterial ecclesiology are in part an attempt to help identify the place and space of the gathered believing community. Hubmaier helps identify the invisible and universal boundaries through emphasizing the Church consists of those individuals in churches of actual regenerated believers. His treatment on the sacraments also helps identify the lower-case "c" churches as those particular places where baptized believers physically gather as identifiable members. However, one essential and complimentary component has thus far been continuously absent. Given the path paved, how does this tradition absorb and utilize covenant as an ecclesial idea?

The interpretive key towards the historical appraisal of covenant as an ecclesial idea resides in what the Free Church called "church covenants." In *Baptist Church Covenants*, Charles W. Deweese defines a church covenant as "a series of written pledges based on the Bible which church members voluntarily make to God and to one another regarding their basic moral and spiritual commitments and the practice of their faith."<sup>149</sup>

---

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Charles W. Deweese, *Baptist Church Covenants* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1990), viii. While the emphasis is on a written constitution, unwritten constitutions in political theory are recognized as

Some of the earliest extra-biblical examples of the covenantal approach to community building were present among the Qumran community and their *Dead Sea Scrolls*.<sup>150</sup> Outside of the New Testament, Pliny the Younger's *Letter to Emperor Trajan* in 112 A.D. mentions Christians binding themselves by oath to abstain from immoralities.<sup>151</sup> Besides this early reference, it is not surprising that the Middle Ages lacked significant church covenantal emphasis, given the dominance of papal paedobaptist sacramental ecclesiology and establishment-friendly political theology. With the Reformers came advancements in covenantal convictions (especially Calvin), but it is with the Anabaptists, Baptists, Congregationalists, and Separatists that the notion of particular church covenants really comes to form. The Free Church ecclesiologies enabled a scenario where mutually-agreed-upon church covenants could occur, given their emphasis that the church consisted of the type of regenerated believing members who could volitionally enter into such covenants—they were neither forced by birth or territory.

One early Baptist representative of the church covenants ecclesiology was the *London Baptist Confession* of 1644. The confession continued Hubmaier's major ecclesiological themes, and wedded them to a definition of the particular local church as "a company of visible saints ... joined to the Lord and each other by mutual

---

serving the same role—despite their seemingly nebulous nature. It was the rights guaranteed in the "unwritten constitution" of England that America's Founding Fathers appealed to, and ultimately articulated in written form in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 16. See *The Zadokite Document* and its oath-based moral stipulations as an example of Qumranic covenantal obligations.

<sup>151</sup> Pliny the Younger, *Letter 10 [to Trajan] 46.7*; cited in *Documents of the Christian Church*, eds. Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 4.

agreement.”<sup>152</sup> Another early example occurs with the Congregationalists and their “Savoy Declaration” (1658), which stated churches consisted of members who “willingly consent to walk together according to the appointment of Christ, giving themselves unto the Lord, and to one another by the will of God in professed subjection to the ordinances of the gospel.”<sup>153</sup> A third representative occurs with the Separatist John Smyth (1570–1612), who defines the church as “a visible communion of saints ... [that consisted of] two, three, or more saints joined together by covenant with God and themselves, freely to use all the holy things of God, according to the Word, for their mutual edification and God’s glory.”<sup>154</sup> The emphasis of the church covenant idea is also evident with more recent Free Church traditions, such as the Southern Baptist Convention’s “Baptist Faith and Message” (2000), which defines the church as an “autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel.”<sup>155</sup>

These confessional representatives evidence the appropriation of the covenantal idea to explain the visible origination and constitution of particular churches.<sup>156</sup> In short, the underlining concept is the mutual agreement of gospel-believing individuals to covenant with one another to live as an *ekklēsia*. As the earlier survey of the covenantal notion in Scripture revealed, the idea of covenant was used by individuals to mutually establish God-focused morally-bound marriages, friendships, governments, communities,

---

<sup>152</sup> *London Confession of Faith*, 33.

<sup>153</sup> *Savoy Declaration*, “Of the Institution of Churches, and the Order Appointed in Them by Jesus Christ,” p. 8, in *Creeds of Christendom*, ed. Philip Schaff (New York, NY: Harper, 1877–1905), 3:725.

<sup>154</sup> John Smyth, “Principles and Inferences concerning the Visible Church,” in *The Works of John Smyth*, ed. W. T. Whitley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), 252.

<sup>155</sup> *The Baptist Faith and Message* 2000, Section VI., “The Church.”

treatises, and other relationships. The Free Church ecclesiology adopted this biblical idea of horizontal covenants to explain the church's universality and particularity. First, the Free Church ecclesiology understood the Church's universal and invisible catholicity through the vertical covenant of the New Testament's "διαθήκης καινῆς." Second, the Free Church ecclesiology explained the space and place of gathered churches by modeling the biblical notion of horizontal covenants to establish "autonomous local congregation[s] of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel."<sup>157</sup> These convictions ultimately led them to create written covenants at a particular church's inception, which the church's members vowed to uphold through the external signs of believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>158</sup>

### **Covenant and Constitution and Its Significant Ecclesial Contributions**

Prior to appraising covenant as an ecclesial idea, the chapter began with a scholar noted for his contributions to the field of political theology. It may seem like an odd starting point, but O'Donovan rightfully demonstrates the important relationship between

---

<sup>156</sup> For a survey of the church covenantal idea across 16<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptists, Scotch Reformers, Separatists, Baptists, or Congregationalists, see Champlin Burrage, *The Church Covenant Idea: Its Origin and Development* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1904).

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> See an example of a church covenant in Appendix 6, "Praxis: Ecclesial Covenant & Constitution." for an example of a written covenant that I developed while pastoring a Southern Baptist church. It is also curious whether the two ordinances can be developed in a manner that further distinguishes the universal and covenant components of the ecclesial institution. In short, perhaps the sign of baptism evidences the covenantal partnering and entrance into the universal New Covenant, and perhaps the sign of the Lord's supper emphasizes the covenantal oath to a particular church. Perhaps the ordinances each attest to both. Regardless, the two ordinances clearly carry covenantal overtones. This covenantal tone is seen in the usage of the word *sacramentum*, which is where the word "sacraments" comes from, and which means oath, promise, or contract. A number of the elements of the two ordinances recall elements from a number of Old Testament covenants. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper/Lord's Table/Communion recalls the covenantal images and signs of the Mosaic covenant's confirmation and its Table for the Bread

ecclesiology and political theology. Both political and ecclesial theories ask questions related to origination, constitution, behavior, law, authority, mission, and representation. How the church goes about structuring itself helps navigate broader social questions, as well as depicts the borders and functions of non-ecclesial institutions. Furthermore, it models the most ultimate and final sense of God's intended social order. While treating this social order from the vantage point of the church and from the emphasis of political judgment, O'Donovan makes a number of passing references to the importance of the covenantal idea. However, he unfortunately never develops the idea with any real depth in *The Desire of the Nations* or *The Ways of Judgment*. This absence begs the question of what the covenantal idea can contribute towards an understanding of the church's missional address, and towards the ecclesial institution's universal and particular identities.

The bulk of this chapter sought to survey covenant as an ecclesial idea in Scripture and church history. It surveyed Scripture first, and identified two major categories of covenants. One of these categories were called "horizontal" covenants, and consisted of individuals who pre-suppose God's moral framework to covenant with one another and establish mutually-agreed-upon relational obligations. Examples included the "particular" covenants to friendship (1 Sam 18:3), to marriage (Mal 2:14), and even to political alliance (Gen 21:27–32). A second identified category was called "vertical" covenants, and consisted of covenantal relationships that were established and defined by God. Examples included the "universal" Adamic and Noahic covenants (Genesis 1–3; 6–

---

of the Presence (Exod 25:23–30), or more generally the sign of a covenant symbolized in a sacrificial meal

9), as well as the “special” Abrahamic (Genesis 12–17), Mosaic (Exodus 19–24), and Davidic covenants (2 Samuel 7). Both horizontal and vertical covenants shared a number of common elements, such as the creation of morally-bound structured relationships (Gen 26:29), the vowed establishment of binding obligations and penalties (Gen 26:31; Deut 27:15–26), and the presence of formal ratification through external signs and oaths (Gen 31:54). What makes covenant distinct from a mere contract was its moral, social, and relational characteristics. The general idea behind the Hebrew word בְּרִית (*berith*, “covenant”) is deeply social and relational. This social and relational emphasis is seen in the Hebrew terms employed to describe God’s keeping of a covenant as remembering it (זָכַר, *zakar*), as well as the operative mechanism of a covenant being grounded in “loving kindness” (חֶסֶד, *kheseḏ*).<sup>159</sup> The relational emphasis is even evident in the Hebrew term employed to describe violating a covenant, which carries an anti-social sense of alienation (עָבַר, *abar*).

The relationship-producing idea of covenant provides an important “meta-narrative” key to understanding Scripture. At the core of this meta-narrative is God’s goal to establish and redeem his עֵדָה (*edah*, “congregation, people”). God shapes his Old Testament *edah* throughout a number of special covenants, and the Old Testament’s prophets herald their culmination in a foretold New Covenant. This New Covenant prophesy comes into fulfillment through the Christ, who is the promised “mediator of a

---

between individuals (Gen 31:54).

<sup>159</sup> In contrast, contracts do not produce “kin,” let alone are their operative mechanisms loving kindness.

new covenant [διαθήκης καινῆς], so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant [πρώτη διαθήκη]” (Heb 9:15). Through Christ’s propitiatory fulfillment of the terms of the “πρώτη διαθήκη,” God fulfills his covenantal promises, which results in the New Testament’s creation of a fellowship of covenanted believers (*koinōnia*) that organizes into particular congregations (*ekklēsia*). The Church and these churches are identified through the signs of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. This biblical metanarrative also provides the background for major ecclesiological developments across the Church’s history. While the covenantal idea was used throughout the church’s experience to explain its universality, a number of identified traditions in Protestantism capitalized on the covenantal idea by modeling the origination and constitution of their churches after the biblical warrant of horizontal covenants. This adoption of the horizontal covenantal idea led them to explain the origination and constitution of particular churches through written “church covenants.”

Taken together, it seems covenant provides a convincing and biblically permissible explanation to both the universal and particular origination of the invisible Church and visible particular churches. Covenant can explain both the fellowship of the Body of Christ (Church), and the origination and legitimacy of the body/brethren known as “First Baptist Church of Raleigh.” In addition, the covenantal idea manages to synthesize “voluntarist” and “expressivist” elements, in that they consist of persons mutually covenanting with one another before God, to express God’s order and their Gospel-commitments. Furthermore, covenant as an ecclesial idea also synthesizes the

origination and constitutional elements of an institution, given a written church covenant simultaneously originates a particular church, and gives it constitutional form. However, does the covenantal idea's utility end with the ecclesial institution? O'Donovan rightly brings his readers to the ecclesiological horizon because it is here that the Church and world meet in what O'Donovan considers to be political theology's concern. From this address, what else can an appraisal of the covenantal idea reveal? Can it help explain the particularity and universality of other institutions as well? Can it help formalize a response to O'Donovan's criticisms against the traditional Protestant social theory?

Covenant not only has the ability to explain the universality and particularity of the Church and churches, but also those of the Family and families, and the Kingdom and kingdoms. The work of scholars such as Gordon Hugenberger have helpfully examined the relevance of the covenantal idea to the origination and constitution of marriage.<sup>160</sup> Furthermore, the Jewish political theorist Daniel Elazar has made monumental strides towards appraising covenant as a political idea in distinction to conquest, organic, and contractual political models.<sup>161</sup> Covenant can explain the universality of the human family with the covenantal origin of Adam and Eve's union, as well as the moral and religious relational origination and constitution of particular families. Take the Goenaga family as a possible example. Prior to marriage, Leonard Goenaga and Katrina Martinez were simply separate individuals in courtship. When they exchanged vows, and entered into a covenantal union, their relationship and identities changed in an ontological and

---

<sup>160</sup> Gordon Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1994).

social sense. They became a particular family; a newly established public context; a very real oneness biblically articulated as a one-flesh union that was symbolized in the changing of names. They became publically recognized and referred to as the “Goenagas.” Leonard and Katrina were not simply two individuals with some newly specified contractual obligations, but were rather changed in some fundamental and particular way.

Furthermore, covenant potentially not only explains the universality of Christ’s Kingdom/Government, but also explains particular kingdoms/governments. One such example was the Mayflower’s “Compact,” which relied upon the covenantal idea to establish a morally-bound particular polity.<sup>162</sup> These precursory ideas hint at the potential fruitfulness that appraising the covenantal idea may have as it relates to explaining the origins and constitution of the other non-ecclesial institutions of traditional Protestant social theory. If such an appraisal finds continued scriptural, historical, and political theological merit, O’Donovan’s criticisms of traditional Protestant social theory become unwarranted.

---

<sup>161</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel Covenant & Civil Society*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998).

<sup>162</sup> The “Mayflower Compact” was originally called the “Mayflower Covenant.”

## CHAPTER 4 AN APPRAISAL OF COVENANT AS A MARITAL IDEA

The past decade has seen a revolution unparalleled in the history of Western civilization. Revolutionaries have revolted against Christendom's understanding of marriage and sexuality. This revolution has sought to fundamentally change humanity through redefining law, language, and what it means to be human. In the place of monogamy and two sexes, revolutionaries have argued for a spectrum of subjective sexual orientations and gender identities. Gone are the days where these revolutionaries argued people were born with a specific orientation. Rather, it is argued that sexuality and gender are fluid aspects on a wide-ranging spectrum. Individuals may identify as the sex in which they were born with. Others may identify with the opposite sex. Some may identify their gender as having no sex, or as having both sexes, or as a combination of some of one sex and less of another, or as having a gender so complicated it cannot be described. They may also have orientations where they are sexually attracted to the opposite sex, or the same sex, or those with no identified sex, or only those sexes that are fluid in their gender, or only robots, or only themselves, or only two-dimensional animated beings, or even a sexuality that is not attracted to sex at all but is only romantically attracted to sexes.<sup>1</sup> The list is dizzying, and ever expanding. In place of monogamy and

---

<sup>1</sup> This list is a rather small representation of the gender identities and sexualities that sex and marriage revolutionaries are proposing. The provided list is based on a number of friends I have and whom

heterosexuality, these revolutionaries quite literally raise the flags of aegosexuality, androphiliasexuality, asexuality, autosexuality, bisexuality, cupiosexuality, demisexuality, fraysexuality, graysexuality, gynosexuality, heterosexuality, homosexuality, lithsexuality, pansexuality, polysexuality, robosexuality, skoliosexuality, and the list goes on. In place of binary male and female sexes, they advocate for the gendered-spectrum consisting of agender, aporagender, androgender, bigender, cisgender, demigender, genderfluid, genderqueer, greygender, intergender, pangender, polygender, novigender, transgender, trigender, and the list goes on *and on*. In place of the male and female pronouns he/she, him/her, his/her, his/hers, and himself/herself, these revolutionaries advocate for the usage of the created gender-neutral pronouns zie/sie/ey/ve/tey/e, zim/sie/em/ver/ter/em, zir/hir/eir/vis/tem/eir, zis/hirs/eirs/vers/ters/eirs, and zieself/hirself/eirself/verself/terself/emself.<sup>2</sup> The significant implications for how a society views marriage and family should be obvious.

The attempted reorientation of how Western civilization has understood marriage and sexuality is rightly called a revolution. What can be more revolutionary than redefining something as genetically encoded and human as sex, and as linguistically important as pronouns? The revolution has sought to push its reforms in a state's

---

I love deeply, and who actually champion and identify with the majority of these listed gender identities and sexualities. Respectfully, these are their real alleged identities, and while I almost sought a footnote defining each one, that information is easily enough acquired through a simple online search. If the reader thinks some of the items on the list are absurd, just search "waifuism" and the arguments these individuals have had over whether it is cheating to be in a relationship with a three-dimensional person when they are in a relationship with a two-dimensional anime/cartoon character (a "waifu"). This group really represents a very small sample of orientations and identities.

<sup>2</sup> The list is the one the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender resource center officially recommends their students use "in the interest of greater equality." See <http://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/support/gender-pronouns/>. The pronouns "how to guide" is even more confusing.

marriage laws, in Hollywood's movies and entertainment, in children's books about transgendered crayons, in elementary public-school curriculums, in the military and corporate America's insurance policies covering sex-reassignment surgeries, and even in the pronouns used in dissertations at mainstream universities. The pace at which a Christian understanding of marriage and sexuality is coming under attack in the West is simply dizzying. However, this social and sexual dissonance was not unexpected. Harvard sociologist Carle Zimmerman argued for the foundational importance of how society views marriage and sex as early as the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> From the rise of the cohabitation rate, to the development of different legal solutions to marriage, to the epidemic of a plummeting birthrate, Zimmerman was notably prophetic.

It would also be foolish to assume such ruptures in a society's sexual conscience are defined only at the fringes of subjective sexualities. They are evidenced as closely as the dinner table. Just the other week, I cooked a Cuban meal for a Baptist and a Roman Catholic couple who shared their intention to get married. What was their perspective? Did it involve a high-churched Roman Catholic understanding of the sacramental union, or the one-flesh covenantal bond of husband and wife? Neither. It involved the need to go to a courthouse and get contractually "married." As for the ceremony, it could wait until enough funds were raised for a televisionesque dream wedding. Furthermore, the gentleman was receiving insurance benefits under his mother's policy, and if they got married he would lose them. The concept of marriage was chiefly a financial decision, not a moral one.

---

<sup>3</sup> Carle C. Zimmerman, *Family and Civilization* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies

Their view of marriage is a far cry from the type of covenantal sanctity in which marriage is described in Scripture and the Church's history. Instead of "leaving" one's family and "cleaving" to one's wife in holy matrimony, decisions to get marriage today are made based upon medical insurance benefits. How did Western society get to a place where marriage was seen as merely some secular contractual benefit? What theologically motivated perspectives can challenge the contemporary revolution? Is this revolution healthy for society? What effect do such contractarian and atomistic perspectives have not only on perceptions of family and marriage, but on the health of a society and civilization as a whole? Finally, what can an appraisal of marriage as a covenantal idea contribute to these questions, and how can it help contribute to a response to O'Donovan's criticism of traditional Protestant social theory?

To address these problems, Zimmerman's work in familial sociology is an excellent starting point. Whereas O'Donovan served as a question-probing guide towards exploring covenant's ecclesial significance, Zimmerman helps guide an exploration of its familial importance. His general thesis connecting family and marriage types with a society's general health is convincing and sobering. However, it is not perfect. Zimmerman's views are in need of a theological perspective that augments his sociological training by strengthening his thesis with the insights of appraising covenant as a marital idea. This chapter will argue towards such an augmentation by (1) correcting Zimmerman's treatment of alternative views of marriage in church history, (2) rectifying his relative silence on the marriage-as-a-covenant perspective, and (3) providing an

---

Institute, 2008).

alternative to his proposal to recover familyism by instead proposing a solution in covenant as a marital idea. Furthermore, an appraisal of marriage as a covenantal idea also in part addresses O'Donovan's criticisms, and contributes to an answer to the question of the particularity and universality of the familial institution. After reviewing Zimmerman's thought, the chapter shall appraise marriage as a covenantal idea in Scripture and Church history. It shall then conclude with an examination of the covenantal idea's significance in wedding a moral-framework to the institution of marriage and opposing the postmodernist familial revolution.

### **An Introduction to Marital Origination**

Carle Zimmerman was a distinguished professor at Harvard University whose specialty included rural and family sociology, and whose contributions to the field of familial studies are both profound and prophetic. A sociologist specializing in rural studies seems an odd place to start an appraisal of marriage as a covenantal idea, but his work *Family and Civilization* presents an important backdrop to the overall survey of the origination and constitution of marriage.<sup>4</sup> In this work, Zimmerman addresses a problem he sees plaguing the field of family sociology that came to popularity in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. As the conception of the family as a private institution gained prominence, a school of sociology arose that sought to explain familial structures along progressive-linear and socio-evolutionary lines.<sup>5</sup> Sociologists such as Henry Summer Maine and

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 19. Zimmerman identifies some of these progressive-linear and socio-evolutionary approaches who "support, and operate upon the hypotheses of linear negation of the family," as represented

Herbert Spencer “emphasized the fact that the family has a definite beginning, an original type, that could be determined.”<sup>6</sup> In his work, Zimmerman argues that family sociology erred to adopt this linear principle as a philosophical presupposition, and instead argues that on critical, historical, analytical, and casual grounds, family sociology demonstrates a number of familial types that civilizations adopt.<sup>7</sup>

The importance of Zimmerman’s observation is twofold. First, Zimmerman is a corrective to the popular sociology of his time that assumed philosophical principles ultimately justified a linear-progressive model of contractarian individualist familial models.<sup>8</sup> Second, that the product of this popular sociology produced the atomistic familial model, which was actually harmful to the stability of civilizations and, historically, in need of correction. Zimmerman explains his work as showing that the

disintegration of the family into contractual and noninstitutional forms is so devastating to high cultural society that these atypical forms can last only a short while and will in time have to be corrected.... All of these facts strike directly at most of the family sociology which seeks to hold that the “unrestrained individual” is the end of society and the family his private agent.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, Zimmerman claims,

It had a firm beginning with the rise of nationalism and the Protestant conception that the family bond was holy but not a sacrament. It led through the philosophical conception of the eighteenth century that the family was a union based upon private contract with only incidental, but necessary, civil implications. The nineteenth- and early twentieth-century schools of family sociology, with their consistently negative attitudes toward the binding and displeasing aspects of

---

in “The great works in family sociology by Maine, Bachofen, Lubbock, Spencer, Starcke, Westermarck, McLennan, Engels, Bebel, and Howard.”

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> A parallel between O’Donovan and Zimmerman is notable in their shared opposition of contractarian and atomistic individualism in the institution of the church and political theology, or marriage and familial sociology. This approach also parallels what Strauss did in the field of political philosophy.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 20.

the family unit, were but the wholesale development of centuries of previous thought which in a smaller way had the same attitude toward familism.<sup>10</sup>

Zimmerman notes that the problem made by his sociology peers was one primarily of classification. The linear-progressive models of Maine and Spencer lacked the effort to explain “how the family functions and what it really means.”<sup>11</sup> Instead, Zimmerman set out to meet this problem by proposing a new classification “which combines the power of the family as a social unit with the social functions the society delegates to the family.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, Zimmerman sought to develop his classification by studying the constitution of familial models throughout history, and to what degree these familial constitutions held power within their respective societies. His concern was not necessarily the search for some aboriginal familial origin of primate humans, or an evolutionary progression of familial concepts, but one that sought to study the constitution of the family and the degree of power it held in society. Zimmerman spends the bulk of *Family and Civilization* surveying and analyzing these models across Western civilization.

According to Zimmerman’s historical survey, three noted family types exist among civilizations. He calls these types the trustee family, the domestic family, and the atomistic family.<sup>13</sup> Zimmerman argues that the familial type can be identified by the

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 18–19.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 25–30. On defining the trustee family type, Zimmerman writes, “The trustee family is so named because it more or less considers itself as immortal, existing in perpetuity and never being extinguished. As a result, the living members are not the family, but merely ‘trustees’ of its blood, rights, property, name, and position for their lifetimes” (p. 25).

On defining the domestic family type, Zimmerman writes, “The domestic family is a middle type, arising out of modifications of the trustee family or being revived by governmental or religious sanctions

degree of power held by the family in areas such as religious or policing authority, as well as the extent of the family's member boundaries. While Zimmerman notes a number of examples where these three can coexist at any one time in any one civilization, his overall thesis sets out to survey how the family types move in an almost Hegelian fashion, with each type serving as thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Against the linear-familial sociologists, Zimmerman acknowledges that while these types develop in civilizations according to a number of factors, the direction is more circular than simply evolutionary. To prove his point, Zimmerman conducts a historical survey of the movement of these three family types across the three major Western Civilizations of Greece, Rome, and Modern Western society. All three civilizations not only share in evidencing these three family types, but also in exhibiting similar social situations that surrounded their societal decay. In particular, Zimmerman identifies among these civilizations a societal trend that where the family decayed, "divorce, adultery, sex license, childlessness, and other forms of behavior increased to astronomical

---

from the atomistic type.... It satisfies to some extent the natural desires for freedom from family bonds and for individualism, yet it also preserves sufficient social structure to enable the state or body politic to depend upon it as an aid in government and as a source of the extreme power needed by states in carrying out their functions" (p. 27). Furthermore, "This second type of family is called domestic because it arises under conditions when trade sets in and when the freeflowing of values, lands, goods, and persons is essential to commerce.... The end of passive solidarity marks the almost complete emergence of the individual before the law. Thus the history of the domestic family includes a long series of changes in this decline of passive solidarity, leading to the rise of conceptions of absolute divorce" (p. 28).

On defining the atomistic family type, Zimmerman writes, "This family type is called atomistic because of the rise of the conception that, as far as is compatible with the successful carrying-on of society, the individual is to be freed of the family bonds, and the state is to become much more an organization of individuals.... If the trustee family represents the great family, measuring greatness in terms of legal and social power and responsibilities given the family, the atomistic family represents the great individual, measuring the individualism in terms of legal and social power and responsibility given the individual" (p. 30).

proportions.”<sup>14</sup> As the “family failed to function as a social force” during the atomistic periods, declining civilizations either attempted to enforce changes through the state, or were overrun by civilizations with stronger familial types.<sup>15</sup>

From these surveys, Zimmerman makes two important conclusions as they relate to the thesis of this dissertation. The first is that there appears to be a strong correlation between a civilization’s religiousness and its familial status. Religion has the tendency to take a system of family values in the finite world and bring them into an interpretation of a transcendent and infinite system of values.<sup>16</sup> While the trustee family type tends to be polytheistic given the relation between a family and their familial gods, the domestic period tends to correlate with “a drawing-in of the number of godly beliefs, because ‘all men are one’ outside of the domestic family and must have a common denominator in a god and a moral code.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, domestic periods tend to correlate with the religious sanctioning of a moral order that takes up familism as a major theme within religion. The rise of Christianity with its marriage doctrine of *proles, fides, and sacramentum*, is an example of this relationship between religion and family. In contrast,

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 73. On the identifiable symptoms of a society’s declining health as it relates to the decay of the family structure, Zimmerman writes, “[T]he Western world has entered a period of demoralization comparable to the periods when both Greece and Rome turned from growth to decay. Divorce, premarital sex experience, sex promiscuity, homosexuality, versatility in sex, birth control carried to excess, spread of birth control to every segment of the population, positive antagonism to parenthood, clandestine marriage, migratory divorce, marriage for sex alone, contempt for familism, even in the so-called educated circles—all are increasing rapidly” (p. 174).

<sup>15</sup> One example of such an overtaking is the invasion of the declining Roman Empire by Germanic barbarians. The Germanic familial trustee system eventually overtook the Roman atomistic family, and was itself reformed into the domestic type through Catholic evangelism and legal Canon developments.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 259. On the connection between the trustee family type and polytheism, Zimmerman writes, of the “gods of pre-Confucian China, of Homer, of druidical northern Europe, or of camp-meeting days in Kentucky. Essentially, each family has its own gods and religious beliefs which, given time, can be raised to polytheism.”

atomistic periods “are always periods of disbelief in that one god.”<sup>18</sup> This leads Zimmerman to posit an important correlation between religion and familism, noting one cannot survive without the other. As Zimmerman observes, “Mothers will not bear the pains of childbirth nor fathers the worries of parenthood for economic rewards alone.”<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, “Fundamentally, people are familistic because they think it right and for no other reason.”<sup>20</sup> The rise of atomistic familism “causes a dispersal of the infinite faith underlying the family system,” and “this lack of faith leads inevitably to the breaking-up of familism.”<sup>21</sup> Adultery, divorce, and homosexuality are symptoms of familial decay, more than causes. Therefore, Zimmerman concludes, “Underneath these symptoms lies a basic system of negative causation—the lack of faiths and beliefs in the social system strong enough to enable the social system to continue to function.”<sup>22</sup> In short, the connection between faith and fertility is strong.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 260. Zimmerman draws a very strong connection between religion and familism, writing, “Religion is a doctrine of the infinite. The chief, and largely the only basic, agency translating infinite and inescapable doctrines of human behavior into the finite is the familistic system. Religion has never succeeded without a familistic doctrine (Cf. Taoism and Western asceticism which were short-lived). On the other hand, familism has never succeeded without a system of infinite faith, which is simply the acceptance of a basic religious code of values.”

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Zimmerman’s observations on the importance of the family to a healthy society are shared in Vatican II’s *Gaudium et Spes*. The third partition’s first chapter deals with important social elements, and the Council rightfully starts by acknowledging the social importance of the family prior to any broader social exploration. A large quote from *Gaudium et Spes* is worth providing in full, given it shares Zimmerman and my sentiments on the importance of the familial institution, but from a Roman Catholic perspective. *Gaudium et Spes* states, “The well-being of the individual person and of human and Christian society is intimately linked with the healthy condition of that community produced by marriage and family. Hence Christians and all men who hold this community in high esteem sincerely rejoice in the various ways by which men today find help in fostering this community of love and perfecting its life, and by which parents are assisted in their lofty calling. Those who rejoice in such aids look for additional benefits from them and labor to bring them about. Yet the excellence of this institution is not everywhere reflected with equal brilliance, since polygamy, the plague of divorce, so-called free love and other disfigurements have

At this point of his observations, Zimmerman feels equipped to make some major causal analytical conclusions. The family, he writes, “is the closest approach to real causation [of society] we can have,” outside of the infinite God of nature.<sup>24</sup> Whether it be Greece, Rome, or Modern Western society, “when we speak of the ‘fall’ of great civilizations ... in which an inner decay is the main agency, we are justified in giving an absolute causal analysis ... familistic decay and history.”<sup>25</sup> For Zimmerman, the family acts as a unique main-index that can predict societal types, and societal health.<sup>26</sup> The domestic family type lends itself to a level of public decency and order in civilization, and vice versa. While civilizations tend to blossom into great ones corresponding to the onset of periods of atomism, Zimmerman notes that this familial type also eventually leads to a civilization’s decline. Ultimately, “When the atomistic family is carried too far it inevitably tends to limit the possibilities of expansion of the civilization and (through

---

an obscuring effect. In addition, married love is too often profaned by excessive self-love, the worship of pleasure and illicit practices against human generation. Moreover, serious disturbances are caused in families by modern economic conditions, by influences at once social and psychological, and by the demands of civil society. Finally, in certain parts of the world problems resulting from population growth are generating concern. All these situations have produced anxiety of consciences. Yet, the power and strength of the institution of marriage and family can also be seen in the fact that time and again, despite the difficulties produced, the profound changes in modern society reveal the true character of this institution in one way or another. Therefore, by presenting certain key points of Church doctrine in a clearer light, this sacred synod wishes to offer guidance and support to those Christians and other men who are trying to preserve the holiness and to foster the natural dignity of the married state and its superlative value.”

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. Zimmerman points out, “In familism we can approach closely that dream of the philosophers, determining the ‘first’ cause in social systems.” Zimmerman is taking a jab here at political theorists and the social contract tradition.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., x–xi. For Zimmerman, the birthrate acts as a central metric to gauge the health and familial types present in a society. As Allan C. Carlson summarizes in the introduction, “Indeed, the primary theme of *Family and Civilization* is fertility. Zimmerman underscores the three functions of familism as articulated by historic Christian: *fides, proles, and sacramentum*; or ‘fidelity, child-bearing, and indissoluble unity.... Zimmerman zeros in on the birth rate.... In short, ‘the basis of familism is the birth rate. Societies that have numerous children have to have familism.’ ... This gives Zimmerman one easy measure of social success or decline: the marital fertility rate.”

its negative causation) seems to force the processes of decay.”<sup>27</sup> Therefore, Zimmerman posits the basic theme of his work as the central relationship between family and civilization.<sup>28</sup> As was mentioned earlier, the type and health of the family depends greatly on the sanctioning religion provides. Where societies are religiously advanced, moral frameworks develop that justify and elevate the state of the family with transcendent and infinite values. Where societies are antagonistic to religion, the absence of frameworks descends the family to having merely finite values, and with it, the ultimate decay and demise of civilizations.

Zimmerman’s work is both magisterial and prophetic. It is magisterial in that, as a work of sociology, its thesis stands with high-sighted and well-reasoned authority. Zimmerman manages to not only convincingly explain the correlation between family types and societal decay, but also prophetically predicts the cultural social crises currently occurring in Western civilization. This dissertation stands in strong agreement with Zimmerman’s overall thesis as it relates to the correlation between a society’s faith, fertility, and vitality, as well as with the overall familial types and their characteristics evidenced throughout his work.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 262.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. Zimmerman writes, “Civilization grows out of familism; as it grows it loses its original connection with the basic spring which furnished the essence of civilization. When this process has gone too far, the civilization soon exhausts its inventory of social ‘material.’ Then occurs a reaction or decay. The amount of reaction and decay and the length of these ‘Dark Age’ periods seem to depend upon how quickly the culture finds its way back to the fundamental mothersource—familism.”

<sup>29</sup> Zimmerman’s emphasis on the birthrate as a barometer of a society’s health and decline is rather fascinating—especially as it relates to modern day Israel. As an anecdotal example, one of the societies experiencing a problematically low birth-rate is Japan (currently at 1.46 births per woman). This is one of the lowest birth rates recorded by any nation, and for the past 60 years, Japan’s birthrate has always been problematically low (mostly hovering under 2). As a society, Japan has experienced significant problems related to caring for and replacing a generation of elderly people whose life expectancy is disproportionately high. Simply put, Japan is having trouble replacing its human capital, and its impact is deeply felt. The

However, Zimmerman's work is in need of three major corrections. The first of these corrections involves his interpretation of the familial type in Protestantism, and in specific his interpretation of Puritan contributions. At times, Zimmerman seems to blame the Protestant Reformation and Protestant theology for the secularizing or "de-sacramentizing" of marriage.<sup>30</sup> Zimmerman writes,

The Protestant Revolution and its doctrine, insofar as it concerned the family, offered one of the most serious challenges to the original Christian church. From that time until the French Revolution following 1789, the family was considered a holy arrangement created under God's influence, but not one of His original sacraments.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, he postulates the rise of Western Modern society's atomism as influenced by a notion of contract that seemingly came from the Protestant conception of marriage.

Zimmerman concludes that the "modern thinking about the family, other than the scholasticism of the Christian church, has been largely a product of the Reformation and

---

United States contains one of the highest fertility rates among first world powers (1.85 children per woman), however this is nearly half what it was 60 years ago. In general, the trend seems universal that the birthrates and fertility rates among all major global regions have decreased nearly in half. China, the Middle East, etc., have all seen plummeting birthrates. However, one country stands out as a fascinating comparison whose fertility rate did not see a 50% decline. Rather, in the past 20 years, it has actually experienced progressive growth. This country is Israel. 60 years ago, Israel's fertility rate was 3.87, and currently it is 3.09. It experienced a stability in comparison to other nations that is quite notable. Only one region actually experienced higher fertility rates, and that is Sub-Saharan Africa—however its fertility rate has also experienced a nearly 50% decline from what it was 60 years prior. Furthermore, Israel has one of the highest life-expectancy rates of any nation. There seems to be a similar pattern with states in the U.S. whose populations evidence the faith and fertility connection. The best example would be Utah, whose median age, household capital, and household size, over-index other states. Furthermore, Utah contains the second highest fertility rate of any state (2.24). The explanation seems obviously connected to Mormon religious convictions on marriage and family. Furthermore, there seems to be an anecdotal pattern where the worst birth-rate performers are also those states most secular (the Northeastern states in particular make up the bulk of the bottom of the list with fertility rates averaging 1.5). See <https://www.google.com/publicdata/explore> for more public data related to fertility rates.

<sup>30</sup> While it is somewhat true that the Reformers "de-sacramentalized" marriage, it must be said with some reservations. While they secularized it as in removing Roman judicial oversight, and they de-sacramentalized it by doing away with some aspects of the sacramental theology, they still rooted the institution in God and an infinite moral order. They reserved for marriage a sacredness that arguably matched Augustine's understanding of "sacrament," as this chapter later alludes to.

has attributed to the family all those elements of nominalism and contractualism so prevalent in institutional thinking since that period.”<sup>32</sup> This is a pretty strong claim, and Zimmerman argues for it by pointing to the Reformers as the initiators, and the Puritans as the closers, of this secularization of marriage.

Zimmerman’s attitudes are most evident in his outline in *Family and Civilization*, which depict Luther, Calvin, and the Reformation’s conception of the family as a non-sacramental family bond.<sup>33</sup> As for Zimmerman’s treatment of Puritanism, it is especially weak. He points chiefly to Milton, Hobbes, and Locke as representatives of Puritanism, which is problematic for a number of reasons.<sup>34</sup> Of their influence, he essentially concludes that “the ideas and revolts of Puritanism were transplanted to seventeenth-century New England, and with them a fully secular conception of marriage.”<sup>35</sup> Were these views really “fully secular”? Zimmerman’s conclusions are not accurate—if not misplaced—and this dissertation chapter endeavors to amend Zimmerman’s treatment of the Protestant and Puritan understanding of marriage by positing a covenantal understanding that fits neither within the atomistic model, nor the Roman Catholic Church’s Tridentine sacramentalism.

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 119–120.

<sup>34</sup> Locke and Hobbes are definitely influenced by Puritanism, but the degree to which one can actually call them representatives of Puritanism is questionable. Surely, they are excellent representatives of social contract theorists, but as evidenced in the next chapter, and writers such as Daniel Elazar, Puritan political theology from the federal theological tradition is distinctly different than the social contract theorists. Where the social contract theorists posit a social contract, the federal theologians emphasized covenants. Milton is also only one version of puritanical developments on marriage, as will be showed later in this chapter.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 103.

The second of these needed corrections involves Zimmerman's emphasis that the Church's historical understanding of marriage and family is primarily sacramental. While sacramental theology contributed in major ways to the Church's understanding of marriage, medieval Roman Catholic Tridentine sacramental theology is not the same as the views attested to throughout Scripture, let alone those views of the early church, or even post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism.<sup>36</sup> At times, it feels as if Zimmerman's understanding of the Church's views is restricted either to the sacramental camp, or to the secular contractual camp. His assumption seems to be that the Protestant rejection of Medieval sacramental theology led to secular contract. Rather, the problem seems to lie with Zimmerman overlooking another major understanding of marriage and family, which understood marriage as a sacred covenant. As of late, covenantal approaches to marriage have seen a Renaissance among later 20<sup>th</sup> century academics such as Gordon Hugenberger. This understanding of covenant as an explanation for socio-political institutions has only blossomed further by covenantal approaches to political origins and constitutions by scholars such as David Novak and Daniel Elazar. Furthermore, advances made in political theology, Puritan studies, and early American political history by scholars such as Oliver O'Donovan, Donald Lutz, Ellis Sandoz, and Perry Miller, have

---

<sup>36</sup> The Roman Catholic Church held a number of views on marriage throughout its history. Martos notes the historical evolution of the Roman Catholic understanding in Joseph Martos, "Marriage," in *Perspectives on Marriage: A Reader*, ed. Kieran Scott and Michael Warren (Grand Rapids, MI: 2001), 31–48. These changes will be treated in the later historical survey section, however it is worth noting early on, that the Vatican ultimately arrived at a position that saw marriage as a covenant and a sacrament. As they summarize in Joseph Ratzinger, *et al*, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican: Liguori Publications, 1994), 414, "The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman form with each other an intimate communion of life and love, has been founded and endowed with its own special laws by the Creator. By its very nature it is ordered to the good of the couple, as well as to the generation and education of children. Christ the Lord raised marriage between the baptized to the dignity of a sacrament."

helped grasp the relevance of the covenantal idea to social theory. In all, this important recent collection of work sheds light on an area relatively absent throughout Zimmerman's work, by illuminating the understanding of marriage and family as a covenanted body.

The third and final of these needed corrections involves Zimmerman's proposed solution to the current crisis of familial decay in Modern Western society. Throughout his work, Zimmerman places blame on upper-class intellectuals and elites for fostering atomistic and anti-religious ideas that ultimately lead to societal decay. It is then surprising that Zimmerman's proposed solution at the end of the work for a revival of familism "lies in the hands of our learned classes. They must understand the possibilities of a recreated conception of familism and its basic meaning to society.... The answer to the problem may lie in scholarship and teaching."<sup>37</sup> The charge that all society "really need[s] is to educate our Plutarchs" is resoundingly off, given the Plutarchs are not only primarily at fault for advancing atomism, but also the very figures in contemporary society pushing changes towards atomistic conceptions of family via entertainment, the arts, and public policy. In this chapter's earlier introduction, the list of proposed neutral pronouns actually came from the "Plutarch" of a university institution's diversity office. In contrast, this dissertation chapter proposes an alternative teaching solution. Given Zimmerman's connection between faith and family, perhaps pastors and pulpits are a better solution than Plutarchs and podiums.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Zimmerman, *Family and Civilization*, 286.

<sup>38</sup> The play off Zimmerman's "learned class" and teaching is intentional. So is a hierarchical reversal. Change arguably comes from the bottom up, and at the very bottom are the shepherd-leaders

Zimmerman focuses his work on the constitution of familial units (“trustee,” “domestic,” and “atomistic”), but the question as to the origin of familial types is just as important and helpful. Zimmerman even hints at the family as being the closest man can get to explain the socio-philosophical question of a society’s origin. While the inquiry of the origins of institutions is not his primary concern, it certainly seems to be on his mind.<sup>39</sup> Zimmerman’s work instead focuses on the constitution—or the political makeup—of the institution of the family as it relates to society and the other primary institutions of church and state. Perhaps the absence of the question of origins in favor of constitutions is a reason for the lack of mentioning covenantal views. The covenantal view provides both an understanding of an institution’s origination and its constitutional makeup. It even has the added benefit of bridging the finite and infinite problem. It brings both the primary origination in the Creator God, and his covenantal relations with finite humans, into a moral framework that makes marriage sacred and weds finite behavior with covenantal responsibilities. Marriage as a covenant incorporates the vertical moral framework of an infinite God, into the horizontal fettering of finite man and woman. It contains a three-dimensional place of contact where the vertical and horizontal elements of the transcendent and immanent meet, as opposed to the one-dimensional linearity of atomistic marital contracts.

---

described as Elders/Overseers/Shepherds in the Pastoral Epistles. Those that must be “able to teach” (1 Tim 3:2). As they teach the congregation by word and servantly action, individuals may actualize the type of religious justification of the family (and with it the increase in the birthrate). Change came dramatically from the ground up during the Great Awakenings (and with it the birthrate!). This proposed teaching is less secular than Zimmerman’s sociological suggestion. “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9).

Perhaps Zimmerman's silence on covenants is the result of his work's completion prior to the Renaissance of socio-politico covenantal scholarship. Regardless, this chapter sets out to correct three of Zimmerman's errors as they relate to (1) his treatment of Reformers and Puritans, (2) his deficient understanding of the Church's total views on marriage, and (3) his proposed solution towards societal decay *à la* educated elite. It endeavors to respond to these errors by proposing covenant as a valid socio-politico explanation of the origination and constitution of marriage. To accomplish this task, it is now necessary to survey Scripture and Church history for any corrective evidence as it pertains to the covenantal idea.

### **Marital Covenant and Constitution in Scripture**

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there has been somewhat of a Renaissance in covenantal studies across traditional Protestant social theory's three-fold institutions. Scholars have recently sought to examine covenant as a valid conversation partner to explain institutions in a pluralistic post-modernist world.<sup>40</sup> One area where such covenantal musings are quite popular is in works exploring the covenantal aspects of marriage. In review, a covenant is typically defined as a "sanction-sealed commitment to maintain a particular relationship or follow a stipulated course of action. In general, then a covenant may be defined as a relationship under sanctions."<sup>41</sup> Among scholars exploring the covenantal aspects of

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 261. Zimmerman writes, "In familism we can approach closely that dream of the philosophers, determining the 'first' cause in social systems."

<sup>40</sup> An example of this relevance and popularity is Adrian Thatcher, *Marriage After Modernity: Christian Marriage in Postmodern Times* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 1999).

<sup>41</sup> Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 16.

marriage, Gordon Hugenberger and his magisterial *Marriage as a Covenant* are especially informative.<sup>42</sup> Hugenberger's work has a commanding voice among covenantal marriage studies, and as such his definition and study of covenant merits special attention. Hugenberger defines covenant marriage as "an elected, as opposed to natural, relationship of obligation under oath."<sup>43</sup> This definition, and Hugenberger's primary contributions to the biblical understanding of marriage as a covenant, merit further exploration as it relates to amending Zimmerman's formerly stated problems, and addressing O'Donovan's criticisms against traditional Protestant social theory.

#### Marital Covenant and Constitution in the Old Testament

The term for covenant often used in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word בְּרִית (*berith*, "covenant").<sup>44</sup> As the earlier chapter treated in greater depth, the general idea of *berith* carries significant social, relational, and moral components. Given that marriage focuses on the fettering of a man and woman, *berith* and the traditional Hebrew verbs that take it are especially noteworthy for containing "loving-kindness" as their operative mechanism,

---

<sup>42</sup> Gordon Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1994).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 11. Hugenberger provides a great and short definition of covenant in Gordon Hugenberger, "Malachi," in *The ESV Study Bible*, eds. Lane T. Dennis et al. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 1777, where he defines it as containing four elements in the Old Testament: "(1) a relationship (2) with a nonrelative that (3) involves obligations and (4) is established through an oath."

<sup>44</sup> Klaus Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary: In Old Testament, Jewish, and Early Christian Writings* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971), 6. For the etymology and definition of "covenant," see Strong's #1285 בְּרִית (*berith*, "covenant"), Brown-Driver-Briggs' #285 בְּרִית (*berith*, "covenant"), and Strong's #1241 διαθήκη (*diathēkē*, "covenant, testament").

and alienation as their antithesis.<sup>45</sup> Especially as it pertains to marriage, Hugenberger sees the predominant sense of covenant in Biblical Hebrew as

an elected, as opposed to natural, relationship of obligation established under divine sanction.... [And] there are four essential ingredients in the Old Testament understanding of בְּרִית (covenant), namely 1) a relationship 2) with a non-relative 3) which involves obligations and 4) is established through an oath.<sup>46</sup>

As it relates to marriage, there are a number of important passages that scholars reference to support, or discredit, the covenantal marriage idea. In his dissertation entitled *The Covenantal Nature of Marriage in the Order of Creation in Genesis 1 and 2*, John Tarwater expands Hugenberger's arguments by appealing to the creation account as a creation ordinance that provides an initial foundation for the covenantal understanding of marriage.<sup>47</sup> Tarwater concludes that Genesis 1–2 adheres to the essential elements and the general characteristics of a covenant. Regarding these essential covenantal elements, Tarwater notes that the Genesis account contains personal relationships with a non-relative, and involve obligations established under oath.<sup>48</sup> The personal relationship element is evidenced in the intimacy of phrases such as “Let us make” in Gen 1:26, whereas the non-relative aspect is evident in God's creation of Adam and Eve as separate persons. It is not until the “leaving” and “cleaving” in Gen 2:24 that a new particular

---

<sup>45</sup> For examples of these relational components, review the earlier chapter's “Ecclesial Covenant and Contract in Scripture” section. Also see *Strong's* #8104 שָׁמַר (*shamar*, “to keep”), #2142 זָכַר (*zakar*, “to remember”), #5674 אָבַר (*abar*, “to alienate”), and #2617 חֶסֶד (*khesed*, “favor” “lovingkindness”).

<sup>46</sup> Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 171, 174, and 215.

<sup>47</sup> John K. Tarwater, “The Covenantal Nature of Marriage in the Order of Creation in Genesis 1 and 2” (Wake Forest, NC: PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002). It deserves noting that Tarwater lived his convictions. He is proof of Zimmerman's theory regarding the relation of religion and familism: Tarwater, a fellow Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary graduate, has a whopping total of eight children! I can vouch anecdotally for the faith and fertility connection at Southeastern. At campus community picnics, children seem to far outnumber students and faculty. At the point of this writing, I am currently at half as many children as Tarwater.

familial unit of relations is actually established.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, this newly established relationship involves a number of oath-bound obligations. God tasks Adam and Eve to (1) be fruitful, to multiply, to fill and subdue the earth, and to have dominion over it (Gen 1:28); (2) to have obligations related to established gender roles (Gen 2:18–25); (3) to leave one’s former particular family, and cleave unto one another in marital union (Gen 2:24); and (4) to become a one-flesh union with all the responsibilities kinship involves (Gen 2:24; Gen 29:14).<sup>50</sup>

In addition to containing a number of essential covenantal elements, the creation ordinance in Genesis 1–2 also contains a number of general covenantal features. It exhibits the general characteristics of a unilateral dependence on the will and authority of God, as well as a covenantal sign and a name change.<sup>51</sup> Tarwater observes that the covenant’s unilateral dependence on God’s will and authority is evident in Gen 2:22, where God created Eve and “brought her to the man.”<sup>52</sup> Regarding a covenantal sign, Hugenerger notes that a number of biblical passages such as Gen 2:25 indicate sexual

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 72–82.

<sup>49</sup> In Gen 2:24, the vocabulary of “leave” and “hold fast” employed to describe a husband’s duty is covenantal. It is used as covenantal vocabulary in Deut 4:4; 10:20; and Josh 1:5.

<sup>50</sup> See also Lev 25:49 and 2 Sam 5:1.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 72–82.

<sup>52</sup> Malachi confirms the covenant’s dependence on God’s will and authority in bringing Adam and Eve together, and Matthew echoes it, where they write, “Did not the LORD make them one?” (Mal 2:16; Matt 19:6). See also John Calvin, “The Thirty Ninth Sermon, Which Is the Seventh on the Fifth Chapter [Ephesians],” n.d., [https://the-highway.com/Calvin\\_39Eph5.html](https://the-highway.com/Calvin_39Eph5.html). Calvin states, “And now let us come to marriage which is not a thing ordained by men. We know that God is the author of it and that it is solemnized in His name. The Scripture says that it is a *holy covenant*, and therefore it calls it divine. Now then, if a wife be cross-grained, and cannot find in her heart to bear the yoke, although she does wrong to her husband, yet God is still more outraged. And why? Because it is His will that that bond should be inviolable, and behold a mortal creature who is determined to break it and pluck it asunder! We see then that in so doing she sets herself against the majesty of God. On the other hand, when a man will insist on lording it after his own liking and fancy, despising his wife, or using her cruelly and tyrannically, he shows

intercourse signal the marriage covenant.<sup>53</sup> A second covenantal sign is also evident in Adam naming Eve as “woman” in Gen 2:23.<sup>54</sup> This name change parallels other biblical covenantal name changes, such as Abraham and Sarah’s covenantal renaming in Gen 17:5, and Christians taking on the name of Christ in Acts 11:26.<sup>55</sup> A third covenantal sign occurs with Adam’s usage of the formula “this at last is bone of my bones” (Gen 2:23), which is utilized in other biblical contexts in relation to covenant ratification (2 Sam 5:1–3).<sup>56</sup> In all, Tarwater’s treatment of Adam and Eve’s union as a marital covenant is executed well, and the central contribution made by the Garden account is how heavily later writers in Scripture and Church history draw from it to define and defend marriage as a covenant.<sup>57</sup>

---

that he despises God and defies Him openly. For he ought to know for what purpose he was created, what the state of marriage is, and what law God has set in it.”

<sup>53</sup> Hugenberger, *Marriage as Covenant*, 251–267. See also Deut 21:10–14; 22:28; Gen 2:25; 4:1; 29:21; 38:8, 19; and Exod 22:15. Sexual intercourse as a sign of the marriage covenant is notably different from sexual intercourse as the origination of marriage. In Norman L. Geisler, *Ethics: Alternatives and Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971), 199–200, Geisler argues for a view that equated marriage as essentially a sexual union. However, this view is undermined by an analysis of three relationships in which one-flesh unions occur. In 1 Cor 6:16, the “one body” sexual union with a prostitute is a violation of God’s law. It is something to be fled from. In Gen 2:24, the “one flesh” sexual union is legal and a representative of covenantal marital companionship. It is something not to be sundered. A comparison of the two incidents reveal that sexual intercourse, on its own, does not essentially make a marriage. See William F. Luck, *Divorce and Remarriage: Recovering the Biblical View* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1987).

<sup>54</sup> For an example of renaming as a covenantal sign, see the Abrahamic covenant in Gen 17:4–6, where God states, “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations” (Gen 17:4–5).

<sup>55</sup> A number of passages in the Old Testament also use the marriage relationship to represent God’s relationship with his people (Isa 54:5; Jer 3:1–14; Hos 2:9, a sign 20).

<sup>56</sup> In the context of David’s political covenant with the tribal elders of Israel, and their anointment of David as king, the passage chapter opens with the tribes of Israel saying to David, “Behold, we are your bone and flesh” (1 Sam 5:1).

<sup>57</sup> A number of the Garden’s covenantal elements are still visible at a modern Western wedding. First, weddings usually part the couple’s family into two, and then have the bride and groom walk down this aisle. The participation recalls the covenantal parting of the two halves of a sacrifice, and then the covenant’s partners walking between these partitions. Second, weddings usually have the father walking with the bride and presenting her to the groom, akin to God’s presentation of Eve to Adam. Third, weddings usually contain an exchanging of vows, and a sign of the marital covenant’s union occurs with a

In addition to Genesis 1–2, there are other noteworthy Old Testament passages that either describe marriage as a covenant by analogy, or state it directly. One such example is in Hos 2:18–22, which describes marriage as being analogous to God’s covenantal relationship with Israel.<sup>58</sup> Hosea seems to draw a parallel between God’s covenantal relationship with Israel, and his covenantal relationship with his wife Gomer.<sup>59</sup> A second example is found in Ezek 16:8, which uses the metaphor of marriage to describe God’s covenantal relationship with Israel.<sup>60</sup> In Ezekiel 16, the covenantal imagery for marriage seems clearly present in the “covering” passage’s association with a covenantal oath and its correlating duties, and Ezekiel continues to recall the marriage

---

woman’s name change. Finally, there is the consummation and signaling of the marriage covenant in the couple’s sexual union.

<sup>58</sup> “But like men they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt treacherously with me” (Hos 6:7; see also 8:1).

<sup>59</sup> “You are not my people, and I will not be your God” (Hos 1:9) paralleled with “For she is not my wife and I am not her husband” (Hos 2:2). See the parallel between divorce in Hos 2:1 and Hos 2:23 as well. See also Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, eds. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, *Word Biblical Commentary*, no. 31 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1987). On the purpose of Hosea and the structural parallelism between God and Hosea’s covenantal relationships, see Gale A. Yee, *Composition and Tradition in the Book of Hosea: A Redaction Critical Investigation* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987), 105–108.

<sup>60</sup> “I spread the corner of my garment over you [a form of marriage proposal] and covered your nakedness. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a *covenant* with you declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine” (Ezek 16:8).

throughout the chapter.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, strong parallels exist between Ezekiel 16 and other more direct marriage covenant passages such as Proverbs 2 and Malachi 2.<sup>62</sup>

Whereas marriage as a covenant is viewed analogously in Hosea and metaphorically in Ezekiel, it is identified directly in Prov 2:16–17. Here, the author claims that God’s wisdom “will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words, who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the *covenant* she made before God” (Prov 2:17).<sup>63</sup> In addition to the direct reference, Proverbs also shares a number of covenantal parallels with Malachi. Malachi is arguably the clearest and most important text describing marriage as a covenant.<sup>64</sup> Calvin

---

<sup>61</sup> Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19*, eds. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, *Word Biblical Commentary*, no. 28. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994), 238. Allen writes, “For a man to spread the hem of his garment over a woman was a symbolic gesture that constituted a proposal of marriage. He thus extended over her both his authority and his willingness to support her.” See additional agreement in John W. Wevers, *The Century Bible: Ezekiel* (Copewood: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1969), 121. As for the continuation of the marriage metaphor throughout the passage, Ezekiel writes, “But you trusted in your beauty and used your fame to become a prostitute.... You adulterous wife! You prefer strangers to your own husband! ... I will deal with you as you deserve, because you have despised my oath by breaking the *covenant*. Yet I will still remember the *covenant* I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting *covenant* with you” (Ezek 16:15, 32, and 59–60).

<sup>62</sup> God follows the covering gesture with an oath-swearing, which seems to parallel Mal 2:14’s oath-presence via YHWH as “witness,” and Prov 2:17’s implication of a ratifying oath and God’s invocation (“covenant of God”). Among the passages, Ezekiel is the most direct in identifying the presence of an oath in marriage. On this topic, refer to Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 305.

<sup>63</sup> While many commentators understand “covenant of her God” as referencing marriage, additional interpretations have been offered. See Boström’s view of equating “covenant” to pagan commitments in G. Boström, *Proverbiastudien: die Weisheit und das femde Weib in Spruch 1–9*, Lunds Universitets Arsskrift, N.F., Avd. I, Bd. 30, Nr. 3 (Lund: Gleerup, 1935), and Cohen’s view of it referencing the Sinaitic covenant in A. Cohen, *Proverbs: Hebrew Text and English Translation with Introductions and Commentary* (London: Soncino Press, 1946), 11f. The reader can find rebuttals of these interpretations in Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 297–299, and can find an articulation of the traditional view on pages 299–302.

<sup>64</sup> Such paralleled examples between Proverbs and Malachi include the phrase “forsakes the companion of her youth” (Prov 2:17) with “to be faithless to the wife of his youth” (Mal 2:16), “companion” (Prov 2:17) with “companion” (Mal 2:14), and “forgets the covenant of her God” (Prov 2:17) with “against whom you have been faithless, though she is ... your wife by covenant” (Mal 2:14). Also refer to Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*, Bible and Literature Series, no. 11 (Decatur: Almond Press, 1985), 235–271.

articulates Prov 2:16's importance, and its covenantal parallel with Malachi, where Calvin writes,

When a marriage takes place between a man and a woman, God presides and requires a mutual pledge from both. Hence Solomon, in Prov 2:17, calls marriage the covenant of God, for it is superior to all human contracts. So also Malachi declares, that God is as it were the stipulator, who by his authority joins the man to the woman, and sanctions the alliance.<sup>65</sup>

While the identification of marriage as a covenant in Mal 2:14–15 is obvious, it is worth acknowledging Calvin's understanding is shared across a diverse spectrum of theological traditions. An example of such diversity appears in a popular post-Vatican II catechism, which comments on the Malachi passage, "He here also speaks of marriage as a covenant, comparing it to the covenant of God and Israel."<sup>66</sup>

Malachi is so important in describing marriage as covenantal that Hugenberger dedicates his work in *Marriage as a Covenant* to exploring the issue from Malachi's perspective.<sup>67</sup> Hugenberger establishes the plausibility that Mal 2:14–15 references marriage as a literal covenant.<sup>68</sup> In full, Mal 2:14–15 states,

---

<sup>65</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets: Zechariah and Malachi*, trans. John Owen, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), 552–553.

<sup>66</sup> Ronald David Lawler *et al.*, *The Teaching of Christ: A Catholic Catechism for Adults* (Huntingdon, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Pub. Division, 2005), 443. For an in-depth treatment of covenant and family from a Roman Catholic perspective, see Richard M Hogan and John M LeVoir, *Covenant of Love: Pope John Paul II on Sexuality, Marriage, and Family in the Modern World, with a Commentary on Familiaris Consortio* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1992). In this work, the authors provide a helpful summary of Pope John Paul II's thoughts on marriage, family, and covenant. It is my suspicion that Vatican II and Pope John Paul II are the primary influencers of the Vatican's 20<sup>th</sup> century emphasis on the covenantal aspects of marriage.

<sup>67</sup> Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 7. Hugenberger calls Mal 2:14–15 the "chief pillar of the traditional identification of marriage in the Old testament as a covenant." A minor irony is that the American holiday that celebrates love, Valentine's Day, occurs every year on 2/14, and Malachi's marriage as covenant passage begins in Mal 2:14.

<sup>68</sup> Hugenberger, "Malachi," in *The ESV Study Bible*, 1776–1777. Interestingly, Hugenberger notes that the word covenant "is used seven times in Malachi (out of a mere 1,193 words): a rate 10 times greater than almost every other OT book (except for Deuteronomy, Joshua, Hosea, and Obadiah). This may explain

But you say, “Why does he not?” Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did He not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth (Mal 2:14–15, ESV).<sup>69</sup>

In addition to directly referencing marriage as a covenant while accusing the Israelite men of their faithlessness, one of Malachi’s primary contributions is in connecting this marriage covenant to Genesis 1–2. As Hugenberger notes, “Malachi identified marriage as a covenant and that he grounds this identification in his interpretation of the Adam and Eve narrative.”<sup>70</sup> Both Genesis 1–2 and Malachi 2 share essential elements and general features common to covenants, such as the presence of obligations established under oath (“whom you have been faithless”), and the unilateral dependence on the will and authority of God (God as “witness,” and God as the one who made “them one”). The parallels between Malachi 2 and Genesis 1–2 are further established by noting Malachi’s strong reliance on the Pentateuch and its motifs, vocabulary, and emphases. Throughout Malachi, the work appeals to the Pentateuch’s creation motifs in its usage of creation imagery such as “offspring [seed],” its reference of the responsibility of the husband towards his wife, and its reference to the one flesh union.<sup>71</sup> In light of this biblical evidence, Hugenberger concludes, “The implication of the marriage metaphor, especially

---

why Malachi goes out of his way to identify marriage as a ‘covenant’ (Proverbs is the only other book to do so explicitly)” (p. 1777).

<sup>69</sup> Malachi’s importance can be seen in its ability to contain all of the major covenantal inferences drawn by the other passages, and by the Church’s later theologians. Malachi contains a direct mention of marriage as covenant, a reference to the Garden, a reference to God’s sanctioning, and an inference drawn in relation to divorce and adultery. Furthermore, Augustine’s *fides*, *sacramentum*, and *proles* elements are also clearly visible in the text.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

as articulated in Hos 2:18–22 [especially 16–20], and the explicit evidences of Prov 2:17; Ezek 16:8, 59, 60, 62; and 1 Samuel 18–20 all proved to be convincing in their identification of marriage as a covenant.”<sup>72</sup>

### Marital Covenant and Constitution in the New Testament

The appraisal of marriage as a covenantal idea in the New Testament generally consists of three types of references. First, the New Testament uses the institution of marriage as a symbolic representation of Christ’s covenantal relationship with His Church. Second, the New Testament draws from a number of the earlier noted Old Testament marriage passages by leaning heavily on the marital idea expressed in Genesis 1–2. Finally, the New Testament illustrates the covenantal character of marriage by drawing out the implications of Genesis 1–2 as they relate to divorce.

As Paul Sampley observes, a pattern exists in marriage verses such as 1 Tim 2:8–15, 1 Cor 14:33–34, and 1 Pet 3:1–6, which “manifests a widespread early Christian convention of a reference to the Pentateuch pattern or lesson to be applied to the understanding of the position of women in marriage in early Christian times.”<sup>73</sup> One of the strongest examples of a continuation of this interpretive approach—as it relates to

---

<sup>71</sup> Tarwater, *The Covenantal Nature of Marriage*, 95–98. See also Hugenerger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 148–149.

<sup>72</sup> Hugenerger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 337. The current section finds Genesis 1–2, Hosea 2, Ezekiel 16, Proverbs 2, and Malachi 2 sufficient enough to make the point that in the Old Testament, marriage was seen as a covenantal idea.

<sup>73</sup> Paul J. Sampley, *“And the Two Shall Become One Flesh”: A study of Traditions in Ephesians 5:21–33* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 99. A good treatment of this tendency of later texts to reference earlier texts is present in John H. Sailhammer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 95.

favoring an interpretation of marriage as a covenant—is Eph 5:21–33.<sup>74</sup> In the New Testament, the Church is often described as Christ’s “bride.” John the Baptist first speaks to this in John 3:29, where he makes reference to the Messianic “bridegroom” and his “bride.” The main passage where the Church is compared to the marital institution is Eph 5:22–33. Here, Paul compares Christ’s union with the Church to the union of a husband and wife in marriage. Paul’s comparison is especially interesting, given the letter’s broader theme is one of union, reconciliation, and alienation, all of which are foundational concepts to the covenantal idea evident in the Hebrew *khesed* and *abar*. The

---

<sup>74</sup> However, it should be noted that the Ephesians passage does contain a number of interpretive difficulties. This is the infamous passage that describes marriage as a “mystery” (μυστήριον) (Eph 5:32), which the Latin Vulgate translates as *sacramentum*, and which in part led Roman Catholics to later define as a sacrament. Zimmerman unfortunately draws heavily from the Latin *sacramentum* throughout his work. An example of this Roman Catholic interpretation is present in Ronald David Lawler *et al.*, *The Teaching of Christ: A Catholic Catechism for Adults* (Huntingdon, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2005), 443. In the catechism, Ephesians is identified as the scriptural support for “the point at which marriage becomes a sacrament in the New Covenant” (p. 443). The catechism points to the word *sacramentum* for support, claiming, “The word translated as ‘mystery’ is *sacramentum* in Latin and *mysterion* in Greek. It is the very word St. Paul uses and enlarges on at the beginning of his letter, in describing the hidden plan of God whereby all are to be united in Christ: the mystery of God in Christ, the paschal mystery, which is at the center and heart of the New Covenant. . . . Marriage, then, is a sacrament between the baptized” (pp. 443–444). However, there are a number of problems with this interpretation. As Boettner notes in Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1962), 333, “Because the supposedly infallible Vulgate mistranslated Eph 5:32 to read, ‘This is a great sacrament,’ the Roman Church for ages has taught that marriage is a sacrament. But the correct translation is: ‘This is a great mystery’ . . . . Today even Roman Catholic writers acknowledge that the old translation was in error. The new Confraternity Version translates it correctly: ‘This is a great mystery’—which is the same as the King James Version. But the Church of Rome continues to hold zealously the doctrine that was formulated on the erroneous Vulgate translation, namely, that marriage is a sacrament. . . . A vital consequence of the erroneous translation has been that the Roman Church has attempted to control everything pertaining to marriage” (p. 333). Boettner proceeds to then list a number of examples in the 20<sup>th</sup> century where the zealotry is used to deeply condemn Protestant marriages. I share Boettner’s concluding observations on the error of translating μυστήριον as *sacramentum*, where Boettner concludes, “But the fact is that Rome’s own teaching is null and void, for Paul does not say that marriage is a sacrament, nor is that statement found anywhere in the Bible. Marriage was not instituted by Christ, which is a requirement for a true sacrament, but instead was instituted in the Garden of Eden thousands of years before the time of Christ. . . . For a Christian, therefore, it is a sacred ordinance that should be performed by a minister and blessed by the church” (p. 335). The next section of Boettner’s “Marriage” chapter proceeds to lay out an eye-opening survey of just how much civil control the Roman Church claimed over the institution of marriage via Canon Law. As he notes, “She asserted that all couples not married by a priest were living in adultery and that their children were illegitimate” (p. 335).

majority of commentators “agree that the primary purpose of this pericope concerns the marriage institution,” and that by dividing the passage into two columns consisting of (A) Eph 5:22–23; 5:25a; and 5:28–29a, alongside (B) Eph 5:24; 5:25b–26; and 5:29b–30, the passage “clearly illustrates the interplay between human marriage and the Christ-church relationship.”<sup>75</sup>

As noted, the New Testament authors often parallel earlier Old Testament compositional strategies by referencing the Garden to speak to male and female relations that occur within the New Covenantal context. As Peter O’Brien notes in his commentary of Ephesians,

Christ and the church in a loving relationship is the paradigm for the Christian husband and wife.... This particular view of marriage has its antecedents in the Old Testament, where marriage is used typologically of the relationship between God and His covenant people. In the earlier Testament the image of marriage was often used to depict the covenant relationship between Yahweh and his people, Israel. Jesus took over this teaching and boldly referred to himself as the Bridegroom (Mark 2:18–20; John 3:29).... Paul expands on the image in 2 Cor 11:1–3 and here in Ephesians 5, and focuses particularly on the “sacrificial steadfastness” of the heavenly “Bridegroom’s covenant-love for his bride.” At one level, then, Paul’s teaching on marriage is grounded in the Old Testament, while at another level the Church’s marriage to Christ is prefigured in Adam and Eve.<sup>76</sup>

Therefore, it is not surprising that scholars suggest that allusions exist between Ephesians 5 and other Old Testament marriage-as-covenant passages such as Ezekiel 16 and their emphasis on Genesis 1–2.<sup>77</sup> In drawing its appeal to the Garden to define male and

---

<sup>75</sup> Tarwater, *The Covenantal Nature of Marriage*, 115–116.

<sup>76</sup> Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, ed. D. A. Carson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 433–435.

<sup>77</sup> Tarwater, *The Covenantal Nature of Marriage*, 119. Tarwater notes, “In both Ezekiel and Ephesians, the washing with water is connected with the husband purifying his wife. Therefore, bathing imagery connects the covenant understanding of marriage in Ezekiel with the husband-wife relationship in Eph 5:21–33.”

female relations, and in its usage of New Testament covenantal imagery to illustrate marriage, Ephesians is arguably an extension of a pattern evidenced throughout the Old Testament that understands marriage as a covenant.

A final passage worth referencing that treats the nature and definition of marriage is Matt 19:1–10. Eugene Roop notes that while Matthew 19 shares Genesis 1–2 and Ephesians 5’s absence of directly deploying the term “covenant,” all three passages clearly reference the covenantal idea in their implications for marriage and divorce.<sup>78</sup> Jesus appeals to the Garden to define marriage and divorce, asking,

Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate (Matt 19:4–6).

If Genesis 1–2 favors the view of marriage as a covenantal idea, then surely Jesus’ citation in Matt 19:4–6 alludes to the same. Matthew also rehashes a pattern prevalent in passages such as Mal 2:15–16, which draws out the implication of the Garden account as it relates to marriage and divorce. Not only does Jesus emulate Malachi in Matt 19:4–6’s reference of the one flesh union and God’s creation of humanity, but both passages also draw the implication of God’s abhorrence to divorce per marriage’s covenantal nature in

---

<sup>78</sup> Eugene Roop, “Two Become One Become Two,” *Brethren Life and Thought* 21 (1976): 136. Roop is not surprised by the absence of the term covenant, given the New Testament texts were continuations of Jewish debates that primarily centered around the topic of divorce. Kline agreed that the absence of the term in Genesis 1–2 did not exclude the existence of the concept. He writes in *By Oath Consigns*, 26–27, “The mere absence of the word ‘covenant’ from Genesis 1 and 2 does not hinder a systematic formulation of the material of these chapters in covenantal terms, just as the absence of the word ‘covenant’ from the redemptive revelation in the latter part of Genesis 3 does not prevent systematic theology from analyzing that passage as the earliest disclosure of the ‘Covenant of Grace.’ Obviously the reality denoted by a word may be found in biblical contexts from which that word is absent. So it is in the present case.”

Genesis 1–2. The abhorrence of divorce is evident in Mal 2:16’s statement that “Indeed, the LORD God of Israel says that he hates divorce, along with the one who conceals his violence by outward appearances.” This abhorrence is paralleled in Matt 19:6, where Jesus states, “So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” Tarwater rightly points out that this pattern exists in other noted marriage-as-covenant passages such as Prov 2:17, which references those “who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God.”<sup>79</sup> In short, the technique and treatment of the covenantal idea of marriage as it symbolizes Christ’s covenantal relationship with the Church, and as it relates to modeling marriage in the Garden and drawing out its implications for divorce, supports the idea that Jesus and the New Testament understood marriage to be a covenant.

### **Marital Covenant and Constitution in History**

A brief survey of passages related to marriage in Scripture make the claim that marriage was biblically understood as a covenant plausible, if not convincing. With this foundation set, it now becomes valuable to survey Church history for the development of covenantal marriage concepts. In particular, emphasis will be placed on charting the evolution of the Church’s understanding of marriage as a sacrament, which Zimmerman himself draws heavily upon with his description of the Church’s historical understanding of marriage as *sacramentum*. Marriage will first be charted across the classical period, by paying particular attention to Augustine and the Medieval formulations. Afterwards, the chapter

---

<sup>79</sup> On the implications drawn from these passages on divorce and the covenantal nature of marriage, see Tarwater, *The Covenantal Nature of Marriage*, 121–122. See also Hugenberg, *Marriage as*

will examine the Reformation's response, which serves as the starting corrective to Zimmerman's three-fold weaknesses. This corrective is primarily found in the inheritors of Reformed ideas known as the Puritans, whose articulation of marriage as a covenantal idea not only provided an alternative to the Tridentine sacramental theological model, but also managed to maintain marriage as a sacred institution. Furthermore, while the emphasis of marriage as a covenant was relatively absent in the Tridentine formulation of marriage, Vatican II and 20<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholicism seemed to arrive at a noteworthy appreciation of marriage as a covenantal idea. While post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism still held to their inherited sacramental understanding, their appreciation of the marriage-as-covenant idea's ability to enhance the sacredness, solemnity, and sobriety of the covenantal institution seemingly redeems the Puritan and Reformed perspectives from Zimmerman's allegations of secularization. Ultimately, this survey will acknowledge that the understanding of marriage as covenant was a valid historical option that corrects Zimmerman's historical treatment, addresses his allusion to the Reformers and Puritans as the source for marriage's secularization, and frees their notion of covenant to be considered as a sanctioning idea to redeem marriage and the family from post-modernity's absurdities.

---

*a Covenant*, 124–151.

## Marital Covenant and Constitution in the Classical Era

During the early period of the Church, the Church Fathers had fairly little to say on the nature and origin of marriage.<sup>80</sup> This is understandable, given the immense theological capital needed to deal with the heresies and theological wildfires that conciliar orthodoxy fought against. While little was said, Joseph Martos notes that “when they did they talked about it as an important aspect of the Christian life, not as an ecclesiastical institution.”<sup>81</sup> Martos’ observation is worth mentioning, given the ecclesial absorption of marriage that occurred alongside the rise of sacramental theology and with it a sacramental understanding of marriage during the Dark and Medieval Ages. While Martos claims marriage was regarded as sacred early on, he notes that it was not until the eleventh century that there was even a sense of a “Christian wedding ceremony, and throughout the Middle Ages there was no single church ritual for solemnizing marriages between Christians.”<sup>82</sup> Most of what the patristics had to say on marriage was negative, and they primarily emphasized marriage’s ability to curtail sexual depravities.<sup>83</sup> Such a representative example is found in Gregory of Nyssa, who states, “Our view of marriage

---

<sup>80</sup> Primary material on Early Church writings can be found in David G. Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), and Philip Lyndon Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church: The Christianization of Marriage During the Patristic and Early Medieval Periods* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994). See *Shepherd of Hermas* 29.1; Tertullian’s *To His Wife and An Exhortation to Chastity*; Clement of Alexandria’s *The Instructor*, Book 2, *Miscellanies* 2, 23.138; and John Chrysostom’s *Homily on Ephesians*. See also Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity*, viii, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, trans. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 5 (Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1887).

<sup>81</sup> Martos, *Perspectives on Marriage: A Reader*, 37.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 31. This observation puts the Christian wedding ceremony especially at odds with baptism and communion, which allegedly had early ceremonial practices preceding sacramental theology proper.

<sup>83</sup> Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *The Man-Woman Relation in Christian Thought* (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1959), 24. Bailey writes, “On the whole, patristic literature adopts a pessimistic view of matrimony even while it vindicates its goodness, and the Fathers argue from the parable with

is this; that, while the pursuit of heavenly things should be a man's first care, yet if he can use the advantages of marriage with sobriety and moderation, he need not despise this way of serving the state."<sup>84</sup>

It is not until Augustine that a theologian is found whose contributions to an understanding of marriage are not only substantive, but formative for all future discussions in Church history.<sup>85</sup> In his work *On the Good of Marriage*, Augustine provides a definition of marriage based upon primordial functions, which consists of the three benefits of fidelity (*fides*), offspring (*proles*), and a sacramental indissoluble bond of the unity of man and wife (*sacramentum*).<sup>86</sup> While Augustine shared with the former Patristic Fathers some of their negative views on sex, his contributions towards defining these three benefits were a major advancement in the Christian conception of marriage.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, it was a progression that alluded to covenantal notions such as a "bond," and the covenantal ideas present in the primordial Garden episodes and images in

---

monotonous frequency that the wedded state produces a mere thirty-fold as compared with the sixty-fold of widowhood or the hundred-fold of virginity."

<sup>84</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity*, 353. Interestingly, Gregory of Nyssa connects the value and utility of marriage not with the ecclesial institution, but with the political one. Later Roman Catholicism reacted strongly against any claims by civil authorities to having authority over the marital institution. Rather, during the Medieval Ages, Canon law ultimately became Civil law as it related to recognizing marriage. As the Council of Trent stated, "If any one saith, that matrimonial causes do not belong to ecclesiastical judges; let him be anathema."

<sup>85</sup> For Augustine's writings on marriage, refer to *De bono conjugali*, CSEL, 41, 187–231; PL, 40, 373–396; *De sancta virginitate*, CSEL 41, 235–302; PL 40, 397–428; and *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, CSEL 42, 209–319; PL 44, 413–474

<sup>86</sup> Augustine, *The Good of Marriage*, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. by John E. Rotelle (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1998), 57. It is noteworthy that these three ideas are overtly present in Mal 2:15–16.

<sup>87</sup> The influence is still felt across Roman Catholic catechisms, where sections widely reference Augustine's framework in various footnotes.

Genesis 1–2.<sup>88</sup> There is also a strong presence of oaths and obligations in Augustine’s notion of *sacramentum*, leading Philip Lyndon Reynolds to conclude, “*Sacramentum* could denote a bond created by an oath or a vow. . . . Marriage itself can be regarded as a *sacramentum* in the sense of a vowed bond.”<sup>89</sup> Given Augustine read the New Testament in Latin and not Greek, as he read Eph 5:32, he found the Vulgate’s *sacramentum* in place of the Greek’s μυστήριον.<sup>90</sup> This led Augustine to interpret marriage as “a sacred sign of a divine reality but it was also a sacred bond between the husband and wife.”<sup>91</sup>

During Augustine’s lifetime, Western Christendom began to experience increasing instability. The Roman Empire exhibited the type of decay Zimmerman references as being tied to familial deterioration.<sup>92</sup> As the state-supported infrastructure began to crumble, the networks of bishops increasingly adopted civil powers in the hopes of preventing societal chaos. Constantine at this point had already granted the Church judicial rights on civil matters, and the Church was increasingly called upon to decide

---

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 35. Augustine writes, “We can say now that in that condition of being born and dying with which we are acquainted, and in which we were created, the union of man and woman is something of value. . . . Marriages also have the benefit that sensual or youthful incontinence, even though it is wrong, is redirected to the honorable purpose of having children, and so out of the evil of lust sexual union in marriage achieves something good. Furthermore, parental feeling brings about a moderation in sensual desire, since it is held back and in a certain way burns more modestly.” Augustine not only shared a negative view on divorce like the earlier section’s Scriptural passages, but he also outright claimed, “The marriage bond is dissolved only by the death of one of the partners.”

<sup>89</sup> Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 282.

<sup>90</sup> Μυστήριον is better translated into English as “mystery” versus *sacramentum*’s translation as sacrament. For a treatment on the problem of translating μυστήριον as *sacramentum*.

<sup>91</sup> Martos, *Perspectives on Marriage*, 43. Martos comment also explains how Augustine reasons the indissolubility of divorce. If it is a sacred sign of God’s action, how can it remain a sign yet end in divorce? Instead of being understood as a sign in the sacramental theological sense, marriage is better understood as a sacred institution which contains covenantal signs. During this time, Augustine was rather alone in his understanding of marriage as “sacrament” (p. 45). Although as noted later, Augustine’s understanding of marriage as a sacramental sign was not the same as Tridentine sacramentalism.

<sup>92</sup> See Zimmerman, *Family and Civilization*, Chapter 4: “From Late Roman to trustee Familism.”

marriage cases during the Dark Ages.<sup>93</sup> During this period, the need to decide divorce cases drove the Church to examine whence a couple became officially married. At first, their examination centered upon the Romanic idea of the moment of consent.<sup>94</sup> The unfortunate outcome is that this drove individuals to engage in secret marriages, which further complicated Canon law by propagating legal difficulties related to the legitimacy of children and their inheritance. These difficulties demanded additional articulation into the origination of a marriage that ultimately led to a Germanic understanding that intercourse was needed to ratify it.<sup>95</sup> During the Dark Ages, two schools developed, with the law faculty at the University of Bologna arguing for the sexual consummation view, and the University of Paris arguing for the emphasis on consent. It was not until Francis Gratian published his *Decree* in 1140 that the views were synthesized into canonical law, which argued that a marriage had both consensual and sexual consummation aspects.<sup>96</sup> As for Augustine's view on divorce, the Medieval church solidified it further, arguing in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries that there were no grounds whatsoever for divorce. Around this time, marriage began to be seen in a sacramental sense familiar to Tridentine sacramental

---

<sup>93</sup> Martos, *Perspectives on Marriage*, 47. Martos writes, "One reason why churchmen became involved in marriage and divorce cases, especially after the popes started sending missionaries into northern Europe, was the difference between Roman and Germanic marriage customs." Martos' observation parallels Zimmerman's thesis of the familial typology dependent on the interaction of cultures and convictions.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 49. As Martos explains, "In the eleventh century the discovery and circulation of the *Code of Justinian* led to increasing acceptance of the idea that marriage came about by the consent of the partners, and this idea was reflected in the new rituals for church wedding in which the priest asked the bride and groom, not the parents, for their consent to the marriage." Noteworthy champions of the consensual view included St. John Chrysostom, Augustine, Ambrose, Isidore, and Pierre Lombard.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* It should be noted that the contractual elements that Zimmerman blamed for giving rise to the secularization of marriage are already here present in the Church's understanding as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

theology, and Thomas Aquinas reinforced these various canonical assumptions by moving away from Augustine's influence on *fides*, and towards an emphasis on *proles*.<sup>97</sup>

Thus far, the view of marriage evolved from the covenantal model evident in the earlier biblical passages, to the broad non-ceremonial "sacramental" understanding of Augustine. This view then evolved further into the formal and sacramental understanding of Medieval Roman Catholicism. The notion of marriage as a sacrament was made official and enforced by the ecclesial authority of the Vatican in marital issues, in part as a response to the Reformation's formulations. Numerous complications and corruptions arose in connection with the view that the sacramental union was dissolvable through annulment, and these issues led the Reformers to formulate an alternative understanding of the institution.<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> I agree with Zimmerman, where he theorizes in *Family and Civilization*, 72, "A careful study of St. Augustine's *De bono conjugali* leads me to the opinion that he places *fides*, or faith and constancy, above *proles* in this enumeration of the three foundations of marriage and the family. It is difficult to interpret his many statements, but this seems to be his general idea. Later writers (St. Isidore and St. Thomas Aquinas) seem to me to rearrange the sequence into *proles*, *fides*, and *sacramentum*." Luther seemed to emphasize *proles*.

<sup>98</sup> Martos, *Perspectives on Marriage*, 31–61. Prior to treating the Reformation's reformulations, there is merit in reviewing some of Roman Catholicism's prior positions for some helpful context. As mentioned earlier, the Roman Catholic Church held a number of views on marriage throughout its history. As Martos notes regarding the sacramental understanding, "Relatively early in the history of Christianity, marriage was regarded as a sacrament in the broad sense [as sacred], but it was only in the twelfth century that it came to be regarded as a sacrament in the same sense as baptism and the other official sacraments. In fact, before the eleventh century there was no such thing as a Christian wedding ceremony, and throughout the Middle Ages there was no single church ritual for solemnizing marriages between Christians" (p. 31). Furthermore, Martos notes, "Initially the churchmen simply adopted the prevailing Roman customs, although they sometimes added prohibitions that were found in the Old Testament. Later they incorporated the customs of the invading Germanic peoples into the church's laws. These customs varied somewhat from tribe to tribe" (p. 45). As the Roman Catholic Church dealt with disputes related to the origination and cessation of marriage, a number of conflicting papal and conciliar decrees and decisions that stretched back to the patristic era needed synthesis. It was not until the later twelfth century that Pope Alexander III worked out a definitive solution to the two major schools that proposed either consent or sexual intimacy as the origination of marriage. Martos notes that Pope Alexander's solution was to decree "that the consent given by the two partners themselves was all that was needed for the existence of a real marriage. This consent was viewed as an act of conferring on each other the legal right to marital relations even if they did

Luther reacted negatively to a number of related issues such as enforced clerical celibacy, and he argued that marriage could not possibly be considered a sacrament, given it existed since the beginning of the world (and thus before the New Testament Church).<sup>99</sup> Luther was also correct to emphasize that in Eph 5:14–15, *mysterion* was a

---

not occur, and so from the moment of consent there was a true marriage contract between the two partners” (p. 50).

As the Roman Catholic Church began to deal with the implications of this decree as it related to divorce during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, marriage began to be seen chiefly as a sacrament. In particular, the sacramental perspective really took shape as the Vatican sought to respond to the Reformation’s definition of marriage as nonsacramental. The Vatican’s response was evident in the last session of the Council of Trent in 1563, which argued that marriage was always unbreakable, and that Christ himself had elevated it to a sacrament. As stated at the Council of Trent, “The Council of Trent—Session 24,” 1563, <http://www.thecounciloftrent.com/ch24.htm>, “If any one saith, that matrimony is not truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelic law, (a sacrament) instituted by Christ the Lord; but that it has been invented by men in the Church; and that it does not confer grace; let him be *anathema*. . . . If any one saith, that matrimonial causes do not belong to ecclesiastical judges; let him be *anathema*.” Furthermore, while the Council decided all prior secret marriages were grandfathered in as valid, Martos notes that Trent “declared that henceforth no Christian marriage would be valid and sacramental unless it was contracted in the presence of a priest and two witnesses” (p. 58). These laws applied to all baptized persons, whether or not they acknowledged the Vatican’s authority. However, as was Roman Catholic policy related to baptism by heretics and schismatics, non-Catholic marriages were still considered by Rome to be sacramentally valid, yet wounded and warped (p. 60). As the secular authority of the Vatican and papacy began to be continuously challenged by secular powers, various popes reinforced the sacramental understanding. As Pope Pius IX articulated in his 1852 response to the claim of civil governments, “There can be no marriage between Catholics which is not at the same time a sacrament; and consequently any other union between Christian men and women, even a civil marriage, is nothing but shameful and mortally sinful concubinage if it is not a sacrament” (Pious IX’s address in *Acerbissimum vobiscum*, as quoted by Martos, p. 60). Pope Leo XIII reiterated Pious IX’s position, where he wrote in his 1880 encyclical, *Arcanum divinae sapientiae*, “In Christian marriage the contract cannot be separated from the sacrament, and for this reason the contract cannot be a true and lawful one without being a sacrament as well” (quoted in Martos, p. 60).

However, given the emphasis on consent, the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church later dropped the necessity of the sacrament being performed by the priest, and instead argued that the sacrament was administered by the bride and groom to each other (p. 60). Martos helpfully defines the understanding of marriage as a sacrament at this historical point, writing, “Marriage was a sacrament instituted by Christ in which two legally competent persons became permanently united as husband and wife. The *sacramentum* was the giving of consent, the external rite in which they agreed to the marriage and took each other as their spouse. The *sacramentum et res* was the marriage contract, the sacramental reality which both symbolized the permanent union between Christ and the church and permanently united the couple in the bond of marriage. The *res* was the grace that the couple received to be faithful to each other as Christian spouses, and to fulfill their duties as parents. The primary purpose of marriage was the procreation and education of children; its secondary purpose was the spiritual perfection of the spouses by means of the grace of the sacrament, the mutual support they gave to each other, and the morally permissible satisfaction of their sexual needs” (p. 61).

<sup>99</sup> Martin Luther, *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 5, in *Perspectives on Marriage*, ed. Joseph Martos, 46. Luther claims, “[T]here is no reason why it should be called a sacrament of the new law and the

better Latin translation of the Greek word *μυστήριον* than the word *sacramentum*.<sup>100</sup>

Overall, Luther opposed the negative view of marriage propagated by priestly and monastic celibacy, as well as the overall unbiblical foundations in which the sacramental position rested.<sup>101</sup> So what alternative did Luther offer? In place of viewing marriage as primarily sacramental, he appraised Augustine's threefold emphasis within his doctrine of two kingdoms. In place of the consent of two parties consummated in intercourse, Luther argued for witnesses, parental permission, and public profession of marriage vows.<sup>102</sup> Luther's view is apparent in his *Sermon on the Estate of Marriage*, where he summarizes the three-fold goods of the doctors of the Church as sacrament (*sacramentum*), fidelity (*fides*), and procreation (*proles*).<sup>103</sup> Interestingly, Luther acknowledges "marriage is a *covenant* of fidelity," although he ultimately concludes that the "third point [of procreation, *proles*] seems to me to be the most important of all, as

---

sole property of the church." For Luther's views on sexuality and marriage, see Lisa Cahill, *Between the Sexes: Foundations for a Christian Ethics of Sexuality* (Philadelphia, PA: 1985), 123–137, and Eric Fuchs, *Sexual Desire and Love* (Cambridge: J. Clarke, 1983), 136–138. As Luther notes in *A Sermon on the Estate of Marriage*, he did hold to marriage being a "sacrament" in a more Protestant sense of signaling a holy institution, but rejected the sacramental understanding articulated in the Council of Trent as a Christ-appointed, ecclesial-directed, infusion of grace.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> James Turner Johnson, "Marriage as Covenant in Early Protestant Thought: Its Development and Implications," in *Covenant Marriage in Comparative Perspective*, ed. John Witte (Grand Rapids, MI: 2005), 126–127.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 127. Johnson notes, "The idea of marriage as sacramental was replaced by a conception of marriage reflecting Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms. In its ideal state, as originally created by God and possible to Christian spouses through grace—that is, in marriage conceived as a relationship in the Kingdom on the Right Hand—it is indissoluble because of the perfection of love between the spouses. Yet in the world as it is, the Kingdom on the Left Hand, people marry who do not enjoy perfect mutual love; serious incompatibilities may arise, and one or both spouses may take actions which destroy the marital bond. In this kingdom, indissolubility is not an inherent characteristic of the marital state but an ordering imposed by the temporal authorities for the common good."

<sup>103</sup> Martin Luther, *A Sermon on the Estate of Marriage*, in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. William R. Russell (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 388–391.

well as being the most useful.”<sup>104</sup> Zimmerman is partially correct in stating Luther called for a secularization of marriage, but Luther still maintained a sacredness to the institution as mitigated by the appropriation of Augustine’s ideas within Luther’s two kingdom perspective.<sup>105</sup>

Building upon Luther’s reactions and criticisms were Reformed theologians such as Martin Bucer and John Calvin. Bucer and Calvin developed a notion of marriage they saw evidenced in Gen 2:23 that stressed the *fides* component of the male and female relationship.<sup>106</sup> This emphasis on marital friendship is especially evident in Bucer’s definition of marriage, which Bucer defined as an institution of God consisting of

a society and conjunction of man and woman, in which they are obliged to mutually communicate all things, divine and human, throughout their whole life and to live together in giving their bodies to one another whenever required or because of warm affection and genuine friendship.<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 391. On the Church doctors teaching of fidelity, Luther writes, “Second, [the doctors say] marriage is a covenant of fidelity. The whole basis and essence of marriage is that each gives himself or herself to the other, and they promise to remain faithful to each other and not give themselves to any other” (p. 389). On the Church doctors teaching of sacrament, Luther writes, “First, [the doctors say] it is a sacrament. A sacrament is a sacred sign of something spiritual, holy, heavenly, and eternal, just as the water of baptism, when the priest pours it over the child, means that the holy, divine, eternal grace is poured into the soul and body of that child at the same time, and cleanses him from his original sin. . . . In the same way the estate of marriage is a sacrament. It is an outward and spiritual sign of the greatest, holiest, worthiest, and noblest thing that has ever existed or ever will exist: the union of the divine and human natures in Christ. . . . Consider this matter with the respect it deserves. Because the union of man and woman signifies such a great mystery, the estate of marriage has to have this special significance” (pp. 388–389).

<sup>105</sup> Johnson, *Covenant Marriage in Comparative Perspective*, 128. Johnson writes, “Luther thus redefined marriage in terms that tied it closely to the social and even political structure of the society in which it existed, while at the same time setting a high ideal for performance not only for the husband-wife relationship but also for familial relationships considered more broadly. We see here several main features of the covenant idea of marriage developed in the next century by the English Puritans.”

<sup>106</sup> Eric Fuchs, *Sexual Desire and Love: Origins and History of the Christian Ethic of Sexuality and Marriage* (Cambridge: Seabury Press, 1983), 140. Fuchs quotes Martin Bucer’s *Von der Ehe*, writing, “In this verse God shows what marriage is and why He instituted it. The communion of man and woman is such that in all things they are one flesh, i.e., one being, and that each of them has a willingness to remain with the other more than with anyone else on earth.”

<sup>107</sup> Johnson, *Covenant Marriage in Comparative Perspective*, 128. Johnson quoting Bucer’s description of true marriage.

Calvin also shared Bucer's emphasis on the importance to *fides* in the marital relationship. On his commentary in *Institutes* on Genesis 2, Calvin writes,

As the law under which man was created was not to lead a life of solitude, but enjoy a help-meet for him—and ever since he fell under the curse the necessity for this mode of life is increased—the Lord made the requisite provision for us in this respect by the institution of marriage.<sup>108</sup>

At this point, it becomes overt that these more “Reformed” Reformers shared the earlier treated Scriptural passages emphasis on the Creation account to define the nature of marriage and its members.<sup>109</sup> The chief contribution from this Reformed tradition and their return to the primordial model, is their appeal to the covenantal idea to explain the origination, constitution, and sacredness of the marital institution. This is especially the case with Calvin, who John Witte credits as the Father of the Protestant marriage-as-covenant tradition.<sup>110</sup>

Calvin had a tendency to use the doctrine of covenant as an explanation for not only the vertical relationship between God and man, but also the theocentric horizontal relationships amongst men.<sup>111</sup> From this covenantal perspective, Witte notes that Calvin developed “in great detail a covenantal theology of the origin, nature, and purpose of marriage and a covenantal law of marital formation, maintenance, and dissolution,

---

<sup>108</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957), 1:348.

<sup>109</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, vol 1., trans. John King (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948), 128–129. Calvin notes, “Man was formed to be a social animal. Now, the human race could not exist without the woman; and, therefore, in the conjunction of human beings, that sacred bond is especially conspicuous, by which the husband and the wife are combined in one body, and one soul.” Also see Calvin's *Institutes*, 1559, 4.19.34, where Calvin writes, “Marriage is the holiest bond that God has set among us.”

<sup>110</sup> Refer to John Witte Jr., *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), chap. 3, and in John Witte Jr. and Robert M. Kingdon, *Sex, Marriage, and Family in John Calvin's Geneva* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

spousal rights, roles, and responsibilities, and more.”<sup>112</sup> And it did not just stop at theory. Calvin’s covenantal model directly influenced policies for the Genevan church and city-state.<sup>113</sup> More importantly, Calvin developed the rationale for these ideas upon grounds established earlier in the survey of Old and New Testament marriage passages. For example, in addition to building his case off of Genesis 1–2, Calvin greatly emphasized the general characteristic of a unilateral dependence on the will and authority of God, stating in a sermon on Eph 5:22–26, “Marriage is not a thing ordained by men. We know that God is the author of it, and that it is solemnized in his name. The Scripture says that it is a holy *covenant*, and therefore calls it divine.”<sup>114</sup> Calvin also relied heavily on the earlier treated Malachi and Proverbs passages for his interpretation that marriage is a covenant.<sup>115</sup> From this covenantal articulation came the treatment of the duties surrounding the covenantal oath, and “the writings of Calvin and Bullinger, separately and together, catalyzed a veritable industry of Protestant covenant theology, jurisprudence, and ethics.”<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>111</sup> Witte, *Covenant Marriage in Comparative Perspective*, 19.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.* Witte writes, “Calvin’s *Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1561* interwove the levels of responsibility in contracting marriage—that of the would-be husband and wife, their parents, and the public authorities—by insisting on parental approval for minor children to marry, but by giving the consistory authority over both.” See also Fuchs, *Sexual Desire and Love*, 143.

<sup>114</sup> Witte quoting Calvin in *From Sacrament to Contract*, 95. Italics added for emphasis.

<sup>115</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve*, 552–553. On Calvin’s treatment of the earlier referenced Old Testament passages, Calvin writes, “When a marriage takes place between a man and a woman, God presides and requires a mutual pledge from both. Hence Solomon, in Prov 2:17, calls marriage the covenant of God, for it is superior to all human contracts. So also Malachi declares, that God is as it were the stipulator, who by his authority joins the man to the woman, and sanctions the alliance.”

<sup>116</sup> Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 21. Also refer to David A. Weir, *Early New England: A Covenanted Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005); and Colloquium, “Creativity and Responsibility: Covenant, Contract, and the Resolution of Disputes,” *Emory Law Journal* 36 (1987): 533.

## Marital Covenant and Constitution in the Modern Era

The Reformer's contributions to marriage were twofold. First, they reacted against the sacramental understanding of the Vatican by emphasizing a more biblical understanding of marriage. Second, they provided alternative models within the two kingdoms and covenantal perspectives. In short, the Reformers did not simply do away with the sacramental understanding and replace it with a purely secular version, as Zimmerman's tabular summary would have one believe. Rather, they provided alternative models that maintained a biblically-oriented view of marriage, whose sanctity was grounded in the moral framework of a triangular understanding of a covenantal marriage relation as involving God, man, and woman. While the combined treatment of the scriptural and historical passages provides a corrective to Zimmerman's survey of the Church's historical understanding of marriage, a continued historical study into the inheritors of Reformed covenantal theology provides a corrective to Zimmerman's accusation that the Protestant Reformation led to the secularization of marriage.

With the Puritans came a prolonged attempt to integrate Calvin and Bucer's Reformed covenantal convictions into multiple societal institutions. While Zimmerman's treatment of Puritan contributions leaves much to be desired, a corrective can be proposed by examining a number of influential Puritans and their extension of Reformed Protestantism's views on marriage as a covenantal idea. First among these Puritans is Robert Cleaver, whose *A Godlie Forme of Household Government* draws an analogy between marriage and government as tempered by a focus on the marital relationship as a form of friendship. Cleaver saw the household as "a little commonwealth," and defined marriage as "a lawful knot, and unto God an acceptable yoking and joining together of

one man, and one woman, with the good consent of them both: to the end that they may dwell together in friendship and honesty, one helping and comforting the other ... bringing up their children in the fear of God.”<sup>117</sup> Cleaver’s emphasis on mutuality and friendship is particularly notable in reversing the traditional Medieval order of marriage. Cleaver argued that “mutual society, not procreation, is most fundamental, and procreation is presented not as the defining purpose of marriage but as one of the results of a good marriage.”<sup>118</sup> According to Cleaver, the covenantal emphasis is appropriately placed upon the male-female relationship, and the covenantal obligations inherent within those roles.

Robert Pricke was a second Puritan who, in his *The Doctrine of Superioritie and of Subjection*, continued Cleaver’s emphasis on mutuality and covenant.<sup>119</sup> Like Cleaver, Pricke saw marriage as the fundamental form of society. Pricke argued that this fundamental form was rooted in the Decalogue’s command to honor one’s parents. Marriage was a work of grace, and like the earlier surveyed texts, Pricke likened the husband and wife relationship to that of God and Israel. As he writes, God “hath joined to himself, and as it were married in a special covenant of mercy and compassion, all the faithful and elect ones; so that he is head and husband of his people.”<sup>120</sup>

William Perkins published a year after Pricke, and like Calvin and Pricke, Perkins saw marriage as “the Seminary of all other Societies,” which was “ordained by God in

---

<sup>117</sup> A. W. Pollar and G. R. Redgrace, *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1926), 98. Henceforth abbreviated as *STC*.

<sup>118</sup> James Turner Johnson, “Marriage as Covenant in Early Protestant Thought,” in Witte, *Covenant Marriage in Comparative Perspective*, 134.

paradise” to bring a couple together and experience the added blessings of procreation.<sup>121</sup> Perkins stressed that the marriage covenant was God’s doing, and argued that “marriage was made & appointed by God himself, to be the fountain and seminary of all other sorts and kinds of life, in the Common-wealth, and in the Church.”<sup>122</sup> This combination of stressing the inherited emphasis on marriage as mutual companionship, and marriage as a dutiful companionship rife with covenantal obligations, became the standard among Puritan circles. As Witte comments on Perkins importance to the covenantal tradition, by amplifying the idea of mutual companionship and its duties, “he laid down a pathway for the subsequent development of the Puritan understanding of marriage: the covenant model as one of ‘dutiful companionship’ in marriage.”<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, Witte notes, “This model implied not simply love as affection but love as act, act in accord with the obligations of the covenant relationship.”<sup>124</sup> (135)

Whereas the above-mentioned Puritans represented major contributors to the doctrine of marriage, Puritans such as Thomas Gataker and William Gogue brought the covenantal understanding to a more popular level. In Gataker’s sermons, *A Good Wife Gods Gift*, *A Wife Indeed*, and *Marriage Duties*, Gataker placed his emphasis on the loving companionship component of Perkin’s thought.<sup>125</sup> Contemporary William Gouge,

---

<sup>119</sup> Robert Pricke, *The Doctrine of Superioritie, and of Subjection* (London, 1609), *STC* 20337.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> William Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie*, vol. 3 of *William Perkins, Workes*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1609), *STC*, 19649, 3:10.

<sup>122</sup> Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie*, 3:670–71.

<sup>123</sup> Witte, *Covenant Marriage in Comparative Perspective*, 135.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.* This emphasis on love as act seems to parallel well Elazar’s emphasis on “hearkening” (*shamoa*) and “covenantal loving kindness” (*khesed*).

<sup>125</sup> Thomas Gataker, *Marriage Duties* (London, 1620), *STC* 11667; Thomas Gataker, *A Good Wife Gods Gift*; and Thomas Gataker, *A Wife Indeed; Two Marriage Sermons* (London, 1623), *STC* 11659.

on the other hand, placed emphasis on the covenantal duties component of Perkins beliefs.<sup>126</sup> Both represent different interpretative emphases on Perkins perspective, and it is at this later point that John Milton, whom Zimmerman begins with in his summary of the Puritan perspective, provides his marital synthesis. At this point, there is a healthy line of covenantal marriage thinkers stretching back across history to Calvin, and as suggested, arguably to the heart of the scriptural marriage passages. In their teachings are found an emphasis on oath/vow, covenantal duties, God's role in bringing the covenant together, and even a strong reliance on the creation ordinance of the formerly treated passages. By the time history arrives at Zimmerman's emphasis of John Milton's *Tetrachordon*, the covenant conception of marriage that emphasizes Christian freedom and mutual love is only one such perspective; hardly could John Milton—as Zimmerman's work tries to make it seem—be considered authoritative and representative of the Puritan tradition as a whole.<sup>127</sup> This is to say nothing of Locke and Hobbes who, arguably influenced by the Puritans, drew heavily from the covenantal idea in their development of the social contract idea.<sup>128</sup> As noted in the earlier survey of traditional Protestant social theory, Baxter is especially relevant—and a better early representative—who clearly deployed the insights of the Puritan tradition to formulate a traditional Protestant social theory based off applying the covenantal idea. Furthermore, this says nothing of the dissertation's second chapter's treatment of the baptistic traditional

---

<sup>126</sup> William Gouge, *Of Domestical Duties Eight Treatises* (London, 1622), STC 12119.

<sup>127</sup> John Milton, *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Don M. Wolfe and Ernest Sirluck (New Haven, London: 1959); Milton, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, in *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 217–356; and Milton, *Tetrachordon*, *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 571–718.

Protestant social theory and its view of marriage as an ordained covenantal institution. As Witte correctly concludes in *Covenant Marriage in Comparative Perspective*, the covenantal view is clearly the majority view of contemporary Protestantism.<sup>129</sup> However, one of the most interesting modern appraisals of the covenantal idea actually comes from modern Roman Catholicism.

The current evolution of the Vatican's view of marriage came with the 20<sup>th</sup> century's second Vatican council. In particular, the Roman Catholic Church sought—through Vatican II and its *Gaudium et Spes*—to respond to modernity's cultural emphasis of atomistic individualism. Prior to this rise of individualism, the Western emphasis of marriage was on social duty. The Vatican sought to address this individualism and additional problematic social questions by first addressing the family. Furthermore, the

---

<sup>128</sup> Locke clearly seems more influenced by his Puritan heritage and the covenantal tradition than does the more secular Hobbes.

<sup>129</sup> The Baptist absorption of the Reformed covenantal idea provides yet another strong theological tradition that articulated covenantal insights. However, a number of other contemporary Protestant traditions emphasize the covenantal idea, to the point it may be said with certainty that the covenantal view formulates the current majority Protestant understanding of marriage. In Witte, *Covenant Marriage in Comparative Perspective*, 151, Witte notes that in Perry H. Biddle Jr., *A Marriage Manual*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), Biddle “provides marriage liturgies from several contemporary American denominations. Of these the only one which, rather conspicuously, lacks any reference to the idea of marriage as a covenant relationship grounded in the mutual love of the spouses is the Lutheran one. . . . In the other liturgies provided—Episcopal, Presbyterian, and United Methodist—the language used reflects the tradition of marriage as a covenantal relationship of mutual love” (p. 151). Witte quotes the *Revised Book of Common Prayer* as evidence of the contemporary Protestant covenantal marital view in a marriage ceremony, where it states, “‘Beloved, We have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony. The bond and *covenant* of marriage was established by God in creation, and our Lord Jesus adorned this manner of life by his presence and first miracle at the wedding in Cana and Galilee” (p. 162). Witte also quotes evidence of the covenantal view among United Methodists, where United Methodist marriage ceremonies state, “Friends, we are gathered together in the sight of God to witness and bless the joining of this man and this woman in Christian Marriage. The *Covenant* of marriage was established by God, who created us male and female for each other” (p. 162). The covenantal perspective is also evident in a traditional Presbyterian marriage ceremony, where covenant is used not to address the congregation, but the couple: “‘John’ (or ‘Jane’), understanding that God has created, ordered, and blessed the *covenant* of marriage, do you affirm your desire and intention to enter this *covenant*?” (p. 162). In *A Marriage Manual*, Biddle notes that the Episcopal marriage liturgy held an understanding that “Christian marriage is a solemn and public *covenant*” (p. 119).

Vatican sought to loosen harsh restrictions and penalties against mixed marriages derived from the Tridentine positions. The resulting innovations and response of these developments is captured in Vatican II's treatment of marriage, which is present in the third partition of *Gaudium et Spes*. Martos summarizes the section as claiming, "It spoke of marriage as a social and divine institution, an agreement between persons, an intimate partnership, a union in love, a community, and a *covenant*."<sup>130</sup> It is especially interesting that Vatican II arrived at a more covenantal understanding of the institution. After all, the notion of marriage as a covenant is rather absent in the Tridentine formulation.<sup>131</sup>

*Gaudium et Spes* references covenant as it relates to marriage multiple times. The Synod states,

The intimate partnership of married life and love has been established by the Creator and qualified by His laws, and is rooted in the conjugal *covenant* of irrevocable personal consent.... For as God of old made Himself present to His people through a *covenant* of love and fidelity, so now the Savior of men and the Spouse of the Church comes into the lives of married Christians through the sacrament of matrimony.... Thus the Christian family, which springs from marriage as a reflection of the loving *covenant* uniting Christ with the Church, and as a participation in that *covenant*, will manifest to all men Christ's living presence in the world, and the genuine nature of the Church. This the family will do by the mutual love of the spouses, by their generous fruitfulness, their solidarity and faithfulness, and by the loving way in which all members of the family assist one another.<sup>132</sup>

With Vatican II came an emphasis by Roman Catholics to understand marriage as being covenantal. While the sacramental nature of a Roman Catholic understanding of marriage still differs from the Protestant attitude, this covenantal acknowledgement provides

---

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 63. Italics added for emphasis.

<sup>131</sup> An initial search of the word "covenant" in the relevant section on marriage revealed only a single reference that occurs later in the text, and focuses more on another theological concept.

common ground between the two traditions. Furthermore, it pushes back against Zimmerman's conclusion that the Protestant and Reformed traditions are somehow at fault for a secularization of the marriage concept. As Loraine Boettner states in *Roman Catholicism*,

The fact that Roman Catholicism holds that marriage is a sacrament does not mean that it holds marriage in greater reverence than does Protestantism. Protestantism holds that marriage was divinely instituted in the Garden of Eden, and so was established by God's blessing. For a Christian, therefore, it is a sacred ordinance that should be performed by a minister and blessed by the church.<sup>133</sup>

Furthermore, a number of contractual elements Zimmerman faults for a rise of secularization were already present in the Vatican's formulation of marriage far before the Reformation began. Zimmerman provides poor representatives of the Reformed and Puritan tradition to evidence the lineage and orientation of Protestant views on marriage. The tradition that provided the deepest articulation of marriage as a sacred covenantal institution were these noted Reformed Puritans. In a sense, Roman Catholics arrived at an indirect and sacramentalized adoption of a number of the Reformation's covenantal insights, which only served to expand the sacredness, solemnity, and sobriety of the institution.

There is irony in that, with Vatican II, Roman Catholics came to a more official covenantal notion of marriage.<sup>134</sup> For these reasons, two popular Roman Catholic

---

<sup>132</sup> "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World—*Gaudium et Spes*," n.d., [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_cons\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html).

<sup>133</sup> Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1962), 335.

<sup>134</sup> I can imagine a Roman Catholic possibly responding here with some statement claiming Roman Catholics always emphasized the covenantal aspect of marriage in its teaching. However, the basic absence in the Tridentine formulation suggests otherwise. Furthermore, the Roman Catholic variant of covenantal theology seems to be a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century development. Perhaps this also explains the covenantal

catechisms place a noteworthy emphasis on the covenantal aspects of marriage.<sup>135</sup> In *The Teaching of Christ: A Catholic Catechism for Adults*, the catechism stresses the covenantal aspect in its relation to the sacramental, stating marriage is

a *covenant* of indissoluble love. It is a sacred sign recalling and drawing upon the perpetual love between Christ and His Church. Like that *covenant*, a consummated sacramental marriage is entirely indissoluble. It endures until

---

emphasis on marriage at and after Vatican II. During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, scholars such as Henri de Lubac and Jean Danielou helped develop a distinctive approach to Catholic theology by recovering Patristic interpretive methods (specifically, those spiritual exegetical methods of Irenaeus and Augustine's *Against Heresies* and *The City of God*). Vatican II articulated this approach in *Dei verbum*'s "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation." The product of Vatican II's exploration of scriptural interpretation was to denote "four senses" of Scripture within an interpretive "spiritual" exegetical framework that guided soteriological and biblical scholarship in accordance with the biblical covenants. The works that contributed to this patristic spiritual exegesis were Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis I* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), and Jean Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005). For an example of a seminal representation of the development of the Roman Catholic variant of covenantal theology, see Joseph Ratzinger, *Many Religions—One Covenant: Israel, the Church, and the World* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1999). For more contemporary articulations of Roman Catholic covenantal theology, see Scott Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises: God's Covenant Love in Scripture* (Ann Arbor, MI: Charis, 1998).

This 20<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholic emphasis on covenantal theology should not deprive the Reformed tradition of their contributions, especially as it pertains to the conclusions in this chapter's appraisal. If anything, the notable increase in the awareness of the covenantal framework among Vatican II influencers should be celebrated, and commended as an area for shared Reformed and Roman Catholic social theoretical dialogue. Furthermore, it emphasizes the seminal importance of the approach for possibly a broader Christian social ethic. A future historical theological study of the covenantal idea across denominational confessions and catechisms—as was done earlier with the Baptists—could perhaps shed some additional insights on continuity of the covenantal idea across traditions, as well as its ecumenical utility towards developing social theory.

<sup>135</sup> Ronald David Lawler *et al.*, *The Teaching of Christ: A Catholic Catechism for Adults* (Huntingdon, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Pub. Division, 2005), 442–448. The catechism defines marriage as "a sacrament between the baptized. It is a *covenant* between a man and a woman, committing them to live with one another in a bond of married love whose charter was established by God. This covenant is a symbol of the undying covenant love established by Christ, with His Church in the paschal mystery. It is an encounter with Christ which makes effective the grace it signifies, the graces needed to make human love enduring, faithful, and fruitful, and so a suitable image of the love between Christ and His Church" (p. 444). A second popular catechism, directed by the Vatican itself, is Joseph Ratzinger *et al.*, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori Publications, 1994), 400. On its treatment of marriage, the catechism describes "The matrimonial *covenant*, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this *covenant* between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament" (p. 400).

death.... Marriage in the sense of *covenanted* love—*sacred, solemn, serious*—of itself required indissoluble union after the model of God’s love.<sup>136</sup>

Given the weight these catechisms and Vatican II give to marriage as a covenantal idea—which was relatively absent in the Tridentine formulation—the Puritan and Reformed perspectives seem somewhat redeemed against Zimmerman’s criticisms. Simply because Protestants removed the sacramental component of infused grace—and with it, Vatican’s overreaching ecclesial dominion over the institution—does not mean the Protestant understanding lacks the type of transcendent and moral merit that Zimmerman thinks is necessary to healthy domestic families and a healthy society. Rather, as the catechism *The Teaching of Christ* alludes to in its reference to marriage, covenantal love in marriage is “sacred, solemn, [and] serious,” because it is modeled after God’s own covenantal love.<sup>137</sup> If anything, the treatment of covenant by the Reformed tradition and Puritans arguably takes this covenantal sacredness with more seriousness and to greater depths than any other theological tradition.

### **Covenant and Constitution and Its Significant Marital Contributions**

The chapter began by sobering the reader as to the absurdity and severity of a revolution being waged in the West against Christendom’s traditional understanding of marriage and family. The absurdity is hinted in the endless subjective notions of gender, sexuality, and pronouns being propagated by culture’s popular “Plutarchs.” As for the severity of the

---

<sup>136</sup> Lawler, *The Teaching of Christ*, 448. The catechism then proceeds to quote from *Rites of Marriage*, Introduction, n. 2, in *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, 3.866, which states, “Marriage arises in the *covenant* of marriage, or irrevocable consent, which each partner freely bestows on and accepts from the other” (p. 448).

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

revolution, Zimmerman claims they impact the very survival of a civilization. In particular, Zimmerman makes a convincing observation that a parallel exists between a society's decline, and the vitality or deterioration of its faith and familial model. Zimmerman surveys a number of civilizations and draws the observation that a society's vitality correlates with what he calls the trustee, domestic, and atomistic family models. His survey concludes that a strong relationship exists between a society's faith and its fertility, and that a civilization's overall health can be measured by its birthrate. As a society embraces the atomistic familial model—which usually correlates with the presence of spiritual decline—it begins to experience societal decay evident in the signs of divorce, homosexuality, abortion, and a number of other social indicators. In short, faith plays an important role in sanctioning family and fertility, and thus impacting a society's overall health.

While surveying Zimmerman's argument, three problems in his work were noted as they relate to an appraisal of traditional Protestant social theory and this dissertation's thesis. First, Zimmerman seems to blame the Reformation broadly—and Puritans specifically—for the secularization of marriage. Second, Zimmerman's emphasis on the Church's historical understanding of marriage and family as primarily sacramental is insufficient. Third, Zimmerman's proposal of suggesting a society target its educated "Plutarchs" as a solution to the revitalization of the familial institution seems wrongheaded. The chapter proceeded to respond to these errors by appraising marriage as a covenantal idea in Scripture and the Church's history.

The appraisal began by investigating the covenantal marriage idea in the Old and New Testament. After building upon the definition of *berith* and its related terms from the earlier ecclesial chapter, the initial survey into the scriptural evidence underscored the relational aspect of covenant as involving a “hearkening” of one’s “covenantal loving kindness.” Marriage as a covenantal idea, and these noted elements, are evident throughout a number of important Old Testament passages. As Hugenberger and Tarwater rightly note, Genesis 1–2 is a foundational primordial account of marriage as a covenant. The episode of Adam and Eve contain various covenantal elements of oaths and signs, and further provide a foundation for the covenantal understanding of later scriptural passages and theologians. Among these Old Testament passages, Hos 2:18–22 and Ezek 16:8 draw analogous references to covenant as a marital idea. Passages such as Prov 2:16–17 and especially Mal 2:14–15 are more direct in identifying marriage as a covenant, as well as intentionally drawing the implications of the Garden’s primordial marriage covenant. The relevant New Testament passages continue the interpretive tone of these noted verses. In Eph 5:21–33 and John 3:29, Paul and John develop the covenantal marital idea through comparing it with Christ’s covenantal relationship with His Church. Further, Ephesians 5 shares a number of important interpretive characteristics with Ezekiel 16 and Genesis 1–2. Finally, New Testament passages such as Matt 19:1–10 further illustrate the covenantal character of marriage by emulating Mal 2:15–16 and Prov 2:17 in drawing out the implications of Genesis 1–2 as they relate to divorce.

With this scriptural survey complete, an appraisal was conducted to examine the marital covenantal idea across the Church's history. The emphasis of the Early Church's theological attention was busy with responding to heresy and persecution, and it is not until Augustine that a substantive account of marriage is developed with his marital notions of *fides*, *sacramentum*, and *proles*. These marital elements formed the core for the Church's later formulations, and various episodes in the Church's history elevated one's merit above the others. During this survey, the overall turbulence of dealing with questions of the origination of marriage, the validity of secretive marriages, and how to address the question of divorce, led the Vatican to synthesize the thoughts of two prevailing theological schools that emphasized contract or sexual consummation as the origins of the validity of marriage. The point at which the Vatican's Tridentine sacramental understanding of marriage truly came about was as it responded to the Reformation's reformulations that sought to free the institution from papal dominion, and restore the covenantal and *fides* components. From this conflict, the appraisal surveyed the development among Reformers who increasingly appealed to the covenantal idea to maintain and explain the sacredness and solemnity of the marriage institution. This tradition ran right through the Puritans, who—in contrast to Zimmerman's suggestions—arguably advance the covenantal understanding to the theological tradition's greatest depth. John Witte is correct to observe that today, the mainstream view among Protestants is that marriage is a sacred covenantal idea. Furthermore, Vatican II reveals an emphasis on the covenantal idea in *Gaudium et Spes* and a number of popular contemporary Roman Catholic catechisms. In short, the pre-Reformation presence of a

contractual element in the Vatican's attempted synthesis, as well as a contemporary emphasis on the covenantal idea, seems to redeem the Puritan covenantal view from Zimmerman's secularization criticisms, and further invite an evaluation of its potential significance in addressing Zimmerman's "Plutarch" suggestion. Furthermore, the significance of this idea contributes to a response to O'Donovan's criticism against the traditional Protestant social theory.

In all, the survey concluded that two of Zimmerman's problems are alleviated and his work strengthened by amending it with the above Scriptural and historical surveys of the marriage-as-covenant perspective. Regarding the claim that Zimmerman lacked an alternative perspective in Church history to the Roman Catholic sacramental approach, the concept of marriage-as-covenant was traced through the Bible and history, and was ultimately evidenced among the Reformers, the Puritans, and even post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism. Whereas Zimmerman alleges the pattern led to a developed secularism, the dissertation instead proposes an alternative perspective that maintained the sacredness of the marriage institution as being rooted in the sanctity and moral viability of God's covenant. From the characteristics of oaths, to seals, to God's central role, to related duties and obligations, the marriage-as-covenant proponents emulated the cited scriptural passages by relying heavily on Genesis 1–2 to develop their respective perspectives. The Reformers views on marriage—at least as traced in the Reformed and Puritan tradition—led to a sacred covenant, not a secular contract. Furthermore, this idea is able to address humanity's universality by explaining the shared inheritance of a macro-familial identity rooted in God's primordial creation covenant (Humanity), as well

as explain humanity's particular marital identities through the appropriation of the horizontal covenantal concept to identify particular yet sacred marital covenants (the Goenagas, the Burkes, etc).

So, what of the third problem of Zimmerman's work? It is quite unfortunate, given the negative influence elites have in leading a society towards atomism and thus social decay, that Zimmerman would propose a corrective to familial rot as residing in educated Plutarchs and their podiums. It is almost tragic that such a fine work would mar itself with such a conclusion. However, Zimmerman was not entirely misdirected. Perhaps the solution really is in a group of teachers. Perhaps the potential saviors of familism are not found in the Plutarch and his podium, but in the Pastor and his pulpit. Zimmerman's overall thesis about the connection between societal decay and familial strength is valid. So is his noted connection between a society's religiousness, and the creation of moral frameworks that morally sanction familism by connecting the finite with the values of the infinite. Zimmerman's understanding of sacred can be broadened to include the covenantal tradition. In the least, the covenantal tradition appears poised to articulate a vigorous alternative to post-modernity's subjective absurdities.

As this dissertation continues to note, there surely seems to be major differences between a moral sacred covenant, and a legal secular contract. And perhaps the effort to religiously re-absorb familism starts with pulpit-preaching-and-teaching Christians reclaiming God's institution by emphasizing its covenantal sanctity. Perhaps this effort starts with the pulpit and pew's commitment to call for a renewal of the brethren's hearkening of their marital covenant's loving obligations in a manner that—by sheer

institutional public contrast alone—missionally addresses the confused “other” at the Church’s “horizon” (to the Glory of God). In all, the covenantal idea is rooted in Scripture and a historical tradition that arguably grounds itself in the noted biblical passages and primordial marital episode. There is merit, in a pluralist and postmodernist world, to re-examine covenant as a potential explanation to our socio-politico-theological institutions. It is an idea that reinforces the traditional Protestant social theory by providing a scriptural and theological framework to explain the particularity and universality of the marital and familial institution. And further, the covenantal idea can reverse the course of societal decay and absurdity experienced in post-modern Western society, by approaching a sexually and martially confused civilization with the missional address of a morally-framed sanctioning of marriage as a covenant (God Willing!). At the least, the appraisal of marriage as a covenantal idea contributes another important element in a response to O’Donovan’s criticisms, and thus the redemption of the utility of the traditional Protestant social theoretical framework.

The concept of covenant seems to be at the core of bridging man’s finite experience, and God’s infinite moral objectivity. The covenantal idea develops a transcendent and immanent moral framework that creates real moral responsibilities, within visible covenantal constitutions. Furthermore, a holistic understanding of the covenantal idea expresses a synthesis of the marital elements of *fides*, *sacramentum*, and *proles*. Against the nebulous spectrum of subjective and ever-squared genders and sexualities, the biblical concept of marriage as a covenant stands concrete and evangelistically distinct. The clarity of *him*, *her*, and their *God*, stands in sanctioned

contrast against the gibberish of *zim/sie/em/ver/ter/em*, *zim/sie/em/ver/ter/em* (and maybe a third or fourth *zim/sie/em/ver/ter/em*), and *zir/hir/eir/vis/tem/eir whatever*.

## CHAPTER 5 AN APPRAISAL OF COVENANT AS A POLITICAL IDEA

Three years ago, I experienced a sobering commercial flight landing. Before the plane ever landed on the runway, the lane was lined up with firetrucks and emergency response vehicles. Fully uniformed men and women stood at attention on their respective vehicles, waiting for their cue. Once the plane landed, the flanking firetrucks doused the plane in a plume of thousands of gallons of water. The most sobering moment of the onboard experience came with the pilot's solemn intercom narration. He explained that the display being experienced was actually a ceremony, and it was being held to honor two very important passengers. The pilot—who was a Vietnam vet himself—noted that onboard were two veterans who were returning home. The first of the passengers was an elderly former World War II bomber pilot, and the second was a young soldier returning from a tour of service in the Middle East. The elderly veteran was returning from a sponsored honor flight visit that helped him reunite with his fallen brethren at the nation's capital and its World War II monuments. The younger veteran was returning from combat to be reunited with his family.

What the passengers experienced was called a water salute. It is usually held to express gratitude to veterans, or to mark important occasions and dignitaries. The arches formed that day by the fired plumes of water were strikingly symbolic. The plane's advance beneath the liquid arches mimicked the ceremonial procession of a bridal party

walking beneath a wedding arch. The tradition of the wedding arch seems to be a Christian adaptation of the Jewish wedding ceremony's *chuppah*.<sup>1</sup> In the Jewish ceremony, the couple stands beneath the *chuppah* as a symbol of Abrahamic hospitality, the home the couple will build together, and God's presence over the marriage covenant. The absence of any furniture beneath the *chuppah* reminds the couple and their witnesses that a home consists primarily of the people—and not the possessions—within it. In addition to the symbolism drawn from the marriage covenant, the rainbow arch recalled the signs, promises, and provisions of the Noahic covenant. Particularly relevant to the veterans' water canon ceremony, the covenantal sign was a reminder of God's universal ordination of man's punitive political powers to combat murder and violence (Gen 9:6).

The ceremonial imagery and event did not end onboard the plane. Upon leaving the aircraft, passengers discovered two long rows of diverse crowds who were eagerly lining a pathway with American flags and homemade signs.<sup>2</sup> Once the two veterans exited the plane and began their procession down the aisle, the crowds erupted into a rendition of "God Bless America," and shouts of gratitude and homecoming. Again, the ceremony drew to mind a number of covenantal symbols, from the *likhrot* imagery of covenanted partners having a procession between two halves, to a wedding march down an aisle that symbolized the covenantal witness and participation of a couple's family and friends.

---

<sup>1</sup> The *chuppah* is a canopy consisting of a sheet suspended in the air by four poles. Traditionally, the couple will take their vows beneath this canopy as a symbol of their home, and God's presence over it.

<sup>2</sup> I had filmed moments from the two ceremonies, and they can be watched by visiting: <https://www.facebook.com/leonardooh/videos/10102445029143978/>, and <https://www.facebook.com/leonardooh/videos/10102445030072118/>.

The civic experience felt incredibly solemn. However, it was especially meaningful given the reason I was at the Gerald R. Ford International Airport to begin with. I had been selected to be one of fourteen fellows invited by Liberty Fund and the Acton Institute to participate in a four-day seminar intensive to study liberty and the Declaration of Independence. A history professor, a female clinical therapist, a high school teacher, an Evangelical pastor, a political science professor, a Republican politico, a Hispanic lawyer, a stay at home mom, a Canadian Roman Catholic conservative, two libertarian Ivy-League political science PhD candidates, two female international affair and political science Hillsdale college students, and I were all crowded around a long conference table for twelve hours a day. We spent this time pouring through primary source readings in a shared mission to understand the context and significance of liberty and the Declaration of Independence.

The seminar was a quest to understand the political home, tradition, identity, relationship, and polity shared by the majority of the participants. Our primary goal was to understand the seminal idea that inspired and shaped the Declaration of Independence. The earlier water salute and homecoming ceremony added additional significance to the endeavor, but it also seeded in my mind the covenantal idea. As the seminar unfolded, the selected primary reading sources seemed to overlook the covenantal tradition's influence on the American polity through sources such as the Reformed federal theologians, the colonial Puritans, and theopolitical covenantal documents like the "Mayflower

Covenant.”<sup>3</sup> A number of major influences on the Declaration’s seminal political ideas—as well as the structure and tone of the document itself—seem influenced by the rich theo-political covenantal tradition; yet it was generally absent throughout the seminar.

---

<sup>3</sup> Each fellow of the seminar received a collection of primary sources divided into eight sessions. During the conference, I sought to shed some light on the covenantal tradition as evidenced in the “Mayflower Covenant,” the federalist theologians and Puritans, and Donald Lutz’s collection of Colonial political covenants. Some of these sources were even present in the assigned reading (although more obvious covenantal documents, such as the “Mayflower Covenant,” could have been included). Given the deeply religious and covenantal heritage of the colonies—which is seen in just the widespread usage of the word “covenant” in a plethora of their articles of organization, petitions, declarations, and constitutions—the basic absence of the tradition in such a seminar is another symptom of the unfortunate ignorance of the covenantal tradition’s political influence. The seminar’s reading list offered a helpful introduction to various other influences that helped contribute to the Declaration of Independence and its notion of liberty. A number of them were especially helpful in recognizing the Judeo-Christian sources. The required reading consisted of: (1) Tensions in the American Founding.

(2) English Sources of Colonial Liberty: “Magna Carta” (1215); “Charter of Liberties Henry I” (1100); Richard Hooker, “Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity” (1594); and “Petition of Right” (1628); in *The American Republic: Primary Sources*, ed. Bruce Frohnen (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2008);

(3) Colonial Origins of Protest: “The Laws and Liberties of Massachusetts” (1647); “Charter of Liberties and Frame of Government of the Province of Pennsylvania in America” (May 5, 1682); and “Laws Enacted by the First General Assembly of Virginia” (August 2–4, 1619); in *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution*, ed. Donald Lutz (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2007).

(4) The Movement for Independence: “Resolutions of the Virginia House of Burgesses, Declarations of the Stamp Act Congress;” and “Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress;” in Frohnen, *The American Republic*; Thomas Jefferson, “Summary View of the Rights of British America,” and “Resolution of Congress on Lord North’s Conciliatory Proposal,” in *Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Merrill Peterson (New York, NY: Literary Classics of the United States, 1984); John Witherspoon, “The Dominion of Providence Over the Passions of Men,” and Samuel Sherwood, “Scriptural Instructions to Civil Rulers,” in *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730–1805*, Volume 1, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1998).

(5) The Common Law Tradition and the Declaration of Independence: no required reading;

(6) The Declaration of Independence: “Local Resolutions on Independence;” and “The Declaration of Independence: Jefferson Draft with Congress’ Editorial Changes;” in *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence*, ed. Pauline Maier (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1997); Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, *The Federalist*, ed. George W. Carey and James McClellan (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2011); Thomas Jefferson, “The Virginia Constitution as Adopted on June 29, 1776;” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950); and Preambles to the Constitutions of Pennsylvania, Vermont, and South Carolina, in *The Federal and State Constitutions Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws of the States, Territories, and Colonies Now or Heretofore Forming the United States of America. Compiled and Edited Under the Acts of Congress of June 30, 1906*, ed. Francis Newton Thorpe (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1909).

(7) The Construction of Meaning: William Findley, “William Findley’s Speech on December 1, 1787,” in *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, ed. Merrill Jensen (Stevens Point, WI: Worzalla Publishing Company, 1997); James Wilson, “Remarks in the Pennsylvania Convention,” in *The Collected Works of James Wilson*, eds. Kermit Hall and Mark David Hall (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2007); John C. Calhoun, “Speech on the Oregon Bill,” in *Union and*

The theopolitical idea of covenant seemed to be foreign and strange to the seminar’s participants, in spite of a number of them coming from religious and political institutions. However, the experience solidified in my mind the impressed importance of covenant as a seminal political idea within the tradition that led directly to the formulation of the Declaration of Independence. The Jewish political theorist Daniel Elazar shared a similar experience, writing decades earlier,

It was also at that time that my study of American government led me to understand how the American polity was founded on that Reformed Protestant covenantal tradition in its Puritan expression and in its secularized Lockean form. By the end of the 1950s, the convergence of these various lines of exploration brought me to a recognition that covenant was a truly *seminal* concept in Western civilization and stimulated me to begin what has been a decades-long exploration of the covenant tradition in the Western world, especially in its political dimensions.<sup>4</sup>

The importance and utility of covenant as a political idea is often overlooked in the political disciplines, which is quite unfortunate, given the apologetic and explanatory power covenant has for elucidating foundational political concepts within the Western—and particularly American—political traditions. Furthermore, covenant as a political idea

---

*Liberty: The Political Philosophy of John C. Calhoun*, ed. Ross M Lence (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1992); Abraham Lincoln, “Speech on the Dred Scott Decision at Springfield Illinois,” and “Gettysburg Address,” in *Speeches and Letters of Abraham Lincoln, 1832–1865*, ed. Merwin Roe (Gutenberg.org, 2005), <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/14721>.

(8) A Modern Debate: Henry Jaffa, “Equality as a Conservative Principle,” in *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review*, no. VIII (June 1975): 471–505; M. E. Bradford, “The Heresy of Equality: Bradford Replies to Jaffa,” in *Modern Age*, Winter (1976): 62–77.

If I were asked to edit this reading list, I would either add readings to the “(3) Colonial Origins of Protest” session, or create a section before it entitled “Covenant and Constitution in Colonial America.” I would assign the following reading: John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity,” in *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings*, eds. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1938), 195–199; and *Mayflower Compact* (1620), *Agreement of the Settlers at Exeter in New Hampshire* (1639), *Dedham Covenant* (1636), *Government of Pocasset* (1638), and *Guilford Covenant* (1639), in Lutz, *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution*.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel: Biblical Foundations & Jewish Expressions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995), xiii. Italics added for emphasis.

may help address O'Donovan's criticisms by augmenting traditional Protestant social theory with an explanation of the particularity and universality of political institutions. In particular, the influence of the covenantal idea in political historical episodes that occur on social "frontiers"—such as those that led to the "Mayflower Covenant" and the Declaration of Independence—may help explain how frontiersmen originated and constituted political institutions in response to circumstances that lacked authoritative polities.

This chapter shall appraise covenant as a rich method of socio-political analysis by surveying the theopolitical idea in Scripture and history. Whereas the ecclesial chapter utilized O'Donovan, and the marital chapter utilized Zimmerman, this chapter shall introduce the reader to Daniel J. Elazar, whose research into covenant as a political idea serves as a helpful guide towards asking relevant political questions and understanding the political covenantal tradition and its significance. After introducing Elazar's thought, the chapter shall survey the Bible for evidence of covenant as a political idea. The chapter will then appraise the theopolitical idea throughout the Church's history by tracing the covenantal tradition from the Israelites to the Puritans. Particular attention will be given to episodes where the Puritan's federal theology influenced Western political theory—such as the "Mayflower Covenant" and the many colonial documents that first gave birth to American society. After its scriptural and historical appraisal, the chapter will close with a political theological analysis of covenant and constitution's significance towards addressing O'Donovan's criticisms, and contributing towards an explanation of the particularity and universality of the political institution. Furthermore, the chapter will

consider the particular significance of the theopolitical covenantal idea's ability to help America understand its own tradition and political narrative. By exposing its scriptural origins, its historicity, and its political theological significance, the thesis of this chapter shall establish political covenants as a seminal and utile Western political idea.

### **An Introduction to Political Origination**

The chief concern of modern political science is discovering where sovereignty resides in a polity. Sovereignty is a controversial subject in political theory, partially because of the difficulty of defining it. The modern political conception of sovereignty arose with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which led to Europe's consolidation of tensions into a world of sovereign states. The primary tensions that had checked statist tendencies for centuries had been the alleged authority of the Holy Roman Empire, as well as the dominance of the plenary papacy over temporal powers. With both of these authorities significantly challenged by the Reformation and weakened during the Thirty Years' War, sovereign states arose to consolidate power and authority within drawn territories.

The first political philosopher to systematically treat sovereignty was the French philosopher Jean Bodin (1529–1596). Bodin defined “majesty” or “sovereignty” as

the most high, absolute, and perpetual power over the citizens and subjects in a Commonwealth: which the Latins call *Majestatem*, the Greeks *akra exousia*, *kurion arche*, and *kurion politeuma*; the Italians *Segnorìa*, and the Hebrews *tomech shévet*, that is to say, the greatest power to command.<sup>5</sup>

Thomas Hobbes and Carl Schmitt made noteworthy contributions to the concept of sovereignty by expanding on Bodin's emphasis of power and command. They

emphasized political sovereignty resided in that part of political society that ultimately determined law literally (Hobbes's notion of law and the "Leviathan"), or exceptionally (Schmitt's notion of law and the "state of exception"). In *Leviathan*, Hobbes emphasizes that sovereignty can be ultimately identified in the figure of the sovereign he calls the "Leviathan." According to Hobbes, this sovereign is ultimately charged with punitive and legal powers to protect and punish those who vested him with an initial and permanent socially contracted authority.<sup>6</sup> A third important treatment on sovereignty is Carl Schmitt's formulation, who famously opens his *Political Theology* by stating the "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception."<sup>7</sup> In other words, Schmitt developed Bodin and Hobbes' stress on power and law, by emphasizing that the figure who has the "emergency powers" to determine what happens in those moments outside of the law, is fundamentally the sovereign.<sup>8</sup>

Political theorists such as Bodin, Hobbes, and Schmitt are examples of various approaches that articulate a definition of sovereignty within modern political philosophy. They may be taken as representatives of what became the contemporary academic approach to studying politics, which emphasizes the identification and study of the sovereign of a political state. In his *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* article on "Sovereignty," Daniel Philpott does an excellent job of developing an agreeable

---

<sup>5</sup> Jean Bodin, *The Six Bookes of a Commonweale* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 84. I have updated the original text to reflect modern English.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 5.

<sup>8</sup> The identification of sovereignty with "emergency powers" leads to an emphasis on strong executives. Interestingly, Schmitt initially supported the Nazis' heavy executives and their consolidation of powers.

definition that captures the modernist perspective.<sup>9</sup> In short, he defines sovereignty as having the core meaning of being a “supreme authority within a territory.”<sup>10</sup> Philpott’s definition captures the central components of the concept in its historical arrival at the Peace of Westphalia and the developments of Bodin, Hobbes, and Schmitt, by emphasizing that the core elements of sovereignty are (1) supremacy, (2) authority, and (3) territory.<sup>11</sup>

It becomes clear at this point that the notion associated with modern political science is overtly secular. However, as a political concept, sovereignty is especially relevant to the field of political theology. Is it not strange, that an idea that is so intrinsic to theology and her God, is secularized so deeply in modern political analysis? Prior to appraising covenant as a political idea, it is helpful to orient such an appraisal by arriving at a shared interest in covenant’s relationship with identifying and studying sovereignty. What is it that makes the political theological covenantal idea “political”? For starters,

---

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Philpott, “Sovereignty,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edwards Zalta (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2016), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sovereignty/>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Philpott develops the three elements of sovereignty as follows: “Each component of this definition highlights an important aspect of the concept. First, a holder of sovereignty possesses *authority*. That is to say, the person or entity does not merely wield coercive power, defined as A’s ability to cause B to do what he would otherwise not do. Authority is rather what philosopher R.P. Wolff proposed: ‘the right to command and correlatively the right to be obeyed’ (Wolff, 1990, 20). What is most important here is the term ‘right,’ connoting legitimacy. A holder of sovereignty derives authority from some mutually acknowledged source of legitimacy—natural law, a divine mandate, hereditary law, a constitution, even international law. In the contemporary era, some body of law is ubiquitously the source of sovereignty.

But if sovereignty is a matter of authority, it is not a matter of mere authority, but of supreme authority. *Supremacy* is what makes the constitution of the United States superior to the government of Pennsylvania, or any holder of sovereignty different from a police chief or corporate executive. The holder of sovereignty is superior to all authorities under its purview. Supremacy, too, is endemic to modernity. During the Middle ages, manifold authorities held some sort of legal warrant for their authority, whether feudal, canonical, or otherwise, but very rarely did such warrant confer supremacy.

A final ingredient of sovereignty is *territoriality*, also a feature of political authority in modernity. Territoriality is a principle by which members of a community are to be defined. It specifies that their membership derives from their residence within borders.” Italics added for emphasis.

political theology shares with political science a mutual pursuit of discovering and studying “sovereignty.” However, in contrast, the political theological perspective begins the endeavor by rightly attributing this political notion to a theocentric person.

Carl Schmitt contributes a helpful parallel concerning theology and political philosophy. In *Political Theology*, Schmitt argues that political philosophy is related to theology

not only because of their historical development—in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent god became the omnipotent lawgiver—but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts. The exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology. Only by being aware of this analogy can we appreciate the manner in which the philosophical ideas of the state developed in the last centuries.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, what theology is to the study of the sovereignty of God, politics is to the study of “sovereignty” in a state. Therefore, political theology can be defined as the study of God’s sovereignty in a state (and states).<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, part of what made modern political science so “modern,” was that it secularized an array of political concepts that Schmitt rightly recognizes were originally deeply theological. The secularization of these political concepts is chiefly evident in the modernist political concept of sovereignty, which prior to modern political science was a term that was chiefly associated with God’s majestic Lordship over the earth—and Lordship is quite rightly seen in this context as a deeply theo-politico idea.

---

<sup>12</sup> Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 36.

<sup>13</sup> Or, in more biblical language, political theology is the study of God’s sovereignty in kingdoms, and the Kingdom.

On a Christian conception of sovereignty in a state, O'Donovan writes, "Within the context of Christian constitutionalism, sovereignty (*suprema potestas*) has a clearly defined reference to that office of state which, by presiding over other offices, ensured the lawfulness and authority of the whole."<sup>14</sup> O'Donovan's definition seems to parallel Bodin, Hobbes, and Schmitt's emphasis on identifying the state's sovereign with the empowered office who oversees the laws and punishments of the whole. Also, loosely present with O'Donovan's conception of sovereignty are Philpott's three elements.<sup>15</sup> From the perspective of modern political science, O'Donovan's utilization of sovereignty in analyzing Christian constitutionalism is quite fair. However, perhaps the concept of sovereignty can be even more theologically interpreted, without losing its significance to a realistic political theology.

From the theological perspective, there can only be one faith-honoring answer to the question "who is the sovereign?" It is only the LORD God. The sovereign cannot be a king, or a parliament, or even a people. To borrow from the three elements of Philpott's definition, only the LORD God can claim ultimate (1) supremacy, (2) authority, and (3) territory. First, God's supremacy is evident in being supreme over any alleged political "sovereigns," for the LORD is he "who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness" (Isa 40:23, ESV).<sup>16</sup> Second, his authority is evident in the

---

<sup>14</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 240.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. All three elements of sovereignty seem present in O'Donovan's definition: (1) supremacy, in the sovereign "presiding over other offices;" (2) authority, in the sovereign being the one who "ensured lawfulness;" and (3) territory, in the mention of a "state" and a "whole."

<sup>16</sup> The Greek word used about 748 times to refer to God is *Strong's* #2962 κύριος (*kurios*, "lord, Lord, master, sir"). The connection between the word and political notions such as supremacy are noteworthy.

Decalogue's first command, where the LORD instructs that mankind "shall have no other Gods before me" (Exod 20:3).<sup>17</sup> Third, His territory is evident in the opening words of Genesis, where it states, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). The LORD's sovereignty is the highest notion of supremacy imaginable to the monotheistic mind, and it is deeply relevant to the continued political endeavor. The LORD is, after-all, intentionally called by political terms, such as being the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev 19:16). The LORD's sovereignty is one of the fundamental metanarratives of the Bible. Arguably, the very metanarrative of covenants is an extension of how God mediates his sovereignty in Creation. Some of the Bible's most political passages occur with the very intention of answering the question of sovereignty: "Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Ps 2:10–11). Regardless of modern political science's secularization of the term, no political theology and no faithful Christian can entertain the word "sovereignty" without acknowledging and attributing it to the LORD God. To entertain the secular conception of sovereignty, without some connected reference to the theocentric reality, is to prostitute the term, and to slander Scripture's repeated refrain that he is "Lord of lords" and "King of kings" (Rev 19:16; Deut 10:17; Ps 136:3; Dan 2:47; 1 Tim 6:15; Rev 1:5; Matt 28:18; Acts 10:36). This is no trivial matter. The entire possibility of a political theology, and the very authenticity of a Christian's faith who

---

<sup>17</sup> Or—in a more political rendition that honors the spirit of the command—man shall have no other lords *before* the Lord. Political lordship that conflicts or antagonizes God's Lordship is political idolatry.

seeks to entertain political questions, rests on the very recognition that God is who he says he is. And God says that *he* is the Sovereign.<sup>18</sup>

It does not matter how unpopular this confession makes political theology to modern political science. Political theology starts its enterprise with loving the LORD your God, and then loving your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:27), for the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom and understand (Prov 9:10). However, this does not mean political theology cannot contribute to mainstream political theory. If anything—as Elazar and O’Donovan argue—this theocentric commitment actually helps Western civilization and Western political science understand itself better. It also helps political science examine political ideas with greater authenticity. If any value can be claimed of post-modernism by political theologians, it is in its invitation to the virtue of authenticity, and its emphasis on narrative and story. The political insights of political theological history are intrinsically interwoven with the political story of Western civilization. Modern political science should not fear exploring the theological realities that birthed certain political ideas. Nor does it need to secularize its subject to maintain its identity.

Often, the fear against inviting theology to the political roundtable is that political science dooms itself to theocracy. This fear comes with reason, and is present among both secular and sacred approaches to addressing political questions such as the

---

<sup>18</sup> Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer both do an excellent job exploring the Christocentricity of the political institution. For examples of Barth’s treatment of the Christocentricity of the ecclesial and political institutions, see his essays “Church and State,” and “The Christian Community and the Civil Community,” in Karl Barth, *Community, State, and Church; Three Essays*, ed. Will Herberg (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960). On the Christocentricity of the state, Barth writes in “Church and State,” “When the New Testament speaks of the State, we are, fundamentally, in the Christological sphere; we are on a lower level than when it speaks of the Church, yet, in true accordance with its statements on the Church, we

identification of sovereignty. If only God can be called sovereign, does that not imply an answer echoing a theocratic idealism that channels the papacy's Medieval synthesis and temporal dominance? Modern political science is identified in part because of its realism, and because of its breakup with theocratic medieval idealism. The fear, in short, is that ultimately this theological intrusion ceases to be a "political science" and instead becomes simply "theology." The fear is also present in reverse. Part of the theological concern with the political address is that the particularity of politics and social institutions becomes mistaken for the universality of God's sovereignty. This confusion is one part of O'Donovan's criticisms against the traditional Protestant social theory. And it too is also exemplified in the papacy's Medieval dominance over temporal authority, which illustrates the danger of a particular mistaking itself as being a universal sovereign.<sup>19</sup>

However, these legitimate concerns can be mediated by approaching them with authenticity and sobriety. The threat of political theology to political science is no more dangerous than any other number of related disciplines. How can a political science possibly entertain political philosophies such as Marxism, if they feared and ignored economic theory? How could such a science begin to understand the driving motivators of Marx's political quest, if they feared the intrusion of economics would lead to the cessation of political science being "political," and instead becoming merely "economics"? Rather, political science is encouraged to study economics, to better understand political theory. The same can be said with any number of disciplines, all

---

are in the same unique Christological sphere" (p. 120). For Bonhoeffer's treatment, see Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 327–347.

which have their own histories of misleading the political scientific endeavor. The most authentic charted course for political science is to take the political theological address in the fullness of its authenticity and sincerity, and to openly hear what it has to say about Western Civilization's political ideas and the notion of sovereignty.<sup>20</sup> And here, political science and political theology's kinship is especially evident in their shared focus on the "sovereign."<sup>21</sup>

In review, authentic political theology can help political science be even more authentic. These past couple pages may seem like some longwinded tangent, but the actual merit of an appraisal of covenant as a political idea presupposes the possibility that the notion and endeavor can even be considered "political." The chief question of political theology—and political science—is the identification of sovereignty. If political theology starts by acknowledging God is sovereign, the next step is to address how this sovereignty manifests itself politically. To that end, Daniel J. Elazar is a masterful guide. He incorporates the themes and concerns listed above by proposing covenant as a seminal theopolitical idea. Elazar argues that the political notion of covenant not only helps

---

<sup>19</sup> The danger of confusing the particularity for a universality is one of the primary reasons why Europe had its Thirty Years' War.

<sup>20</sup> Part of the service political theologians can give to political science, is to serve the discipline as experts on how theological ideas influence and influenced political values. This sounds rather straightforward, but it is rather absent in mainstream academia. Modern political science arose in part as a rejection of the religiousness that caused the Thirty Years War. However, historical political philosophers are often whitewashed of their theological influences in a manner done either out of vice, or ignorance. Political theologians can provide a great service in speaking to the theological realities of political organizations, especially given the international demands of the synthesis of Islamic theology and polity.

<sup>21</sup> The shared focus on "sovereignty" between political theology and political philosophy seems to shadow an aspect of Augustine's thesis in *City of God*, where he ultimately concludes with an Augustinian realism that identifies "peace" as the shared concern between the City of God and the city of man in their shared earthly city. While both have a different understanding of "peace," there is an aspect that serves as a common denominator for mutuality. Perhaps the same utility exists for the notion of exploring "sovereignty" as the cornerstone of the political theological and political scientific endeavors.

political science understand some of Western civilizations most important political ideas and historical episodes, but also helps explain a faithful recognition of God's sovereignty as manifested in a political idea that holistically explains the particularity, universality, origination, and constitution of polities. In continuation of the spirit of the ecclesial and marital treatments, God's sovereignty across social institutions also manifests itself through covenant as a political idea.

Elazar's guidance towards exploring covenant as a political idea occurs primarily in his four-volume *magnum opus*, entitled *The Covenant Tradition in Politics*.<sup>22</sup> Elazar summarizes the direction and significance of his work, as well as the seminal importance of the covenantal idea, where he writes,

The covenants of the Bible are the founding covenants of Western civilization. Perforce, they have to do with God. They have their beginnings in the need to establish clear and binding relationships between God and humans and among humans, relationships that must be understood as being political far more than theological in character, designed to establish lines of authority, distributions of power, bodies politic, and systems of law. It is indeed the genius of the idea and its biblical source that it seeks both to legitimize political life and to direct it into the right paths; to use theo-political relationships to build a bridge between the heaven and earth—and there is nothing more earthly than politics even in its highest form—without letting either swallow up the other.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> *The Covenant Tradition in Politics* series consists of the following four works: Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998); Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant & Commonwealth* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996); Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant & Constitutionalism, The Great Frontier and the Matrix of Federal Democracy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998); and Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant and Civil Society: The Constitutional Matrix of Modern Democracy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1998). The first work focuses on setting the foundation by examining the covenantal idea in the Old Testament, and the intra- and extra-biblical history of the Jewish people. The second volume then explores the covenantal idea in its chiefly Christian historical incorporation, and pays particular attention to the Reformed and Puritan federal theological tradition. The third volume narrows its focus to the influence of the covenantal idea on the United States and similar episodes where political covenants and constitutions occurred at the frontiers of existing polities. The final and fourth volume explores more contemporary and international adaptations of the covenantal political idea.

<sup>23</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 1.

In addition to the value of explaining a seminal source of influence for the rise of Western notions such as constitutionalism and the limitation of power, Elazar believes that the theopolitical concept of covenant contains a strong measure of realism that makes it especially attractive to political theologians and political scientists alike.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, the covenantal idea helps examine a number of political ideas related to sovereignty, such as supremacy (in notions of power, judgement, and political actions), authority (in notions of justice, right, legitimacy, representation, and morality), and territory (in notions such as a polity's origination and constitution). Elazar argues that the covenantal idea addresses the two faces of politics he calls "power and justice," which are central to examining supremacy and authority, and thus identifying and studying sovereignty.<sup>25</sup> Elazar notes the importance of these two faces of politics, where he writes,

Politics cannot be understood without reference to both faces. Without understanding a polity's conception of justice, or who should have power, one cannot understand clearly why certain people or groups get certain rewards, at certain times, in certain ways. On the other hand, one cannot focus properly on the pursuit of justice without also understanding the realities of the distribution of power. Both elements are present in all political questions, mutually influencing each other.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Perhaps these two faces of politics fit with chapter two's political theological framework of the "political act," the "political authority," and the "life beyond the political act and authority." While more thought needs to go into the relationship of the categories, it seems Elazar's face of "power" fits within the treatment of the political act, given acts cannot occur without some empowerment driving the action. Second, perhaps the face of justice fits within the political authority, given the need of right and legitimately to conduct just actions with authority. Or, perhaps the categorization is forced. Regardless, there seems to be some shared notions between Luther, O'Donovan, Elazar, and I, that could be developed to fit into a matrix that corresponds the earlier political act, authority, and life beyond political act and authority (social theory), within the notion of sovereignty and its three elements of supremacy, authority, and territory. An attempt at this systematization of political categories and ideas will be attempted in the

Elazar argues that not only can covenant help explain a polity's conception of justice and power, but, "Through covenant, the two faces of politics, power and justice, are linked to become effective both morally and operationally."<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, covenant is able to address the purpose of politics by informing and encompassing the three general political themes derived from politics' two faces. Elazar describes the political concern as focusing on:

(1) the pursuit of political justice to achieve the good political order; (2) the search for understanding of the empirical reality of political power and its exercise; and (3) the development of an appropriate civic environment through political society and political community capable of integrating the first two to produce a good political life.<sup>28</sup>

Covenant's importance is evident in its ability to "inform and encompass all three themes—an idea that defines political justice, shapes political behavior, and directs humans toward an appropriately civic synthesis of the two in their effort to manage political power."<sup>29</sup>

In addition to addressing the two faces of politics and the political concern's three general themes, Elazar argues that one of the principle values of the covenant idea is that it also explains a moral foundation for politics that is not antithetical to a political realism. Covenant helps identify political authority by grounding it with a moral

---

following chapter's section entitled "Covenantal Constitutional Political Theology: On Covenant, On Constitution, and Covenantal Constitutions."

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 3. On the two faces of politics, Elazar writes, "One is the face of power; the other is the face of justice. Politics, as the pursuit and origination of power, is concerned (in the words of Harold Lasswell) with 'who gets what, when and how.' However, politics is equally a matter of justice, or the determination of who should get what, when and how—and why. Power is the means by which people organize themselves and shape their environment in order to live. Justice offers the guidelines for using power in order to live well."

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 19.

authority. It is able to correct the self-imploding principle of the *realpolitick* inherent in modern political theories. He explains the dilemma, where he writes,

The collapse of a shared moral understanding inevitably leads to a collapse of the rules of the game. We are witness to just such a collapse in many polities in our time, for precisely that reason, a collapse which has brought in its train the present crisis of humankind. It is in the discovery of a proper moral base or foundation, and its pursuit in such a way that recognizes the realities of power that is essential for a good politics. That is what the conceptual system rooted in covenant is all about.<sup>30</sup>

In other words, politics needs a realistic moral foundation. Otherwise, a political society eats itself. The problem with modernist Machiavellian approaches, is that they make morality politically meaningless. They equate the polity with merely power, perception, persuasion, and preference. This is arguably anti-political, given that an atomistic subjectivity seems antithetical to the possibility of a continuing polity; let alone being quite opposite to the very idea of a *polis*. Here too, covenant shows its apparent value, for it is able to propose a moral basis to politics that corrects against this implosive tendency, in a manner that is theological, political, and realistic. Thus, Elazar summarizes the thesis of his work as arguing

that covenant is by far the best source for developing a proper moral understanding and proper moral path in politics, that it is, indeed, the way to achieve a general public commitment to the political institutions required for the good life and to emerge from the Machiavellian jungle as free, morally responsible people.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to providing notions of supremacy and authority, covenant's final noteworthy political value in relation to sovereignty is in its ability to create and identify a territory.

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Elazar equates the importance of the covenantal idea as "akin to natural law in defining justice and to natural right in delineating the origins and proper constitution of political society."

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 3.

While territory in Philpott's definition of sovereignty is used to reference a specific geographical landmass, some liberty can be taken with the definition. The concept of a territory invites a broader notion that describes the extent of a sovereign's sovereignty. In this sense of the word, the geographical component is still a major element of the identification of a territory, but the idea itself primarily references the conceptual reach of a sovereign's supremacy and authority. Thus, a state's territory may be identified with its geographical land, but also its citizens. A family's territory may be identified with its physical house, but also its immediate kin. A church's territory may be identified with its physical building, but also its congregated members. If anything, the latter sense of the word territory seems to better capture the extent of a sovereign's supremacy and authority than the geographical.<sup>32</sup> In identifying and explaining this notion of territory, Covenant again evidences its political value. Covenant explains the particularity of a polity and its territory, by simultaneously incorporating its origination and its constitution.

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>32</sup> The definition of territory as being the extent and reach of a sovereign's supremacy and authority within a given social institution helps explain why an individual is still under the obligations, punishments, and protections of said particular institution when they operate outside of the territory's geographical boundaries. It also explains why—even though a particular institution may physically reside within another territory (as an example, picture a particular family or church within the physical territory of the "United States")—there is a limitation to the sovereign's supremacy and authority. Thus, why a church and family can exist within the "territory" of the state, while still operating with unique supremacy outside of the state's "territory." It may be noted that the word "sovereignty" is being used to denote human figures in authority of their relative institution, perhaps in a manner similar to the way it is used in modern political science. However, this usage is oriented by the earlier confession that only God is capital "S" Sovereign. Or, borrowing from the upper and lower-case dynamic of Covenant (vertical) and covenants (horizontal), while only God is Sovereign, God appoints the social institutions to mediate his sovereignty. Lower-case sovereignty or sovereigns reference those mediators of God's ultimate Sovereignty, within the sovereignty they borrow/bend within their respective institutions. In a sense, the *chuppah* symbolizes this notion of territory, given it in-part symbolizes the reality that a home territory consists primarily of the people, and not the possessions. It conveys dual notions of territory, both in the spatial and relational reference of the two particular individuals beneath its physical shade, as well as the universal and theocentric presence of the LORD God.

Supremacy, authority, territory, and their related notions of power and justice, share a reliance on a conceptual and temporal moment of the origination of the particular socio-political environments that sovereignty addresses. The question of origination is theologically and politically important. What has thus far been hinted is that—in order to discover the sovereign, and thus address the two faces of politics (power and justice)—the question of origin takes somewhat of a precedence. This insight was the genius of the social contract theorists, who recognized that an identification of the origination of a polity helped identify its sovereignty. The value of the question of origination is not lost on theology, which denotes God’s supremacy as evidenced in the grand moment of the origination and constitution of the universe.<sup>33</sup> Because God is the originator of all creation, he is ultimately supreme and authoritative. Origin serves to help theologically identify the sovereign in its most magnificent sense. Whereas theology in this manner asks the question of origin at a theocentric and universal level, politics asks it at an anthropocentric and particular level. The question of origin is every bit as useful to the political endeavor as to the theological.

Elazar recognizes the importance of the question of origination early in his work. He summarizes the three widely accepted traditional responses to identifying the origination of polities as “conquest, organic development, and covenant.”<sup>34</sup> Elazar

---

<sup>33</sup> Origination and constitution takes place in the theological concepts of Creation, Law, and Covenants. Theology and the Bible rely heavily on God as the Primary Originator in which to develop is various doctrinal claims.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 35. The three traditional views are actually conquest, organic development, and contract, but Elazar’s work argues that contract is a derivative of covenant. I would actually argue for four categories, with contract being its own, regardless of the rightful observation that contract theory shares a history and major ideas with covenant theory. The difference between the two is in their implementation of moral frameworks and relationships. A contract does not establish relationships—it does not produce

rightfully notes, “These questions of origins are not abstract; the mode of founding of a polity does much to determine the framework for its subsequent political life.”<sup>35</sup> He defines the first of these modes of founding, conquest, as “a conqueror (or conquering group) gaining control of a land or a people, but also such subsidiary ways as a revolutionary conquest of an existing state, a *coup d’état*, or even an entrepreneur conquering a market and organizing his control through corporate means.”<sup>36</sup> He defines

---

relatives (blood brothers and sisters, a nation’s *fraternity*, a church’s brethren). It simply specifies objects of exchange in the respective interests of the contractual parties. There is a general absence of the moral relationship, in favor of the economic notion of exchange. That notion of exchange can exist in political, marital, and ecclesial contracts, where the focus is on “I do this, so I get that,” instead of a covenant’s “Let us become this, for that.” Elazar notes their difference in that covenants are “public” whereas contracts are “private in character” (p. 31).

On the common recognition of the three-fold classification in political science, Elazar writes, “This ‘classification’ can be found in most, if not all, works of political philosophy, implicitly if not explicitly. *The Federalist* offers a particularly felicitous formulation in its effort to persuade the people of New York to ratify the *United States Constitution* of 1787: force, accident, or reflection and choice” (p. 35). Alexander Hamilton exhibits the importance of the question of origination and the three classical categories, where he relates them to orienting *The Federalist* argument for a New Constitution. In Alexander Hamilton, “No. 1,” *The Federalist*, 1, Hamilton writes, “It has been frequently remarked, that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country to decide, by their conduct and example, the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not, of establishing good government from *reflection* and *choice*, or whether they are forever destined to depend, for their political constitutions, on *accident* and *force*.”

William Penn, “Charter of Liberties and Frame of Government of the Province of Pennsylvania in America” (1682), in *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution*, serves as an even earlier representative of American political thought who recognizes the traditional three-fold models of origination and regime. In this masterful and innovative political document that served as one of Western civilization’s first full written constitutions, Penn writes, “Thirdly. I know what is said by the several admirers of *monarchy*, *aristocracy* and *democracy*, which are the *rule of one, a few, and many*, and are the three common ideas of government, when men discourse on the subject. But I choose to solve the controversy with this small distinction, and it belongs to all three: *Any government is free to the people under it* (whatever be the frame) where the laws rule, and the people are a party to those laws, and more than this is *tyranny, oligarchy, or confusion*” (p. 273). Italics added for emphasis.

<sup>35</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Ancient Israel*, 35. It is noteworthy that these three modes of political origination can be borrowed to explain the origination of the ecclesial and familial institutions. The three modes seem present in Zimmerman’s threefold marital categories, where he examines the trustee, domestic, and atomistic familial models. An excellent prospective project would be to survey the history of these forms across all three traditional social institutions in a manner more in-depth than that offers here.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. Elazar further describes the conquest model, where he writes, “Conquest tends to produce hierarchically organized regimes ruled in an authoritarian manner; power pyramids with the conqueror on top, his agents in the middle, and the people underneath the entire structure.... The original expression of this kind of polity was the Pharaonic state of ancient Egypt. It was hardly an accident that those rulers who brought the Pharaonic state to its fullest development had the pyramids built as their tombs. In its

the second organic approach as “the development of political life from families, tribes, and villages into large polities in such a way that institutions, constitutional relationships, and power alignments emerge in response to the interaction between past precedent and changing circumstances with the minimum of deliberate constitutional choice.”<sup>37</sup> Finally, he defines the third covenantal approach as “the deliberate coming together of humans as equals to establish bodies politic in such a way that all reaffirm their fundamental equality and retain their basic rights.”<sup>38</sup> In other words, these models on the origination and founding of polities are centered on force, accident, or reflection and choice. Their

---

constitutionalized form, the power pyramid is transformed into feudalism. Although both the Pharaonic models have been judged illegitimate in contemporary Western society, modern and feudal totalitarian theories, particularly fascism and Nazism, represented an attempt to give the comprehensive state based on hierarchical rule a certain theoretical legitimacy.”

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 36. Elazar further describes the organic model, where he writes, “As a result, in the course of time elites emerge from among the population and political power gravitates into their hands—which Robert Michel has described as ‘the iron law of oligarchy.’ Together they form the core of the polity, leaving the others outside of the governing circle. The end result tends to be a polity with a single center of power and a sharp division between center and periphery.... Classical Greek political thought emphasized the organic evolution of the polity and rejected any other means of polity building as deficient or improper. The organic model is closely related to the concept of natural law in the political order. Natural law involves the world and, when undisturbed, leads in every polity to the emergency of natural power relationships, necessarily and naturally unequal, which fit the character of its people.... Just as conquest tends to produce hierarchically organized regimes ruled in an authoritarian manner, organic evolution tends to produce oligarchic regimes, which at their best have an aristocratic flavor, and at their worst are simply the rule of the many by the few. In the first, the goal of politics is to control the top of the pyramid, in the second, the goal is to control the center of power” (pp. 36–38).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 38. Elazar further describes the covenant model, where he writes, “Polities whose origins are covenantal reflect the exercise of constitutional choice and broad-based participation in constitutional design. Polities founded by covenant are essentially federal in character, in the original meaning of the term, whether they are federal in structure or not. That is to say, each polity is a matrix compounded of equal confederates who freely bind themselves to one another so as to retain their respective integrities even as they are bound in a common whole. Such polities are republican by definition and power within them must be diffused among many centers or the various cells within the matrix. We find recurring expressions of the covenant model in ancient Israel, whose people started out as rebels against the Pharaonic model; among the medieval Swiss rebels against the Holy Roman Empire; among the Reformation era rebels against the Catholic hierarchy; among the early modern political compact republicans who were rebels against either hierarchical or organic theories of the state; and among modern federalists. Frontiersmen—that is to say, people who have gone out and settled new areas where there were no preexisting institutions of government with which they identified and who, therefore, have had to compact with one another to create such institutions for themselves—are generally to be found among the most active covenanters.”

origination and their corresponding constitutional frameworks are exemplified in the pharaonic state of ancient Egypt, the parliamentary system of Westminster, and the constitutional federalism of the United States.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 40. See Table 1, “Model: Conquest, Organic, and Covenant Models.” Elazar’s treatment on the connection between origination and constitution is so excellent and helpful to the purpose of the chapter that it merits a lengthy quotation. On the relationship between the three models of origination, and their “very real implications for the character of the regime that emerges from it, in the structure of authority, in the mechanisms of governance, in the distribution of powers—in general, in the form the regime is likely to take,” Elazar writes the following on the relationship between conquest origination and constitution: “Thus, in regimes founded by conquest and force we expect to find hierarchical structures of authority dominant, power pyramids in every sense of the word. In such regimes, administration, which is a matter of top-down chain of command, takes precedence over politics and constitutionalism. Indeed, the major political arena in such regimes is that of the ruler at the top of the pyramid. In other words it is court politics, limited to a small elite that have secured for themselves places in the court, with the kind of intrigue and jockeying for position associated with the politics of courts.... The apotheosis of such a regime is an army. Indeed, one of the first modern models of the hierarchical state was Prussia, described by Voltaire as ‘an army transformed into a state’.... The worst manifestation of such regimes are totalitarian dictatorships whereby those at the top of such regimes are totalitarian dictatorships whereby those at the top of the pyramid attempt, in the name of ideology, to bring their pyramided powers to bear on every aspect of private as well as public life” (pp. 39–40).

On the implications and relationship between organic origination and its constituted form, Elazar writes, “Organic polities that essentially develop by accident and are marked by their center-periphery configuration, while also elite-ruled, organize their mechanisms of government differently. For them politics takes precedence over administration and both over the constitution. Since the center is by far the most importance arena, their politics is the politics of the club or clubs where the elite gather and maintain continuing relationships with one another regardless of their stand on particular issues, simply because they belong to a common elite or network of elites. Administration is deemed much less important than politics and exists only to a degree that it is necessary, flowing from the center outward.... The English system, where studies at Oxford and Cambridge are tickets of admission to either the political or administrative elites, whose members literally speak the same language or at least in the same accents and belong to the same clubs, typifies this kind of regime. Constitutionalism is not unimportant in such regimes; it is not reflected in a single major constitutional document, but in a set of constitutional traditions that may or may not have been set down in writing and transformed into law, as in the English model. The apotheosis of this model is parliamentary government—the Westminster system—while its excess is to be found in Jacobinism where a revolutionary cadre seizes control of the center in the name of the masses and concentrates all power within it in the name of the revolution in order to reconstruct the regime” (pp. 40–41).

On the implications and relationship between covenant origination and its constituted form, Elazar writes, “Covenantal regimes, founded on the basis of reflection and choice to establish a matrix of several or many power centers, order the mechanisms of government quite differently. Both the framing institutions and their constituent bodies share authority and power on a fundamentally equal basis. In such regimes the constitution comes first and foremost because it delineates the basis upon which institutions are organized and authority and power are shared and divided. Without the constitution there cannot legitimately be politics or administration. Pursuant to the constitution there develops a politics of open bargaining in which access is guaranteed by the constitution and the constitutional tradition to all citizens who accept the rules of the game. The open competition of parties and factions is encouraged. Administration is subordinate to both constitutional and political standards and is further controlled by

In conclusion, Elazar's guidance helps illuminate the tremendous political value of the covenantal idea. Covenant's utility is suggested in its ability to explain the origins of major political values held by Western Civilization. If political theology and political science share a mutual focus in discovering and studying sovereignty within a polity, covenant also serves as a helpful interpretive framework, and as a unique and seminal theopolitical idea. As a political idea, covenant helps identify and study sovereignty by recognizing the source of supremacy in the linkage of the political acts of power and judgment. Furthermore, covenant can help determine the operation of a moral political framework that explains ideas related to political authority (such as rights, representation, and justice). Finally, covenant can help originate and formulate the territorial extent of a sovereign's supremacy and authority, through identifying the origination and constituted form of a particular socio-political entity. The goal of this section has been to identify what makes the political idea of covenant "political," and further, what makes it worth appraising. Elazar's guidance helps accomplish this purpose, and thus prepares the way for appraising covenant as a political idea in Scripture and the Church's history.

---

being divided between the framing institution and the cells of the matrix. The apotheosis of this model is a federal democratic republic on the order of the United States or Switzerland. Its excess is anarchy where the framing institutions and cells prove incapable of ordering the exercise of power within the structure" (pp. 41–42).

Elazar notes that while these examples are purer forms of the three models of origination, most polities mix these models in their respective regimes. Furthermore, these three models and their resulting regimes seem to be applicable to the study of the ecclesial and familial institutions. For example, the medieval plenary papacy and its dominance over ecclesial and temporal matters seems to relate to the conquest model. The early church and the Patristics, as well as the early magisterial Reformers, seem to share some similarities to the organic model. Finally, Baptist and Free Church ecclesiology, with its particular visible churches, seems to share some similarities with the constitutional model. These three models may also be loosely applied to Zimmerman's trustee, organic, and atomistic models; or perhaps more faithfully, they can be matched with views of marital origination which argues sexual intercourse (conquest?), parental arrangement or domestic partnership (organic?), or consent and covenant (covenantal?), originate a marriage.

## Political Covenant and Constitution in Scripture

Elazar notes that the three models of political origination are not foreign to the biblical text. He finds in the Bible examples and accounts of each. After noting the common origin of humanity in Genesis, Elazar observes that after the Flood, humanity divides into three grand families consisting of the descendants of Ham, Shem, and Japhet (Genesis 10). Elazar locates the descendants of Ham and the Hamites principally in northeast Africa, the descendants of Shem and the Shemites in southwestern Asia, and the decedents of Japhet and the Japhetites north of the Semites in Asia Minor. He observes that the three traditional models of political origination seem to also correspond with these familial fault lines, writing,

If one reads the biblical text closely, we discover that it presents hierarchical government as originating among the Hamites at two points in Nimrod's empire in lower Mesopotamia (Gen 10:1–12), and in Egypt (Gen 10:13–14). The organic state, on the other hand, originates with Japhet and his descendants, particularly in Yavan, among the Ionians, or Greeks (Gen 10:2–4). The covenantal polity originates among the Semites, particularly the western Semites, culminating in the covenantal polity of Israel (Gen 10:21–31).<sup>40</sup>

What makes this biblical observation even more intriguing is that the Greek and Egyptian mythologies seem to reinforce it. Among the Greeks, the gods are begotten. The pantheon of gods is the product of the earth, Gaia, begetting and then mating with the heavens, Ouranos. Their mating begets Kronos and his brothers and sisters, who produce the common Greek pantheon by themselves mating and competing with one another. The pattern of struggle, competition, and resolve among elites, seems to typify the Greco-organic model, and it seems to also parallel the explanations for governmental origin

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 42.

formulated by the philosophical Greeks.<sup>41</sup> As for Egyptian mythology, they believed individual gods assumed human form, and came to rule over people through a power pyramid. These individuals were the Pharaohs, and their production of the pyramids not only exemplify their power, but also illustrate the conquest model in their top-down hierarchical polities.<sup>42</sup> The remaining tradition of covenant occurs among the descendants of the Western Semites, who ventured as frontiersmen to the land of Canaan, and covenanted a polity and a constitution through the Abrahamic and Mosaic/Sinaitic covenants.<sup>43</sup>

In the realm of contemporary political thought, covenant has been greatly ignored in favor of the more secularized compact and contract traditions.<sup>44</sup> This is unfortunate, given that political covenant not only helps inform the influences of modern compact and contract theories, but also that biblical Israel represents “the oldest stratum in Western

---

<sup>41</sup> See James Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (New York, NY: MacMillan Press, 1929).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, Elazar notes that the Greco tradition and its organic development model correspond with a philosophical approach that merges morality and aesthetics. The hallmark of this tradition is Greco-Roman natural law, which itself seems to have an affinity for the organic model. As for the Semitic and biblical tradition, it emphasizes revelation and theology, which lent itself to the covenantal form and a focus on moral foundations. As a contrast to both, the secular French revolutionary model prized aesthetics over revelation and morality. Furthermore, it is interesting to extend this analysis by comparing the French and American revolutions in the 1700s. The French was wildly secular and aesthetic, and the American was not. As Donald Lutz shall evidence later, the deeply religious and Puritan Colonial America appealed to political covenants to create polities on the frontier. However, secular France instead rebelled against theological morality, and its history of organic development. Instead, the French appealed to a conquest form empowered by aesthetic appeal.

<sup>44</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 54. Elazar notes that at one time, the Greek’s philosophical approach and its focus on the *polis* was given equal attention by political theorists to the Hebrew theological approach and its focus on the *edah*. Both contributed mightily to the shaping of modern democracy, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, since the secularization of political science, the Hebraic contributions were neglected, and seen as a temporally and spatially confined Israelite religious polity. Elazar blames Spinoza for this secularization, and notes this gross misreading of the Hebraic political tradition seems to be an unfortunate result of Spinoza’s attempt to develop a secular political philosophy in Baruch Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991). See also Leo Strauss, *Spinoza’s Critique of Religion* (New York, NY: Schocken, 1965).

political thought and, since the record is derived very directly from the Israelites experience, the latter is in itself an important factor in the development of Western political institutions.”<sup>45</sup> Covenant as a political idea is fruitful not only for theologians, but also for the political scientist, given its political record. Furthermore, it represents a political tradition that contains a remarkably longstanding history, but also an explanatory power that makes sense of modern behaviors, institutions, and attitudes in Western political thought.

Although the prior two chapters have already helped define the idea of covenant, there is merit in articulating Elazar’s theopolitical and political definition of covenant.

Theopolitically, Elazar defines covenant as,

a coming together (con-gregation) of basically equal humans who consent with one another through a morally binding pact supported by a transcendent power, establishing with the partners a new framework or setting them on the road to a new task that can only be dissolved by mutual agreement of all the parties to it.<sup>46</sup>

Politically, Elazar writes,

a covenant-based politics looks toward political arrangements established or, more appropriately, compounded, through the linkage of separate entities in such a way that each preserves its respective integrity while creating a common and continuing association to serve the purposes, broad or limited, for which it was called into being. These purposes range from keeping the peace through a permanent but very limited alliance of independent entities to the forging of a new polity through the union of previously separate entities to create a new whole.<sup>47</sup>

Both of these definitions are valuable towards the chapter’s appraisal, given they provide a needed contrast to the modern tendency to associate a covenant with a more secularized

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 1. Elazar also provides another helpful theopolitical definition of covenant, where he writes, covenant is “a promise that is sanctioned by an oath accompanied by an appeal to the Deity to ‘see’ or ‘watch over’ the behavior of the one who has sworn, and to punish any violation of the covenant by bringing into action the curses stipulated or implied in the swearing of the oath” (p. 23).

political and legal idea.<sup>48</sup> Elazar's emphasis on a covenant's moral, relational, and transcendent elements help contrast it with these modern legal definitions, as well as the more secularized notions of contract and compact.<sup>49</sup>

The other important term in need of definition is constitution. Generally speaking, the word constitution is used to describe the constituent parts that make up the form of a thing or person. Legally, it is defined as "The set of laws, usually written down, under which a country is ruled."<sup>50</sup> Politically, it is defined as,

The body of rules governing the structure, organization and procedure of any corporate body. A constitution sometimes has a special form, as in the charter of a university, or the articles of association of a company. Or it may have to be inferred from practice, being encapsulated in no particular document or authority.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>48</sup> In Henry Campbell Black, "Covenant" in *A Dictionary of Law: Containing Definitions of the Terms and Phrases of American and English Jurisprudence, Ancient and Modern* (New York, NY: Lawbook Exchange, 1991), Black provides what arguably became the standard legal definition of covenant, which he defined as "An agreement between two or more parties, reduced to writing and executed by a sealing and delivery thereof, whereby some of the parties named therein engage, or one of them engages, with the other, or others, or some of them, therein also named, that some act hath or hath not already been done, or for the performance or nonperformance of some specified duty." For more examples of this legal definition, see Cedric D. Bell, *The Law of Real Property* (London: Old Bailey, 2000); and Margaret F. Brinig and Steve Nock, "Covenant and Contract," *Regent University Law Review* 12, Spring (1990): 9–26.

<sup>49</sup> See Douglass, R. Bruce, Joshua Mitchell, *A Nation Under God? Essays on the Future of Religion in American Public Life* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 72. Covenant, compact, and contract are all three unique terms. While they tend to be used interchangeably, it is helpful to note how they differ. Elazar summarizes this difference in his contribution "Recovenanting the American Polity," in *A Nation Under God?*, where he writes, "Both covenants and their derivative, compacts, differ from contracts in that the first two are constitutional or public in character and the last is private. As such, covenantal or compactual obligation is relationship-oriented and broadly reciprocal while the reciprocity of contracts only follows the letter of the law or the agreement because contracts are task-oriented.... A covenant differs from a compact in that its morally binding dimension takes precedence over its legal dimension. In its heart of hearts, a covenant is an agreement in which a higher moral force—traditionally God—is a party, usually a direct party or a guarantor of a particular relationship, whereas when the term compact is used the moral force is internal to the pact itself." This difference is seen in the proponents of its usage in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>50</sup> Black, "Constitution," in *A Dictionary of Law*, 253.

<sup>51</sup> Roger Scruton, "Constitution," in *Palgrave Macmillan Dictionary of Political Thought* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 2007), 135–136.

From a theopolitical perspective, constitution can emphasize two different aspects. Legally, it can address God's Law in which creation is structured and ruled. However, constitution can also address the form adopted by humans in their civil, social, and ecclesial bodies. God's moral Law is a Constitution par excellence (vertical, Constitution), while man's constitutions are the authoritative structures of organizing themselves as traditionally informed and directed by the three forms of origination (horizontal constitutions). Man's lower-case "c" constitutions are hierarchically dependent for their moral viability on God's universal upper-case "C" Constitution.

One of the theopolitical values of covenant as a political idea is its ability to connect these noted constitutional and covenantal horizontal and vertical elements. Akin to the ecclesial chapter's treatment on covenant, political covenants also seem to occur in vertical (Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Moabic universal and special covenants between God and man), and horizontal categories (political treatise, political appointment, and political alliance particular covenants between men and men before God).<sup>52</sup> Political covenants are able to bridge the moral necessity of God's objective Law, with the positivist subjectivity of human polities and experience. Furthermore, this synthesis directly contributes to the formulation of Western constitutionalism.<sup>53</sup> Whereas the Egyptian and Greco mythologies formulate the background for the hierarchical and organic models of origination, the Israelite notion of covenant formulates the starting

---

<sup>52</sup> For examples of horizontal covenants (between men before God) and vertical covenants (between God and man), see *BDB* #285 בְּרִית (berith, "covenant"), or the treatment in chapter three section entitled "Ecclesial Covenant and Constitution in Scripture."

point for addressing the covenantal model of origination. Having defined covenant and constitution in a general sense, it is now possible to begin appraising covenant as a political idea in the Old and New Testaments.

### Political Covenant and Constitution in the Old Testament

Elazar shares Wellum and Gentry's conviction that covenant is a metanarrative key to understanding Scripture. For Elazar, "Covenant as idea and practical device is central to the whole of biblical literature."<sup>54</sup> Covenant is the means by which God and man's relationship manifests itself, and Elazar notes, "In all its forms, the key focus of covenant is on relationships. A covenant is the constitutionalization of a relationship."<sup>55</sup> It is not merely contractual obligation between a superior and inferior. Rather, by its very nature, covenant establishes communities where partners enter into a relationship-forming pledge of loyalty, and which goes beyond the mere demands of mutual advantage. It is intrinsically moral, relational, and public. Furthermore, Elazar argues it is chiefly political.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 68. As Elazar notes, "Politically the covenant idea has within it the seeds of modern constitutionalism in that covenants define and limit the powers of the parties to them, a limitation not inherent in nature but involving willed concessions."

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 78–79. Elazar acknowledges that biblical covenants are often separated into political and nonpolitical categories. However, Elazar emphasizes that even these "nonpolitical" covenants usually carry strong political overtones. As an example, Elazar references David and Jonathan's covenant, which is usually taken to be a nonpolitical covenant of extraordinary friendship. However, Elazar points out that the surrounding scriptural context carries over the issue of the kingship of Israel and the right of succession. Elazar sees Jonathan as being "implicitly portrayed as ceding to David," thus carrying political connotations (p. 79). The political connotation of so-called nonpolitical covenants is seen in the Abrahamic covenant of Gen 15 and 17. The political characteristic of the patriarchal covenant is seen in the later political appeals of Israelites to connect the Abrahamic covenantal promise peoplehood and land with their polity. Once the people of Israel settled into their land, the Abrahamic covenant is often referenced to

Elazar's work acknowledges the usual elements of a covenant, such as the presence of oaths and signs.<sup>57</sup> Where he is especially helpful in expanding earlier treatments of the covenantal idea is in his emphasis on the covenantal dynamics of "hearkening" and "covenant love." Elazar is emphatic on the importance of  $\text{קְהֶסֶד}$  (*khesed*, "covenant love," "lovingkindness") to fleshing out the relational aspect of covenant. He writes,

The operative mechanism of *berith* is *khesed*. The biblical term *khesed* is often mistranslated as grace but is better translated as covenant love or the loving fulfillment of a covenant obligation. *Khesed* is the operative term in a covenant relationship, which translates the bare fact of the covenant into a dynamic relationship. *Khesed* is a critical covenant concept. It prevents the covenant from becoming a mere contract, narrowly interpreted by each partner for his benefit alone, by adding a dynamic dimension requiring the parties to act toward each other in such a way as to demonstrate their covenant love; that is, beyond the letter of the law.<sup>58</sup>

Unlike Mesopotamian covenants that emphasized "a dependent entity linked and owing fealty to an imperial ruler," Israelite covenants emphasized a "partnership between the parties involved."<sup>59</sup> This partnership is highlighted in the usage of *berith* with the verb  $\text{שָׁמוֹעַ}$  (*shamoa*), which modern English Bible translations unfortunately often render as

---

legitimize Israel's possession, dominion, jurisprudence, and defense of the land and its polity (Neh 9; 1 Chr 6; 2 Kgs 13:22–23; Ps 105).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 65–66.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 69–70. Partnership is highlighted in the Hebrew word *shamoa*, which modern English translations unfortunately usually render as "obey." Rather, Elazar argues that the usage of *shamoa* better correlates with the word "hearkening," which "is a form of consent whereby the individual receives an instruction and in the process of hearkening makes a decision to accept and follow it." Implied in this verb is the image of hearing the God who speaks, with man's responsive choice reflecting whether or not he "hearkens" the voice of the LORD. See Daniel J. Elazar and Norman Snaith, "The Covenant-Love of God," in *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1973), 94–130.

“obey” (Exod 19:5).<sup>60</sup> Rather, as Elazar notes, the usage of *shamoa* better correlates with the Old English idea of “hearkening,” which “is a form of consent whereby the individual receives an instruction and in the process of hearkening makes a decision to accept and follow it.”<sup>61</sup> Implied in this verb is the image of hearing the God who speaks, with man’s responsive choice reflecting whether or not he “hearkens” the revealed voice of the LORD. Elazar’s treatment of the connection between *khesed*, *shamoa*, and *berith* helps emphasize covenant’s highly moral and relational character, as well as how they differ from the hierarchical feudal models of Israelite’s Mesopotamian neighbors.<sup>62</sup> Both of these contributions lend themselves to developing an appraisal of covenant as a political

---

<sup>60</sup> See the root word in *Strong’s* #8085 שָׁמַע (*shama*, “to hear, heard”). A good example of translating the word as obey vs. heard occurs in Exod 19:5, where שָׁמַע is used in conjunction with בְּרִית (*berith*, “covenant”) and שָׁמַר (*shamar*, “to keep”), to read as follows:

וְעַתָּה אִם-שָׁמַעַתְּ תְּשָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת-בְּרִיתִי וְהָיִיתֶם לִי סִגְלָה מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים כִּי-לִי כָל-הָאָרֶץ:  
 A number of modern translations translate תְּשָׁמְעוּ here as “obey.” Examples include the NIV’s “Now if you *obey* me fully and keep my covenant,” the NLT’s “Now if you will *obey* me and keep my covenant,” the ESV’s “Now therefore, if you will indeed *obey* my voice and keep my covenant,” the NASB’s “Now then, if you will indeed *obey* My voice and keep My covenant,” the KJV’s “Now therefore, if ye will *obey* my voice indeed, and keep my covenant,” and the ISV’s “And now if you carefully *obey* me and keep my covenant.” The HCSB best captures *shama*’s sense of “hearkening” as it relates to *berith* and *shamar*, where it translated Exod 19:5’s first clause as “Now if you will listen to Me and carefully keep My covenant.” The components of “listening” and “carefully keeping” are what Elazar stresses as operating behind the idea of “hearkening” a covenant, and it is a further reflection of the social and relational distinction of covenant. An individual “hearkens” and “listens to” people, versus them “obeying” contractual stipulations. Even the events of horizontal covenants are further invitations to “hearken” God’s moral created Order and Law.

<sup>61</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 70. Elazar captures the importance of the concept of “hearkening” towards understanding “covenant-grounded freedom” and its “immediate consequences,” where he writes, “The act of hearkening is an act of hearing, considering, agreeing, and then acting. It is a sign of human freedom, of free will, whereby in order to act humans must consciously decide to do so, even in response to God. Harkening involves the exercise of the hearkener’s free will to consent rather than being forced to submit whether willing or not, or not even having the possibility to exercise free will in the first place. Indeed, there is no biblical word for ‘obey.’ The modern Hebrew word is of relatively recent coinage, for military purposes. While God can command, humans either hearken to His commandments or not.” While Elazar’s observations on hearkening are helpful, his lexical observation should be approached with some caution, given the importance that a word’s usage in a sentence has for deriving lexical meaning.

idea in the Old Testament's Pentateuch (Torah), the Prophets (Nevi'im), and the Writings (Ketuvim).

The first five books of the Old Testament, known as the Torah, opens with a number of distinctly political images that serve as informative precursors to God's covenantal response. Two important words used early in the Old Testament that hint towards its political concern are מְשָׁלָה (memshalah, "dominion"), and רָדָה (radah, "reign").<sup>63</sup> The Hebrew term *memshalah* is used in Gen 1:16 to describe the shared dominion and governance of the sun and the moon over the sky.<sup>64</sup> The celestial dominion among equals is contrasted with man's reign over the animals in Gen 1:28, which instead uses the political term *radah* to emphasize a rule of unequal over unequal.<sup>65</sup> Man's regal responsibility in Genesis 1–2 is to lovingly hearken the LORD's instruction to subdue and reign over God's creation, and the specific language of command does not enter until the second chapter. In Genesis 2, God commands (וַיִּצַו, *vayitzav*) man not to eat the forbidden fruit. However, man's disobedience and rejection of God's own dominion over humanity ultimately leads to Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden, and thus the

---

<sup>62</sup> On the distinctive qualities of the Hebraic covenant versus other surrounding ideas, Elazar and Snaith, "The Covenant-Love of God," 94–127.

<sup>63</sup> See *Strong's* #4475 מְשָׁלָה (*memshalah*, "dominion"), and #7287 רָדָה (*radah*, "reign").

<sup>64</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 99. The passages reads in the Hebrew as follows: הַמְּאֹר הַגָּדֹל לְמַשְׁלַת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת־הַמְּאֹר הַקָּטָן לְמַשְׁלַת הַלַּיְלָה, "the greater light to dominate the day" (Gen 1:16). Even the dominion and order of nature seems to be tied to the covenantal idea: "Thus says the LORD: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time," (Jer 33:20).

<sup>65</sup> הָאָרֶץ וְכָבְשָׁהּ וְרָדָהּ עַל־דַּגַּי הַיָּם, "and subdue it, and have reign over the fish" (Gen 1:28).

proto-beginnings of political society and the separation of human civilizations.<sup>66</sup> The first occurrence of such a political society arises a chapter later in Genesis with Cain’s founding of the first city (Gen 4:17).<sup>67</sup> Interestingly, Cain continues Adam and Eve’s Garden rebellion against God’s sovereignty by utilizing violence to murder his brother Abel. Cain’s attempt to defend himself from the punitive ramifications of his actions leads to urbanization and man’s defensive formulation of the city.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> The root word of וְצִוָּה (“And commanded”) is *Strong’s* #6680 צָוָה (*tsavah*, “to lay charge [upon], give charge [to], command, order”). An example of its usage occurs in Gen 2:16, which states, וַיִּצְוֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים “And God commanded the man” (Gen 2:16).

<sup>67</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 76. Interestingly, Elazar notes, “According to the biblical account, political society is established by Cain, the first murderer, who founds the first city (Gen. 4:17). Cain acts on his own initiative.” Cain is the Bible’s first murderer, and also the first initiator of political society. The connection between government, and the punishment of—and protection against—violence, seems intrinsic to the function of the political institution. Surely, this is the sense of purpose given by Paul in Rom 13:1–7, and its focus on judgment and the punitive empowered “sword.” It is also worth pointing out a parallel between God’s call to Adam and to Cain to have dominion. God calls Adam to *radah* (“reign”) over the animals. The intended hierarchical order expressed in the Garden is supposed to be: (1) God, (2) Humanity, (3) Animals and Creation. Instead, a serpent convinces Adam and Eve to swap the order of reign, by getting them to question whether God actually commanded what he said (Gen 3:1), and by getting them to covet God’s sovereignty by wanting to “be like God” (Gen 3:5). Thus, man attempts to invert the creation order to (1) Animals and Creation, (2) Humanity, and (3) God. There seems to be a parallel with Cain’s behavior, and thus the creation of political society. After Cain’s jealousy over God’s response to his and his brother’s offering—and it is noteworthy that Adam and Eve’s sin in the Garden was related to being jealous of God—God tells Cain “sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule [תִּמְשָׁל] over it” (Gen 4:7). The word “rule” in Gen 4:7 is from *Strong’s* #4910 מָשַׁל (*mashal*, “to rule, to have dominion, to reign”), which is the origin for the root of *memshalah*. Cain responds by allowing sin to again rule over man, which leads to him murdering his brother, and another curse of the ground (Gen 4:12). Even in spite of the LORD’s enacted protection of Cain (Gen 4:15), Cain “went away from the presence of the LORD.... [and] he built a city” (Gen 3:16–17). The passages are rich in touching upon common political themes such as order, authority, sovereignty, punishment, and urbanization.

<sup>68</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 108. Elazar writes, “*Ir*, the Hebrew word for city, is derived from the Akkadian *uru*, which means tower, and historians of the ancient Near East generally agree that cities originally came into existence for defensive purposes, as places where the inhabitants of a region could come together to collectively defend themselves.” There are some interesting political parallels with the Tower of Babel in Gen 11:1–9, which is another attempt by man to rely on his own ability to protect against violence. Adam and Eve, Cain, and Babel share in their pursuit of idolatry through Adam and Eve’s wanting to “be like God” (Gen 3:5–6), Cain’s anger and jealousy of his brother (Gen 4:5), and Babel’s wanting to “make a name for themselves” (Gen 11:4). Their intent seemed focused on self-praise, idolatry, and jealousy. Their intent-driven actions also parallel one another. They seek to protect themselves through hiding (Gen 3:8), building a city (Gen 4:17), and building a tower (Gen 11:4). All actions that display their rejection of God’s sovereignty and provision. A natural question to be asked is, given the ordination of civil government in Gen 9:6, why would God take issue with man’s collective

During this period, political rule was traditionally the domain of extended patriarchal families, but beyond their dominion existed the problem of a degenerating anarchy of senseless violence foreshadowed by the Fall and Cain’s murder. This problematic degeneration is described by the Hebrew term *חָמָס* (*khamas*, “violence”).<sup>69</sup> The degeneration became so severe, that Gen 6:11 states “Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence [*khamas*].” Humanity was driven by a wicked imagination and a natural impulse captured by the Hebrew term *יְצֵר* (*yetzer*, “intent”), and this wicked imagination led humanity towards an implosive state of affairs where “every intention [*yetzer*] of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5).<sup>70</sup> God’s response to humanity’s *khamas* and their degenerate *yetzer* is intense: God decides to flood his creation.<sup>71</sup> Jewish theologians typically see this episode of Noah

---

defense in the Tower of Babel? I believe this is explained in part by the *khamas* and *yetzer* of the preceding chapters. God mandated humanity to cultivate the entire earth. He intended for mankind to disperse and “fill the earth” (Gen 9:1). By concentrating in one area, the mandate is ignored. Furthermore, the tower represents their attempt, in the spirit of Adam and Eve’s sin, to be like God by making “a name for themselves” (Gen 11:4). Perhaps God’s response is to prevent another globalization of *khamas* and *yetzer*. However, this time it is exacerbated by an idolatry-driven concentration of power. The pre-flood condition consisted of wide-spread depravity, but as especially revealed in the totalitarian ideologies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the heavy concentration of power and self-worship idolatry ideologies has led to mass violence and evil intent (picture the Nazi’s concentration camp). I believe the lessons implied by the Tower of Babel support the constitutional federal approach to power and authority.

<sup>69</sup> See *Strong’s* #2555 *חָמָס* (*khamas*, “violence”). There are some interesting parallels with the Hebrew word *khamas* and the social contract theory’s idea of the state of nature. Both the Israelite perspective, and the social contract theorists, sees this state of nature and *khamas* as necessitating man’s initiation of civil society. Both traditionally argue for a preliminary step to the actual setup of government, which is either known as a “covenant” or “social contract,” and which are a response to the danger of violence outside of civil society. This moment of conception is followed by the actual formation of civil governments in the form of a written or unwritten constitution.

<sup>70</sup> See *Strong’s* #3336 *יְצֵר* (*yetzer*, “intent”).

<sup>71</sup> *Yetzer mahshevet libo* in Gen 6:5 literally means the “impulse of his heart’s thinking.” The reformed tradition has interpreted this to mean man’s total/radical depravity.

and the flood as being God's first universal covenant with man.<sup>72</sup> God's response to man's *khamas* is a total destruction of the earth's inhabitants, although God preserves a remnant of persons and paired animals. After the flood, God enters into a covenant with this remnant and all of humanity through Noah and the Noahic Covenant (Gen 9:8–16). The result of this universal covenant is that God promises to never again wipe out humanity with a flood. He also establishes “the foundation for moral obligations of all humans.... [and] the new foundation of the postdiluvian earth on a more formal and structured basis.”<sup>73</sup> Especially relevant to appraising covenant as a political idea, Elazar notes that the obligations inherent in the Noahic covenant formulate the foundation for a “universal law” which is “binding on all people,” and which formalizes the principle of political government through its *lex talionis* command (Gen 9:5–6).<sup>74</sup> In short, the Noahic

---

<sup>72</sup> While Elazar states that the Noahic covenant was first, the Reformed tradition and the dissertation's marital chapter instead argue that the Adamic covenant is the earliest covenantal episode in Scripture.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 111. Elazar notes that according to the Talmud, the Noahic Covenant is considered to be the biblical basis for human political order.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. Elazar notes that the rabbinic tradition interprets seven commandments from the Noahic covenant that are binding upon the sons of Noah. They interpret these commands as universal in scope, which means their obligations are proscribed upon righteous Gentiles (what they call *hasidei umot ha'olam*, “the righteous among the gentiles”). Two representative examples of the treatment of the Noahic covenant's minimal moral duties for universal humanity are found in Jacob Neusner, *Tractate Sanhedrin* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), and Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* (New York, NY: Moznaim, 1987), Book of Kings, ch 8–10. Although there is some disagreement as to what entails these Noahic moral commandments, the seven Elazar summarizes as being those generally agreed to be prohibitions against “idolatry, blasphemy, shedding human blood, sexual sins, theft, and eating parts from a living animal,” as well as the positive injunction for “establishing a legal order” (p. 112). Furthermore, “The rabbinic discussion makes it clear that the establishment of a legal order and a system of governance is crucial to the maintenance of human society along the lines required by the other six commandments.” One final comment worth making is that all three institutions of traditional Protestant social theory seem alluded to in some sense. The familial institution seems alluded to in the implied sexual prohibitions and procreation verses; the ecclesial institution seems more loosely alluded to in the general provision of God and man's oriented relationship; and finally the political institution seems alluded to in the injunction for legal order and a system of government in Gen 9:6.

Covenant establishes humankind's moral and political foundation for government as an earthly and temporal correction to man's *khamas* and degenerate *yetzer*.<sup>75</sup>

Three other noteworthy covenants in the Torah follow after the Noahic Covenant, but whereas the Noahic was universal in its scope, the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Moabic covenants are politically particular.<sup>76</sup> They also contain important universal implications related to morality, law, and salvation. Each of these three covenants contributes in some significant way to the development of a particular people (*edah*) and their polity (*yom*).<sup>77</sup> Elazar acknowledges that these biblical covenants are often separated into political and nonpolitical categories. However, Elazar emphasizes that even these nonpolitical

---

<sup>75</sup> The presence of man's propensity for violence and depravity is not erased. This becomes quickly evident with Noah's drunkenness, and Babel's idolatry. The verses in Gen 9:1–4 seem intended to parallel Gen 1:28–30, and seem to hint at man's condition and political limitations. Interestingly, whereas Gen 1:28–30 emphasized regal dominion over living creatures, Gen 9:1–4 notes they will now “fear” and “dread” their human rulers. Also worth noting that—in contrast to man's violence and degenerated descent—God desires for man to be fruitful and to flourish. The moral obligations of the Noahic covenant are framed with “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 9:1), and “be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply it” (Gen 9:7). God's ordination of the political institution in Gen 9:5–6 is done in part to check man's *khamas* and *yetzer*, to enable his flourishing.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 161. Elazar summarizes the four major covenantal episodes in the Torah as follows: “The Bible offers a series of paradigmatic political covenants that have animated the covenantal perspective in politics since biblical times. We have already examined the first of those, the covenant with Noah, which defines the basic relationship between God and humankind, the charter of federal liberty for all humanity. We also reviewed the covenants with Abraham establishing God's intention to found a specially covenanted people who will build a new society to set the pace for humanity as a whole. This new nation will ultimately be given a constitution in the form of the Torah, which combines God-given *hukkot*, constitutionally binding but not explained, often ritual commandments, and *mishpatim*, civil and social laws, in part based on prior custom, and is anchored in a series of covenants of which these two are the first. The third paradigmatic covenant of the Bible is at Sinai. It establishes an *edah* prepared to receive a constitution. The fourth is on the plains of Moab, a covenant set within the constitution itself, adapting it to settled life in the land of Israel.”

<sup>77</sup> The Hebrew words *edah* and *yom* both reference aspects of the particular people of Israel. It is not my intention to isolate their lexical range to only the manner used throughout this dissertation. However, their particular lexical utility of referencing the particularity of the people and polity with congregational and covenantal imagery serve as helpful symbols throughout the dissertation chapters. See *Strong's* #1471 and *BDB's* #561 for the various lexical usages of יָלַד (*yom*, “nation, people”). For a theopolitical usage akin to the manner symbolized throughout the dissertation, see Exod 19:6.

covenants usually carry strong political overtones.<sup>78</sup> The political connotation of so-called nonpolitical covenants is seen especially in the Abrahamic covenant of Gen 15–17. Once the people of Israel settled into their land, the Abrahamic covenant is often referenced to legitimize Israel’s possession, dominion, jurisprudence, and defense of their territory and polity (Neh 9; 1 Chr 6; 2 Kgs 13:22–23; Ps 105). Therefore, in terms of its political appraisal, the Abrahamic covenant serves the primary function of identifying the important territorial boundaries of persons and places relevant to the Mosaic covenant’s later political origination and constitution.<sup>79</sup>

While the Noahic and Abrahamic covenants are less politically particular or direct, the Mosaic covenant is a clear example of a more obvious theopolitical covenant.<sup>80</sup> The Decalogue episode of the Mosaic covenant was

a pact that establishes an organized people—by establishing a relationship between God and a particular nation—thereby establishing the basis for the

---

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 79. As an example, Elazar references the covenant between David and Jonathan. Elazar points out that the surrounding scriptural context carries over the issue of the kingship of Israel and the right of succession. Elazar sees Jonathan as being “implicitly portrayed as ceding to David,” thus carrying political connotations.

<sup>79</sup> The sign of the Abrahamic covenant and its territorial membership is circumcision (Gen 17). Covenantal signs help identify their partnered memberships, with the Noahic covenant’s rainbow evidencing its universality (Gen 9:12–17), and the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants evidencing their special particularity with the sign of circumcision and the Sabbath (Exod 31:12–17). All humanity is identified as being under a rainbow, whereas circumcision and Sabbath pertain to a particular people.

<sup>80</sup> See George Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh, PA: Biblical Colloquium, 1955); Delbert Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins Press, 1969); Moshe Weinfeld, *Covenant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970). The Mosaic covenant seemingly parallels a style adopted from the Ancient Near East political vassal treaty. As Elazar notes in *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 206, one of the interesting unique characteristics of the Israelite polity is that their leaders were subject to written laws. This is a fundamental aspect of Western constitutionalism, and Israel’s neighbors seemed to elevate their rulers above—and as the source of—law. The legal tradition of the Israelites and that of the common law system seem to share this prominence of constitutional law, and given the charted history of the covenantal tradition, it is not rash to say that one had a role in influencing the other. “The king is commanded to write out a copy of ‘this *Mishneh Torah*,’ presumably the whole Book of Deuteronomy, apparently in the presence of the priests and Levites, so that he will have no excuse for not knowing the law. The character of Israelite constitutionalism is no better illustrated than here” (p. 206).

constitution, which is presented as the Book of the Covenant immediately following the Theophany (Exod 21:1–23:33).<sup>81</sup>

With the Mosaic covenant, a particular political people come into formal existence. The actual political covenanting occurs in Exod 19–20, and the notion of their covenantal consent and hearkening is evident in Exod 19:8, where all the people answer together by saying “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.”<sup>82</sup> The formal sign of their political covenant is present in the two written tables of the Decalogue, and their political covenanting is followed by the constitutionalizing of those covenantal principles in the actual constitutional construction known as the Book of the Covenant (Exod 20–23).<sup>83</sup> The Mosaic covenant is further concluded by a public reading of the covenant by Moses in Exod 24:7–8, and the people again verbally consent with their statement, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.” The covenant and constitution are then sealed with the sprinkling of blood, and the result is the origination of a particular *הַעֲדָה* (*edah*, “congregation”), and the constitution of a unique *גוֹי* (*goy*, “nation”).<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 163.

<sup>82</sup> On an interpretation of two tablets, see Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East*; Eduard Nielsen, *The Ten Commandments in New Perspective* (Chicago, IL: Allenson, 1968); and Johann J. Stamm with Maurice E. Andrew, *The Ten Commandments in Recent Research* (Chicago, IL: Allenson, 1967). In support of consent, see Gerald Blidstein, “In the Shadow of the Mountain: Consent and Coercion at Sinai,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 41–53.

<sup>83</sup> The Decalogue event is not to be equated as Israel’s constitution, which came later in the Torah’s fifth book. The Book of the Covenant concerns itself with the type of legal structure to safeguard a number of concerns. These can be charted throughout as laws related to liberty, life, criminal law, human appetites and social consequences, social justice, obligations of governors, and God’s calendar for his people.

<sup>84</sup> See *Strong’s* #5712 *הַעֲדָה* (*edah*, “congregation”). *BDB* defines *edah* as a “company assembled together by appointment, or acting concertedly.” It is primarily used in reference to the congregated people of Israel (Exod 17:1; Hos 7:12; 1 Kgs 8:5; 2 Chr 5:6). See also *Strong’s* #1471 *גוֹי* (*goy*, “nation”), and its usages sandwiching the Mosaic covenant in Exod 19:6; 32:10; and 33:13. Ben Zion Dinur, “Jewish History—Its Uniqueness and Continuity,” in *Jewish Society Through the Ages*, eds. H. H. Ben Sasson and

The first five books of the Bible represent the oldest political covenantal constitution in history. The first four works of the Torah can be seen

as a constitutional document with a long historic introduction (Genesis), a preamble, covenant, and fundamental set of laws (Exodus-Leviticus), and a historical epilogue (Numbers) that includes additional fundamental laws that grow out of the desert experience of the *Bnai Israel* (the children of Israel/Jacob, the ancient name of the Jewish people reflecting both the familial and federal character of the political organization).<sup>85</sup>

Whereas the Noahic and Abrahamic covenants provide the foundation for man's moral ordering, as well as God's promises to establish a particular congregated people (*edah*) and a particular nation (*goy*), the Mosaic covenant and its Moabite covenantal re-affirmation in Deut 29 represents the actual political covenanting and constitution of the polity of Israel. The book of Deuteronomy is itself organized along the standard formula of a covenant, and it closes the Torah by re-affirming and renewing the covenantal and constitutional political identity of Israel as אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל (*Eretz Yisrael*, "Israel in its own permanently settled land").<sup>86</sup>

With the origination and constitution of the Israelite polity in place, the remainder of Israel's pre-Davidic political experience expresses how they allocated the political act

---

S. Ettinger, (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1969), 17–18, clarifies the importance of the usage of *edah* as it relates to other available words for a people. He writes, "The distinctive social feature of early Israel is marked by its being an *edah* (congregation). A congregation is a social entity which comes into being and develops mainly as the result of a common will and not, like the family or the tribe, by natural processes. Its members live in one place, but what distinguishes them is a common faith and common beliefs, a way of life, will; i.e., as in aspirations."

<sup>85</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 57.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 194–195. Elazar notes that Deuteronomy is organized along the standard formula of a covenant: "(1) a historical prologue that explains the reasons for the covenant; (2) the covenant stipulations and, where it deems necessary, justifications for them; (3) provision for mutual pledging; (4) enforcement clauses and punishments for noncompliance with its terms; and (5) a statement of blessings and curses, the former if the terms on constitutional provision are hearkened to and the latter if they are not." On usages of

and authority within their constituted polity. Deeply connected to the Abrahamic promise of a permanently settled land, was the promise of a particular people, which manifests itself in what the Torah calls the *edah* (“congregation”). Elazar notes that *edah* is “the heart of the classic Jewish polity,” and he defines it politically as the organization of a select people “through a system of governing institutions, national, tribal, and local, rooted in a common constitution, the Torah, which is in itself derived from the founding covenant.”<sup>87</sup> Typically, the institutions of the *edah* in the Old Testament are republican and religiously democratic.<sup>88</sup> God executes his sovereignty through the *edah*, which often has covenantal mediators such as Moses and Joshua that the Old Testament calls עֶבֶד-יְהוָה (*ebed-Adonai/ebed-Yhwh*, “servant of the LORD”).<sup>89</sup> Elazar interprets these *ebed-Yhwh* as functioning as a sort of prime minister, and Elazar sees them as representing and mediating between God’s covenantal sovereignty and his covenanted *edah*.<sup>90</sup> These figures are supported by a court of seventy elders, and a high priest. The *edah* assembly itself consisted of tribal elders and the נְשִׂימַי (nesi’im, which Elazar

---

אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל see 1 Sam 13:19; 1 Chr 22:2; 2 Chr 2:17; Ezek 40:2; and 47:18. The borders for this promised land are treated in Gen 15:18–21; Exod 23; Num 34:1–15; Deut 19; 2 Sam 24; and Ezek 47.

<sup>87</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 77.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> See Strong’s #5650 עֶבֶד (*ebed*, “slave, servant”), and Strong’s #3068 יְהוָה (*Yhwh*, “LORD”). As noted in Harry M. Orlinsky and Norman H. Snaith, *Studies on the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 9–10, the combination of *ebed-Yhwh* is found twenty-one times in the Old Testament. Seventeen instances refer to Moses (Deut 34:4 [מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד-יְהוָה]; Josh 1:1, 12, 15; 8:31, 33; 11:12; 12:6; 13:8; 14:7; 18:7; 22:4, 5; 2 Kgs 18:12; 2 Chr 1:3; 24:6). Two instances refer to Joshua (Josh 24:29; Judg 2:8). Two refer to David in superscriptions (Pss 18:1; 36:1). Orlinsky and Snaith note that the term is primarily used as a technical reference to Moses, who was Israel’s lawgiver (p. 10). He is the *edeb-Yhwh* par excellence.

<sup>90</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 77.

defines literally as the “raised up ones or representatives”).<sup>91</sup> The tribal structures known as the שָׁבֵט (shavet, “tribe”) emulated the polity of the edah, and were fairly autonomous collections of all the citizens within the tribe.<sup>92</sup> These tribes were represented by their elders, by a singular tribal representative called the nasi’, and—when circumstances requested it—a nesi’im who was raised for specific purposes.<sup>93</sup>

The edah, shavet, and ha’ir were the political model present throughout the Pentateuch and Joshua. While their polity becomes later modified per the introduction of kingship and bureaucracy, the classical polity is reiterated in Ezekiel and its restoration of Israel (Ezek 11:14–20).<sup>94</sup> After covenant, constitution, and polity are established in the Torah, it is followed by Israel’s attempt to continue and modify its covenanted polity throughout the other two major sections of the Old Testament. Whereas “Deuteronomy completes the Five Books of Moses—the Torah—Israel’s basic covenants and constitution,” the second and third major sections “of the Hebrew Bible—Nevi’im, the

---

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. For usages of נְסִיִּים (nesi’im), see Gen 17:20; 25:16; Josh 22:14; and 1 Chr 4:38. *BDB* captures the sense of Elazar’s interpretation where it defines nasi’ as “one lifted up.” In reference to tribal chiefs and representatives, see Num 1:16, 44; and 2:3.

<sup>92</sup> See *Strong’s* #7626 שָׁבֵט (shavet, “rod, staff, club, scepter, tribe”). A majority of the word’s usage in the Old Testament reference tribe, tribes, or half-tribes, and evident in Gen 49:10; 1 Sam 10:20; Deut 1:23; Judg 21:24; and 1 Kgs 11:31. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* notes that the word originates from an unused root which likely meant to branch off. The connection with symbols of authority and punishment—rod and scepter—seems appropriate, given the degree of autonomy Elazar suggests these polities held over their people.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 77. These tribes were further organized at the local level into towns, with civic and political responsibilities being conducted by local citizen assemblies called הַעִיר (ha’ir, “city,” from the root word in *Strong’s* #5892b) and their respective representatives called sha’arei ha’ir (connected to the root word in *Strong’s* #7778 שׂוֹרֵר [shoer, “gatekeeper”). These were the representatives who assembled at a town’s gates to conduct the community’s official business. Also see *Strong’s* #5387 נָסִי (nasi’, “captain”).

<sup>94</sup> The republican and religiously democratic political model of Israel was influential on a number of political thinkers, such as those Reformed thinkers surveyed later in this chapter. As one example, the

Prophets—is, along with the historical books of Ketuvim—the Writings—an account of Israel’s effort to apply the Torah as constitution under different circumstances at different times.”<sup>95</sup> During these periods, the original vertically-initiated special covenants are rehearsed, rediscovered, or altered to fit new political contexts.<sup>96</sup> One such major episode is the introduction of the constitutional monarchy and the Davidic kingship. While Israel continued to maintain a federalized republican character, the introduction of a constitutional monarchy is an interesting shift, and one that seemingly evidences the utilization of covenants to establish authoritative polities.<sup>97</sup> In the continued spirit of the political covenantal idea, David’s appointment to political kingship is implemented with a political covenant where Israel’s elders initiate an anointment of David as king by covenanting with him “before the LORD” (2 Sam 5:3).<sup>98</sup> Similar covenants were

---

sixteenth and seventeenth century rejection of the argument of the divine right of kings often appealed to the Israel’s covenants and polity.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>96</sup> As examples, see the covenantal renewals in Josh 1:16; 8; and 23 & 24. Other covenants of constitutional renewal that sought to reaffirm and recommit to the earlier special covenant included Joshua and the people (Josh 24:25); Jehoida and the people (2 Kgs 11:17; 2 Chr 23:3); Hezekiah and the people (2 Chr 29:10); Josiah and the people (2 Kgs 23:3); and Ezra and the people (Ezra 10:3).

<sup>97</sup> On the republican character of the *edah* and Israel, see Robert Gordis, “Democratic Origins in Ancient Israel—the Biblical *Edah*,” in *The Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume* (New York, NY: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1950), 373–388; C. Umhau Wolf, “Terminology of Israel’s Tribal Organization,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 65 (1946), 45–48. On federal republicanism in the Bible, see Daniel J. Elazar, *Kinship and Consent: The Jewish Political Tradition and Its Contemporary Manifestations* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America and Center for Jewish Community Studies, 1983); Martin Buber, *Kingship of God* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1956); Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant and Freedom in the Jewish Political Tradition* (Philadelphia, PA: Gratz College, 1981); and Daniel J. Elazar and Stuart A. Cohen, *The Jewish Polity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985).

<sup>98</sup> However, it is worth noting that the Davidic kingship still had a very important vertical element. Although the elders horizontally covenant with David in 2 Sam 5:1–3 “before the LORD,” a couple passages later, God enters into a vertical covenant with David by sending Nathan and a message of the Davidic promise (2 Sam 7:1–17). Furthermore, God’s promise of kingship is established earlier in relation to the Abrahamic covenantal promise (Gen 17:6, 16; 35:11; 49:10). God’s promise of kingship was intended not to be equated with the types of kings Israel’s neighbors had, but was supposed to be an entrusted representative of God’s sovereignty (Deut 17:14–20; Judg 8:22–23; 1 Sam 8:5, 20). Thus, 2 Chr 13:8 states, “the kingdom of the LORD in the hands of the sons of David.” The Davidic kingship is an interesting chapter in Israel’s political history. It seems God intended a regal spiritual headship, and the

instigated by men to mark the renewal of God's earlier established covenants, by covenanting at periods of Israel's major political changes and reforms. Examples of these renewals and constitutional continuations of the Mosaic and Davidic covenant and constitution include: Joshua's covenant with the people (Josh 24:25); Jehoida's covenant with the people (2 Kgs 11:17); Hezekiah's covenant with the people (2 Chr 29:10); Josiah's covenant with the people (2 Kgs 23:3); and Ezra's covenant with the people (Ezra 10:3–5).<sup>99</sup>

What the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Moabic, and Davidic covenantal constitutions and their renewals contribute to an appraisal of covenant as a political idea is a literal example of how the idea of covenant was utilized to create a particular people, place, and polity. In connection with these covenants are a number of clearly political concepts, such as legal codes (Decalogue, Exod 20:1–21), territories (*Eretz Yisrael*, the land of Canaan, Gen 15; Exod 23; Num 34), membership (circumcision, Gen 17:1–14), consent (Mosaic covenantal response, Exod 19:8; 24:7), and more.<sup>100</sup> These covenants

---

Israelites were warned against appointing a political king for their polity. However, the Israelites wanted to emulate their neighbors, and sought after a kingship for their self-defense (much like Cain sought after a city in self defense). The political kingship actually becomes a major problem throughout the rest of the Old Testament. Man's *khamas* and *yetzer* seem to become evident and focused in the continued moral decay of political kings, further reminding Israel that perhaps their solution was not in a change in regime, but in a more prophetic and spiritual Davidic kingship. This Davidic kingship found its ultimate fulfillment and representative in Jesus, the Son of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords. God seemingly combined true monarchical rule in his Son, although the synthesis of the political element—where Jesus descends on a cloud with the sword of political power—does not occur until his Second coming. This unfolding of constitutions and regimes—in light of the corruptive power of *khamas* and *yetzer* in the story of Israel's kings—is a strong affirmation of the political principles of realism as held by Augustine, Niebuhr, Thielicke, and other important political theologians.

<sup>99</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity*, 81. Examples of these additional horizontal covenants include “when the High Priest Jehoiada restored the legitimate monarchy after Athaliah's usurpation (2 Kgs 11:17–20) and Josiah promulgated his constitutional reform (2 Kgs 23:1–3).”

<sup>100</sup> For an introduction to political ideas in the Bible, see Wayne Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).

represent universal and special examples of the vertical category of covenants, and are noteworthy in that God originally initiated them. However, the Old Testament also contains a number of noteworthy horizontal covenants where men initiate covenants to enter into morally-bound political relationships with other men. In addition to using covenants to consent and anoint political rulers, men seemed to use horizontal covenants to establish treaty relationships, alliances, constitutions, and pledges. Examples of political covenants used to establish treaties include: Abraham and the Amorites (Gen 14:13); Abraham and Abimelech (Gen 21:27–32); Edom’s alliance treaty (Obad 1:7); Isaac and Abimelech’s treaty (Gen 26:28–31); Jacob and Laban’s treaty (Gen 31:44); and Joshua and the Gibeonites treaty (Josh 9:6). Horizontal covenants are also used to establish constitutional relationships and partnerships between the people and their rulers, and include covenants between: David, Abner, and the people (2 Sam 3:12, 13, 21); Zedekiah and the people (Jer 34:8–18); and Jehoida and the captains (2 Kgs 11:4; 2 Chr 23:1–3). In some cases, Israelites used political covenants “before God” to establish morally-bound political relationships with non-Israelites.<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> Of note is that in some of these cases, the people of Israel were entering into morally-bound relationship with people who were even polytheistic, but still before the LORD as the covenant’s witness and moral presupposition. However, there are incidents where God directly prohibits the Israelites from covenanting with specific people, such as prohibiting covenants with the Canaanites in Exod 23:32. For some reason, the Philistines, such as represented in Abraham’s covenant with Abimelech, seem absent from God’s list of prohibited nations. God’s prohibition of covenanting with specific nations seems to be in some sense a passive acceptance of Israel being able to utilize covenants as a political device. Otherwise, it would be expected that God would simply command Israel not to covenant with anyone but the LORD and themselves; or perhaps we would expect him to condemn Abraham or Isaac for their covenant with Abimelech. Perhaps it is the Philistine’s entrance into covenants with Israel, and their friendly demeanor with Abraham, that lends itself to them being absent from the list of ten nations that Abraham’s descendants will displace (Gen 15:18–21), or the list of nations Moses tells the Israelites they will conquer (Deut 7:1; 20:17).

In the Old Testament, covenant is a theopolitical idea that was used by God and man to establish a particular people and a particular polity. However, it was also used by men with other men to establish political relationships that were morally-bound before God and his moral order. As the rest of the canonical story unfolds, these horizontal and vertical reforms and renewals are ultimately unable to prevent Israel's covenantal unfaithfulness and civic decline. This reality does not take away from the God-ordained value of covenanting and constituting particular political institutions, but it does provide a canonical affirmation that sobers against mistaking particularity for universality.<sup>102</sup> Israelite polity was not, in its presented forms, meant to be God's ultimate covenantal solution to *khamas* and *yetzer*; rather, they play dual roles of providing particular political utility by restraining *khamas* and *yetzer*, and pointing prophetically to God's final covenantal solution. The repeated breach of the Israelite's covenantal vows results with a number of exiles and punishments in the punitive spirit of the Fall and the Flood. Throughout this exilic period, the political role of the Prophets is to herald God's promise of a final and full restoration of his *edah* through a Messiah who will fulfill the covenant promises and restore God's people; he will even extend this *edah* to all nations and gentiles. The Prophets remind the Israelite *edah* that their various particular political covenants and constitutions are not to be equated with God's universal covenantal

---

<sup>102</sup> However unable they were to ultimately prevent society's civil and social decay, it does not take away from government's earthly and practical utility in keeping the worst of human depravity at bay. It simply exposes their God-ordained role. It is an affirmation of their particularity and value, but a check against the error of universalization. God's solution to *khamas* and *yetzer* cannot come from man or government. It comes from the Gospel.

solution to man's *khamas* and *yetzer*.<sup>103</sup> God's actual solution is instead hinted as early as Gen 3:15's promise that through Eve's seed would come one who crushes the head of the deceptive serpent (and thus the *khamas* and *yetzer* the serpent symbolizes). The Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Moabic, and Davidic covenants and constitutions provide particular political value, but their ultimate and universal contributions are to point prophetically to a covenantal solution identified in their specific lineage. A Davidic messianic king who inherits and fulfills these covenantal promises, and embodies God's covenantal presence, priesthood, and regal sovereignty, is at the heart of God's New Covenant. This New Covenant is the subject of the New Testament, and the messianic and regal figure is identified as Christ Jesus.

#### Political Covenant and Constitution in the New Testament

The New Testament's usage of *diathēkē* ("covenant") focuses on proposing Jesus as the fulfillment of the prior Old Covenant, as well as the mediator and guarantee of the promised New Covenant. The New Testament focuses on Christ Jesus as the "mediator of a New Covenant [διαθήκης καινῆς], so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the First Covenant [πρώτη διαθήκη]" (Heb 9:15). In the spirit of the former Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, Priestly, and

---

<sup>103</sup> The Prophet's conclusion is remarkably self-evident in Adam and Eve's rebellion, Cain's murder, Moses initial doubt and promise-land prevention, the Israelites Golden-calf induced wandering, the Judges' downward spiral, Saul's premeditation for murder, David's bloodied hands, Solomon's sexual immorality, Israel and Judah's division, the Temple's destruction, the kings' depravities, and the Israelites' various exiles. This trajectory is one of the Bible's strongest arguments in favor of a constitutional political realism.

Prophetic covenants, Christ Jesus comes as the sovereign (Heb 1:1–4), salvific (Heb 2:9), faithful (Heb 3:1–6), mediating (Heb 8:4–7), kingly (Heb 1:8–9), and prophesized High Priest (Heb 4:14–16).

The centerpiece of the New Testament’s covenantal passages occurs in the Last Supper, which itself parallels the confirmation of blood in the Mosaic covenant and constitution (Exod 24:8). Whereas Moses’ pivotal role in the Torah was to mediate the origination and constitution of the particular congregated *edah* known as Israel, Christ Jesus comes as a kind of second and superior Moses who mediates the origination and constitution of a universal fellowship of believers the New Testament calls the *koinōnia*. God’s Old Covenant relationship was evident in the Mosaic covenantal sign of the Decalogue and the constituted Israeli people (Exod 19:8; 20:1–21), and its climax occurred with God’s glory filling the tabernacle with his presence (Exod 40:34–38). In the New Covenant, God’s presence is evident in that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory” (John 1:14). Its relational crescendo then occurs with the New Covenant’s sign and seal in the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5).

The messianic King-Priest-Lawgiver ultimately fulfills the Prophets’ covenantal promises through incorporating the whole of humanity into an expanded notion of the *edah*. The New Testament adopts terms that stress the covenantal emphasis, with the result of Christ’s covenantal fulfillment producing a covenanted fellowship of confederated believers (*koinonia*).<sup>104</sup> Individuals enter into this New Covenant by hearkening Christ’s propitiatory salvific invitation, which is symbolized through two

covenantal signs.<sup>105</sup> The acts of hearkening and faithfully embracing Christ's Covenant occurs through the signs of water baptism and participation in the Lord's Supper, and they further lead to the visual identification of particular bodies of covenanted members. The visual identification of these particular bodies is evident in the territorial assembly of collected covenanted members that the New Testament calls the *ekklēsia* (which is used predominantly to refer to the "local church/local congregation of believers").<sup>106</sup>

While parallels can be found among the covenantal overtones in both the Old and New Testaments, the language of political constitution is notably absent in the latter. The New Covenant at first glance seems rather unpolitical.<sup>107</sup> Its seemingly unpolitical nature stands in contrast with the Zealots of the New Testamental period, who sought to solve the problem of *khamas* and *yetzer* through a very political and civil conception of rebellion and its messiah. Whereas the Old Testament details the political constituting and constitutions of the particular people and nation called "Israel," the New Testament

---

<sup>104</sup> See Gerhard Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, "Meaning of *Koinonia*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1964), 804ff.

<sup>105</sup> The Baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:5 is the sign and seal of the New Covenant at its universal level, akin to the function of the rainbow as a sign of God's universal Noahic Covenant. The ordinances of believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper are a particular and visible manifestation of the New Covenant sign of Spirit Baptism. They capture the human covenantal hearkening to the Universal Covenant, as well as entrance into a particular horizontal covenant with fellow believers. Baptism marks the moment of origination and entrance. The Lord's Supper marks continued covenantal faithfulness. Both are made possible by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. They help capture the covenantal universality and particularity of the Church and churches.

<sup>106</sup> "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matt 18:20). The covenantal elements inherent in the concept of the covenanted *ekklēsia* seems to parallel the *edah* in its emphasis of a public gathered congregation. While the overwhelming majority of the usages of *ekklēsia* reference a local assembly, there are some incidents where it describes the universal church as an institutional whole.

<sup>107</sup> It is noteworthy that there is no particular Old Testament constitutional ideal. The Old Testament sees the Israelites go through nomadic, patriarchal, confederate tribal, federal tribal, and constitutional monarchies. Their evolutionary progression is not even confirmed by God as some progressive idealized accomplishment. Rather, the pattern affirms a lesson more circular. The lesson seems to be that no human polity can ultimately end *khamas* and *yetzer*.

leaves open the question of political constitution.<sup>108</sup> The Pauline letters even go as far as to approve as appropriate obedience to “secular” governments, and calls them the *διακονος* (“servants”) of God (Rom 13:4).<sup>109</sup>

However, the seemingly “unpolitical” characteristic of the New Testament is at the same its most political contribution. If the focus of politics is the identification of sovereignty, Christ embraces the concept in the fullness of his Divine incarnated identity. The Greek word used about 748 times to refer to God is *κύριος* (*kurios*, “lord, Lord, master, sir”).<sup>110</sup> The origin of the word *kurios* comes from *kuros*, which literally means “supremacy.” The emphasis on the word *kurios* is to denote one who is supreme in authority, and in whom has a mastery and right over those beneath them.<sup>111</sup> The chief refrain in the New Testament to identify Jesus’ divinity and sovereignty, is the invitation to call and recognize Jesus as Lord.<sup>112</sup> If someone is asked what they think is the most political passage in the New Testament, the respondent would probably appeal to a passage like Rom 13:1–7 and its treatment on the purpose of government. However, the most political passage is arguably one of the seemingly unpolitical passages that

---

<sup>108</sup> There is no “here-and-now” theocracy in the New Testament, although there was one in the Old. The only notion of a religious and political theocratic synthesis is a future end-of-days promise initiated quite obviously by Christ, and not his now-earthly devotees. Nor is Christ recommending such a theocracy. Rather, Christ is focused on a fuller and more faithful notion of the “Kingdom of God,” which can be understood per the dissertation’s direction as “the full recognition of the Sovereignty of God, across institutions.”

<sup>109</sup> *Διακονος* is also used to describe an ecclesial office (“deacons”). Both are separate institutional officers whose primary functions are to be servants in their respective roles.

<sup>110</sup> See *Strong’s* #2962 *κύριος* (*kurios*, “lord, Lord, master, sir”).

<sup>111</sup> In Joseph Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), Thayer’s entry notes that *kurios* is also used to reference the sovereign in a state, such as a prince, chief, or the Roman emperor.

<sup>112</sup> Examples of the refrain affirming Jesus’ Lordship include: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11); and “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom 10:9).

identifies the extent and fullness of Christ’s sovereignty. These passages may even seem anti-political, and have even been interpreted as such.<sup>113</sup> However, they instead provide the New Testament’s foundational contribution to understanding the implications of covenant as a political idea.

A chief example of the seemingly “anti-political” political contribution is extraordinarily present in Paul’s letter to the Philippians, where he writes, “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9–11). The *International Standard Version*’s translation of the verse is worth quoting as well. The ISV’s translators manage to translate the passage in a fashion that deepens both the seemingly un-political and the political characteristic of Paul’s identification of the extent of Christ’s sovereignty. How? Through translating Paul’s passage as a poem, which seems to be the most un-political and anti-political style imaginable. As quoted from the ISV, Phil 2:9–11 contains the central political theological contribution of the New Covenant, where it states,

Now lifted up by God to heaven,  
a name above all others given,  
this matchless name possessing.  
And so, when Jesus’ name is called,  
the knees of everyone should fall,  
wherever they’re residing.  
Then every tongue in one accord,  
will say that *Jesus Christ is Lord*,

---

<sup>113</sup> The Anabaptists exhibit the tradition of interpreting the seemingly “anti-political” or “un-political” nature of the New Testament as in fact being “anti-political.”

while God the Father praising.<sup>114</sup>

The greatest contribution to covenant as a political idea that is made by the New Testament is the claim that Jesus is the Sovereign. No more political statement can be made than that. The political image of a thorn-crowned King conquering, through resurrection, the life-and-death punitive political powers of a princely Pilate is the New Covenant's foundational political principle. The fact that Jesus does not come to establish a specific political polity, or that he even identifies a temporal constitutional ideal, is important. It is in the kindred spirit of the Old Testament's narrative, with its Garden dominion expulsion, its downward Noahic spiral, its corrupted tribal judges, and its depraved kings, that the primary political principle of Christ's New Covenant is understood to be the implication that political sovereignty is loaned and limited.

Only King Jesus is King. Jesus captures the sentiment exhibited throughout the Old Testament that a particular man-induced utopian polity and constitution are not the answer to the Adamic and Noahic universal problem of man's *khamas* and *yetzer*. Rather, the answer is a Person, not a political polity. A fundamental and universal conversion of man's heart through faith in Christ's fulfillment of the Old Covenant, and invitation into a New Covenant, is God's ultimate covenantal solution to humanity's disordering *khamas* and depraved *yetzer*. Furthermore, there are important horizontal and practical implications derived from this foundational political contribution. However, and with

---

<sup>114</sup> The International Standard Version is my favorite rendition of Phil 2:9–11. The translator, Daniel Black, sought to capture the poetic and hymnal elements of the verse, and translated it beautifully as quoted. I have added italics for emphasis, as well as edited verse 11 to read as “will say that Jesus Christ is Lord,” instead of as the original's “will say that Jesus the Messiah is Lord,” given the former simply flows more poetically.

intentional repetition, the New Covenant casts a striking refutation against any attempt by man to universalize the particularity of his institutions.

Again, only the Son can claim to be the Sovereign. Is there any room left for government in this final New Covenantal era? The New Testament's answer is clearly "Yes! Of course! For now, until then! In the here-and-now, not the not-yet!" Christ's absolute sovereignty does not equate to a rejection of the temporal need and ordination of government. With his redemptive work on the cross, Jesus has enabled and empowered members of his universal faith-based fellowship to extend and mediate his Kingdom of God sovereignty across all of man's institutions (Matt 6:9–15).<sup>115</sup> He has also liberated man of the responsibility of having to integrate these institutions into a perfected ideal, given he himself will perfect these orders when he returns (Mark 13:24–27; Rev 19:15–16). The pattern from the Garden onward has revealed the error of universalizing the particularity of an individual or an institution. The problem of *khamas* and *yetzer* are not fixed by anthropocentric political institutions; rather, as evidenced in the Noahic Covenant, God ordained human political institutions to keep this deterioration from descending into pre-flood depravity. The institutions are ordained as a restraint against—and not a redemption of—man's problem of depravity (= *khamas*+*yetzer*). The hearkening to Christ's propitiatory redemption, and the Gospel-driven God-and-neighbor-loving

---

<sup>115</sup> Barth provides a helpful and short definition of the Kingdom of God in relation to the Christian and civil communities (Church and State). In Karl Barth, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community," *Community State, and Church*, ed. Will Herberg (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960), 167, Barth writes, "The Kingdom of God is the kingdom where God is without shadow, without problems and contradictions, where He is All in All: it is the rule of God in the redeemed world." On the Christocentricity of the state's power, in "Church and State" Barth writes, "What follows when all this is applied to the political angelic power? Clearly this: that that power, the State as such, belongs originally and ultimately to

extension of Christ's sovereignty across institutions, provides a fundamental constitutional check against what a particular polity and constitution can ever aspire to be, or attain, in the "here-and-now." The Christ himself, as the Principal Prefect, will perfect with perfect power man's social and political institutions in the future "not-yet."

The "here-and-now" and the "not-yet" dynamic formulates a fundamental interpretive grid for understanding covenant as a political idea in social life under the New Covenant. The more overtly political passages of the New Testament proceed in two parts to affirm the *khamas* and *yetzer* restraining—not redeeming—"here-and-now" function of the New Covenantal era political institution. First, the implications of various passages affirm the legitimacy of the political institution. During the earlier second chapter that surveyed Luther's political theology, Luther's views of the political act and authority were noted as the product of him wrestling with numerous passages that seemed to directly or indirectly imply the legitimacy of government. According to Luther, the legitimacy of the political state is affirmed in the apostolic witness to the validity of political authority (Rom 13:1–7; 1 Pet 2:13–14); in the affirmation of an institutionalization of capital punishment (Gen 9:6; Exod 2:14, 22); in John the Baptist's treatment of soldiers and the absence of condemning their vocation (Luke 3:14); in Peter's confirmation of Cornelius' military station (Acts 10:1–8); and in Jesus' validation of earthly political obligations such as taxes (Matt 22:21). In short, the New Testament seems to affirm the continuity of the role of the political institution established under the Old Testament's universal covenants, and modeled in its special covenants.

---

Jesus Christ; that in its comparatively independent substance, in its dignity, its function, and its purpose, it

Second, the function of the political institution in the “here-and-now” is explained in Rom 13:1–7 and 1 Pet 2:13–14. The New Testament affirms the function of the political institutions derived from the Old Testament covenants as enabling public peace through restraining violence with force.<sup>116</sup> Wayne Grudem notes six implications on the role of government by Paul in Romans 13:

- [1] God has appointed the authorities who have governmental power (vv. 1–2) ...
- [2] Civil rulers are a “terror to bad conduct” (cf. v. 3), which means they restrain evil by the threat of punishment for wrongdoing. This is consistent with what is taught in Gen 9:5–6....
- [3] They give “approval” or praise (Greek *epainos*, “approval, recognition, praise”) to those who do what is good (v. 3).... These verses indicate God has a role in promoting the common good of a society. It should not only punish wrongdoing but also encourage and reward good conduct, conduct that contributes to the good of society....
- [4] Government officials serve God.... This means we should think of government officials as serving God when they punish evil and promote what is good, whether or not they realize it....
- [5] Government officials are doing “good” as they carry out their work....
- [6] Government authorities execute God’s wrath on wrongdoers and thereby carry out a task of retribution.<sup>117</sup>

As noted in Rom 13:1 and 1 Pet 2:13, “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities,” and “be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution.”<sup>118</sup> The

---

should serve the Person and the Work of Jesus Christ and therefore the justification of the sinner” (p. 118).

<sup>116</sup> The function of the political institution is supported by the most empirically demonstrable doctrine of theology: man’s depravity. This is one of Niebuhr’s most prominent contributions to public and political theology. As he states in Reinhold Niebuhr, *Man’s Nature and His Communities: Essays on the Dynamics and Enigmas of Man’s Personal and Social Existence* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1965), 24, “the doctrine of original sin is the only empirically verifiable doctrine of the Christian faith.” This argument is present in some form across his other major works, such as *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1960); and *The Structure of Nations and Empires; a Study of the Recurring Patterns and Problems of the Political Order in Relation to the Unique Problems of the Nuclear Age* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1959).

<sup>117</sup> Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible*, 80–81.

<sup>118</sup> The exhortation in 1 Pet 2:13–17 is especially noteworthy for its application across authorities in other institutions. The primary emphasis of the passage is God-honoring neighbor-loving submission. It is in this service/servitude, that the passage claims we can “Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear

passages evidence that the political institutions perform a God-ordained role in the “here-and-now,” and that the proper response of Christ’s covenant people is to affirm its goodness as an extension of God’s sovereignty which merits recognition, subjugation, and prayer-backed support (Rom 13:1; 1 Pet 2:13; 1 Tim 2:1–4). As these passages emphasize, the state’s “sovereignty” is a borrowed refraction of God’s actual sovereignty, and it has with it some checks in the “here-and-now” that restrain its tendency to confuse its particularity for universality; or, in other words, to confuse God’s Sovereignty as its own “sovereignty.”

Grudem acknowledges the “here-and-now” limitations of government where he asks in his book whether it is ever right to disobey the civil government. His response is that “God does not hold people responsible for obeying the civil government, however, when obedience would mean directly disobeying a command of God himself.”<sup>119</sup> God does not hold people responsible for disobeying a civil government’s refracted sovereignty when it means disobeying God’s actual Sovereignty. Grudem provides a number of passages from narrative sections to prove his point: the episode of the early apostles preaching the Gospel after the Jewish governing authority commanded them not to (Acts 4:18–20; 5:29); the episode of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who denied King Nebuchadnezzar’s commands to bow down and worship a golden statue (Dan 3:13–27); the episode of the Egyptian midwives disobeying Pharaoh’s commands (Exod 1:17,

---

God. Honor the emperor” (1 Pet 2:16–17). Furthermore, practicing this love by doing good, seems to be an effective form of reform and witness (1 Pet 2:15).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 88.

21); the episode of Daniel disobeying a law to prohibit him from praying (Dan 6:10); and the episode of the wise men disobeying the commands of Herod (Matt 2:8).<sup>120</sup>

In summary, the New Testament makes two important contributions to the appraisal of covenant as a political idea. First, the New Testament continues to affirm the ordained role and moral implications of political powers established in the Noahic and Mosaic covenants. It affirms the political institution's legitimacy and function in a number of passages which either directly or indirectly support the continuity of the former covenant's appraisal of the political purpose. Second, the New Testament makes a crucial political claim inherent in the very idea of the New Covenant. This principal political claim is that Christ Jesus is the Sovereign. While he will establish a perfect polity by his own hands when he returns in a "not-yet" future episode, the current "here-and-now" condition of humanity is to reflect Jesus' sovereignty through recognizing the good function of the political institution's ability to provide for a temporal peace by restraining man's *khamas* and *yetzer*. The Sovereign Christ Jesus does not commend one particular political polity and constitution as the only available option. Christ baptizes people, not polities. He does not identify tribalism, constitutional monarchy, representative democracy, or any such constitutional construction as the only legitimate option in there "here-and-now." Rather, the focus is on the reality that government has a specific God-ordained, covenant-derived, institutional function of refracting Jesus' sovereignty through restraining public violence. The political institution creates temporal order and space for God's Spirit to redeem man through his covenant members known as

---

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. 88.

the *koinōnia* who assemble locally in an *ekklēsia*. The implications are that there is no one perfect political polity, just the Perfect Person of Christ Jesus. Nor does any institutional sovereignty exist outside of Christ’s Sovereignty. Neither does this mean that one polity cannot be commended over the other, given they still have a function noted in the former universal covenants and passages such as Rom 13:1–7 that helps determine the goodness in which they actualize their loaned institutional sovereignty. These New Covenantal themes provide the foundational components of appraising the Church’s attempt to politicize their implications across history.

### **Political Covenant and Constitution in History**

The appraisal of covenant as a political idea in Scripture reveals two main contributions. First, the Bible stresses across both Testaments the political idea that only God is Sovereign (Ps 2:10–11; Phil 2:9–11). Second, the Old Testament’s covenants establish—and the New Testament affirms—the vertical covenantal ordination of the “here-and-now” function of the political institution as restraining violence and disorder (Gen 9:6; Rom 13:1–7).<sup>121</sup> Throughout the Old Testament, vertical universal covenants establish

---

<sup>121</sup> Violence and disorder are equated with the ideas behind *khamas* and *yetzer* that led to God’s response of the Flood. In a show of what Kuyper and Bavinck call common grace, God’s covenantal response with Noah establishes the precedence in Gen 9:6 for the institution of government as a restraint against the man’s spiraling depravity. Romans 13 speaks to this function, and is appropriable wedged between Rom 12:9–21, and Rom 13:8–14. The passage affirming the government’s proper function of restraining violence and disorder is preceded and proceeded by passages focusing on the Christian’s Gospel-calling to love their neighbor, almost as if to draw contrast to the Gospel as the source of the actual redemption of man’s *yetzer*. Furthermore, that Noahic condition is not lost on Paul. He opens Romans by describing that Fall and pre-Flood condition of depravity and descent as continuing its existence in man’s nature. God’s judgment almost seems to be, in a “here-and-now” sense, sewn into created order. Violation of God’s order and sovereignty brings with it an immediate judgment of spiraling degeneration. Paul describes this condition, where he writes, “For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images

the function and legitimacy of the governmental institution, and vertical special covenants and their covenantal renewals establish and reform the particular people and polity of Israel. These people also utilize horizontal covenants amongst themselves and their neighbors to establish morally-bound political obligations and relationships. With the New Covenant, the Old Testament's covenant-derived function and purpose of the government is affirmed, although no new vertical covenants are established to create any particular political utopias in the "here-and-now." Rather, the New Covenant focus is on the fulfillment of the Old Testament's prophetic witness and promise through the covenantal establishment of a truly universal *koinōnia*.

Therefore, implied in the two political contributions of a scriptural appraisal of covenant as a political idea is a degree of liberty as to a polity's origination and constitution, and a moral-framework that provides a capital "C" Constitutional check against a polity's functional abuse of borrowed sovereignty. The implications of the New Covenant for liberty and functional legitimacy allow for the freedom to consider covenant as a horizontal political idea. Given the liberty the New Covenant creates for political institutional models, a number of rich theological traditions in the Church's history appealed to vertical and horizontal covenants as inspiration for the origination and constitution of their numerous institutions. Especially when forced into frontiers where no political and social authorities and institutions were available, proponents of

---

resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen" (Rom 1:21–25). Part of God's judgment against the violation of his moral order is that he "gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done" (Rom 1:28). Paul in this passage is

covenantal theologies sought to appropriate covenant as a distinctly political notion. An appraisal of covenant as a political idea across the Church's history reveals how members on these "frontiers" sought to actualize the implications of the New Testament across their horizontal political covenants.

### Political Covenant and Constitution in the Classical Era

There are five main stages in the history of appropriating covenant as a political idea. These stages include (1) the Jewish covenantal stage; (2) the early Christian covenantal stage; (3) the Reformation and Reformed covenantal stage; (4) the Colonial covenantal stage; and (5) the Secular compact and contract stage.<sup>122</sup> The first stage has already been surveyed with the earlier appraisal of covenant as a political idea in the Old Testament. While inheriting much of the Hebraic covenantal overtones, the New Covenant saw itself as the fulfillment of the promises of the former covenants. The New Testament's fulfillment initiated the second main stage by heralding the arrival of a type of messianic king that differed from the more "political" expectation of certain Jews. Unlike the Old Testament, the New Testament was sparse on proscribing actual political constitutions, and the second half of the early Christian covenantal stage consisted of the patristics' initial attempts to investigate the ramifications of New Covenantal theology.

---

capturing the spirit of the dilemma of *khamas* and depraved *yetzer*, and the rest of Romans includes God's restraint and redemption of this depravity.

<sup>122</sup> Another simpler way to identify the covenantal tradition is (1) Jewish covenantal stage (pre-A.D. centuries); (2) the early Christian covenantal stage (1<sup>st</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> century); (3) the middle Christian covenantal stage (16<sup>th</sup> century); (4) the later Christian covenantal stage (17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century); and (5) the secular compact and contract stage (19<sup>th</sup>–modern century).

The Church Fathers generally saw three principal covenants in Scripture. The first of these covenantal principles consisted of the “Natural Covenant” in the Noahic episode, and it had as its audience universal humanity. The second patristic covenantal principle consisted of the “Old Covenant” in the Mosaic episode, and had as its focus the formulation of the particular people and polity of the Israelites. The third covenantal principle consisted of the “New Covenant” of the New Testament, which had as its focus addressing a universal audience through inviting all of humanity into its covenantal Christo-centric relationship.<sup>123</sup> When the Patristics discussed covenant it was mostly in response to the heresies of Marcion and the Judaizers, and as a result they contributed little to the development of a new covenant-minded political constitution.<sup>124</sup> However, this trend was disrupted when the Church moved in a more imperial political and ecclesial direction. Constantine sought to synthesize theology and empire by establishing politically-sanctioned orthodoxy, and in response a number of theological developments were produced to address the relationship between the Church and a seemingly pyramidal

---

<sup>123</sup> Justin Martyr deals with covenant in ch. 47 of *Dialogue with Trypho*. Chapter 87 emphasizes the Noahic covenant and Jesus as the new covenant. Jerome deals with covenant in his *Epistles* 112–113, *CSEL*, 55–56, 381. He also deals with it in his commentary on Zachariah III, 9, *PL*, 25, 1503. As quoted by Elazar in *Covenant & Commonwealth*, 31, Clement of Alexandria “suggests that God established a covenant of philosophy for the Greeks, a covenant of the Mosaic law for the Jews, and a covenant of faith for the Christians.” Meanwhile, Augustine recognized only two covenants, the old and new. After Augustine, the Church’s emphasis on covenant saw a significant decline. See Justin Martyr, *Justin Martyr, the Dialogue With Trypho*, ed. Arthur Lukyn Williams (London: Macmillan, 1930); and Clement of Alexandria, *Clement of Alexandria: Stromateis*, ed. John Ferguson (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 327–328.

<sup>124</sup> Carl J. Friedrich, *Trends of Federalism: The Theory and Practice* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968). Friedrich placed Augustine, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Lactantius, and Eusebius within the covenant tradition, but it is fair to say their chief concern was theological orthodoxy, and not as much political constitutional formulation. See Elazar, *Covenant & Commonwealth*, 29–34, for a treatment on the covenant tradition among the patristics.

political institution of conquest and empire.<sup>125</sup> As the Roman Empire's dominion diminished in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Church was called upon to fill the gap in social welfare and administration, which furthered the urgency of political theological reflection.<sup>126</sup>

The direction that the Church took in addressing social and political questions was a combination of the conquest and organic models of origination and constitution. In the absence of the Roman Empire's centralization of power, the Vatican and the papacy filled the social and political void by expanding its temporal, political, and legal powers. As Elazar notes, "The movement toward pyramidal governance was furthered by the tendency of Church Fathers to turn for guidance to non-covenantal models of political association, especially the more organic and hierarchic models of the Greeks and Romans."<sup>127</sup> The tendency typified the Church's attitude towards constitution throughout the Dark and Medieval ages, which saw the papal powers continue towards an organic hierarchical model that tended to borrow heavily from Greco-Roman ideas.<sup>128</sup> Prior to the Reformation, "for more than a millennium in Europe, the covenantal or federal model of civil society was largely supplanted by an organic pyramidal model embodied in the

---

<sup>125</sup> A depiction of the various theological responses to the State and Church synthesis are evident among the disagreements that ultimately gave birth to the monastic movements of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. These movements were in part a criticism of the type of synthesis theology preached by Eusebius, and an attempt to maintain ecclesial purity.

<sup>126</sup> Augustine's *City of God* is representative of the attempt of the Church to theologize its social and political role in the gap produced by the Roman empire's decline.

<sup>127</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Commonwealth*, 35.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 40. Elazar writes, "Simply put, the organic model views civil society as the product of a kind of organic evolution from families, clans, tribes, and villages in which larger political institutions, constitutional relationships, and power alignments emerge in response to past precedents and changing circumstances, usually with a minimum of constitutional choice.... Such a polity is not construed as an 'artificial' association entered into voluntarily by compact, but as a higher, more comprehensive organism rooted in the apparent structure of nature."

*Corpus Christianum* and representing a mix of imperial, paternal, ecclesiastical, and feudal governments.”<sup>129</sup> Any actual conceptions of popular sovereignty or covenantal constitutions were quite rare, and usually arose as criticisms against the growing imperial hierarchical papacy.<sup>130</sup>

It was not until the Reformation that significant theological and political challenges arose that began to steer the Church away from the organic hierarchical model. The challenge to the temporal dominion and constitution of the imperial hierarchical papacy marks the beginning of the third major stage of the covenantal tradition. During the Reformation and Reformed covenantal stage, the temporal powers of the papacy and the Vatican were theologically challenged by the claims of princes and Protestant theologians. These challenges left a vacancy in political and social life that the Protestants were now in need of addressing. In response, the initiators and inheritors of the Reformation sought a revival of covenantalism to help explain the origination and constitution of their polities. In particular, the Reformed theological tradition sought to develop a politically-relevant federal covenantal theology, which contrasted with both the Vatican’s hierarchical model, as well as with some Protestant reformers such as Luther who seemed to continue the organic orientation of political Catholic Christendom by

---

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 40–41.

<sup>130</sup> Two notable examples of steps towards popular sovereignty are the works of Marsilius of Padua, and the Conciliar movement. A model of the imperial papacy is found in Gregory VII’s *Dictatus Papae*, which contains a sample of the nature of the imperial papacy where Gregory writes: “9. That the Pope is the only one whose feet are to be kissed by all princes.” Quoted from Oliver O’Donovan and Joan Lockwood O’Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100–1625* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 242.

replacing the imperial hierarchies of popes and emperors with petty organic hierarchies of pastors and princes.<sup>131</sup>

While Zwingli and Calvin are the usual names associated with this Reformed tradition, Zwingli's successor for the pastorate of the city of Zurich, Johann Heinrich Bullinger, was one of the first to develop a systematic covenantal political theology in his *A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God* (1534).<sup>132</sup>

Charles McCoy and Wayne Baker describe Bullinger's work as "the first treatise to be focused thematically on the covenant and contain political and theological views that are explicitly federal."<sup>133</sup> One of Bullinger's main contributions to the development of the federal covenantal tradition was to include the bilateral agreement between God, Adam, and Eve as the first universal covenant, followed by the Abrahamic covenant as particular to the Israelites. Bullinger argued that these two covenants were then followed by Jesus' fulfillment of said particular covenant, which opened the covenantal fellowship to the Gentiles.<sup>134</sup>

---

<sup>131</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Commonwealth*, 147. Elazar writes, "Within Protestantism, covenant emerged as the central concept of a school of Reformed (as opposed to Lutheran and Anglican) theology that became known as *Federaltheologie*, or Federalism. This federal or covenant theology movement derived its name from the Latin word *foedus*, meaning covenant, from which comes the English word federalism."

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 149 and 159. For a copy of Bullinger's work, see Heinrich Bullinger, *A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God*, in *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition*, eds. Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 99. Bullinger's treatment of the covenant idea is quite substantive. Some of the earlier proponents of political covenants include John Oecolampadius (1482–1531), Huldreich Zwingli (1484–1531), Konrad Pellikan (1478–1556), Leo Jud (1482–1542), Martin Bucer (1491–1551), Kaspar Hedio (1494–1552), and Philipp Melancthon (1497–1560). See Elazar, *Covenant & Commonwealth*, 158–168.

<sup>133</sup> McCoy and Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism*, 11.

<sup>134</sup> For another treatment of Bullinger's covenantal theology, see J. W. Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant: The Other Reformed Tradition* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1980).

For the adherents of federal theology like Bullinger, covenant became their major social, political, and theological principle.<sup>135</sup> As Elazar writes, for these thinkers, covenants were “the means by which God establishes authoritative relations with humanity, reveals his law, and manifests his extraordinarily gracious benevolence in light of man’s sinfulness.”<sup>136</sup> The Reformed covenantal theologians saw themselves in theological and political situations similar to those of exodus Israel, and as such, their formulation of a socio-political covenantalism shared much in common with the Hebraic model.<sup>137</sup> At the core of this Reformed rediscovery of covenant was a deep appreciation for the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. Their desire for scriptural authority correlated with a rise in Hebraic studies and new translations from the Hebrew texts that helped further the importance and appreciation of the covenantal idea. These discoveries led federal theologians to conceptualize two great covenants, with a covenant of works originating in God’s promise of eternal life on the condition of the observance of the law, and a covenant of grace (*foedus gratiutum*) originating in God’s incarnation. As Elazar writes, the federal theologians saw the *foedus gratiutum* as

---

<sup>135</sup> On Federal theology, see Frederick Carney, “Introductions to Johannes Althusius,” *The Politics of Johannes Althusius* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1965); William Johnson Everett, *God’s Federal Republic* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1988); and Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953).

<sup>136</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Commonwealth*, 171.

<sup>137</sup> On the Reformers seeing their positions as similar to the Israelites, see Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966). On the similarities between Protestant contributions of covenant and the Hebraic concept, see Champlin Burrage, *The Church Covenant Idea: Its Origins and Development* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publications Society, 1904); Peter Ymen DeJong, *The Covenant Idea in New England Theology, 1620–1847* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964); Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969); and E. Brooks Holifield, *The Covenant Sealed: The Development of Puritan Sacramental Theology in Old and New England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974).

uniting divinity and humanity in the person of Jesus Christ who thereby became the representative federal head of his spiritual community in a manner similar to Adam's role as humankind's natural head. This, for the Federalists, is God's outstandingly gracious covenantal act.<sup>138</sup>

It was a combination of their federal theology, and their commitment to the Hebraic texts and scriptural authority, that influenced the later colonial Pilgrims and Puritans, who became arguably the most politically-influential adherents of the covenantal tradition.<sup>139</sup>

### Political Covenant and Constitution in the Modern Era

The fourth major stage of the covenantal tradition consists of the continued influence of Reformed federal theology through the colonial frontiersmen known as the Pilgrims and Puritans. Both traditions sought to establish themselves in the frontier of the North American New World, and both shared deeply religious reasons for their exodus from Europe. While the two groups held some ecclesiological differences pertaining to the

---

<sup>138</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Commonwealth*, 175.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 177–178. The three great intellectual-social movements of the Reformed federalists are Zwingli & Bullinger in Zurich, Calvin in Geneva, and English Puritanism in England and the North American colonies. In this chapter, little has been said about Calvin, given space requirements, but it is worth noting that scholars debate whether Bullinger, the Puritans, and Calvin “represent different understandings of the biblical covenant, with the former emphasizing its mutuality, its call for a greater human responsibility, and its downplaying of rigorous predestination, while the latter emphasize God’s unilateral promise and a rigorous division between the elect and the reprobate.” This scholarly dispute arose when Perry Miller wrote “The Marrow of Puritan Divinity,” republished in *Errand into the Wilderness* (New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), and *The New England Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953). The scholarly debate was itself initiated by Leonard J. Trinterud, in “The Origins of Puritanism,” *Church History* 20 (March 1951): 37–57. As for Calvin’s own federal theology, he is said to stress more the *testamentum* rather than the *foedus*. While the subject merits its own extended treatment, it should here be briefly noted that although this chapter concerns itself with arriving at the Puritans, Calvin’s political influence was immense. His influence was so important on American political thought, that it led the great 19<sup>th</sup> century historian George Bancroft to comment, “He who will not honor the memory and respect the influence of Calvin knows but little of the origin of American liberty.” George Bancroft, quoted by Loraine Boettner in *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972), 389. Page Smith also noted Calvin’s influence, writing that “The American Revolution ... received a substantial part of its theological and philosophical underpinnings from John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and much of its social theory from the Puritan Revolution

degree of needed separation from the Church of England, the religious dissenters shared the experience of arriving as first wave English colonists in a land whose distance and development often required them to originate and constitute their own political institutions.<sup>140</sup> As Donald Lutz notes, “This desire plus the structure of their churches led them to use self-written covenants as part of their political definition.”<sup>141</sup> These traditions both shared and advanced Reformed federal theology, and esteemed Puritan scholar Perry Miller went as far as to call the covenant idea “the marrow of Puritan divinity.”<sup>142</sup>

At the core of Puritan federal theology was a commitment to returning to Scripture as an authoritative source for organizing socio-political life. To this effort, the early 16<sup>th</sup> century Tyndale and Geneva English Bible translations aided the reemergence of the covenant tradition as the Puritans sought to translate the Hebrew *berith* and the

---

of 1640–1660.” For more on this influence, see Page Smith, *Religious Origins of the American Revolution* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 2.

<sup>140</sup> While both traditions inherited Calvin’s teachings and Reformed federal theology, the main difference between the Pilgrims and the Puritans was eschatological in nature. The Pilgrims were separatist Puritans who had separated from the Church of England to form their own congregations. As a result, the Pilgrims were often punished by officials with jail or execution. In response, a number of Separatists fled England in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century for religious freedom in the Netherlands. Later, a number of them migrated to America in 1620 onboard the *Mayflower*. Their separation from the Church of England resulted in a need to originate and constitute their particular congregations, and the Pilgrims appealed to the covenantal idea for warrant. Whereas the Pilgrims separated from the Anglican Church, the larger group of the Puritans were non-separating Anglicans who sought to maintain Anglican membership and cleanse it of any remnants of Roman Catholicism. However, their efforts ultimately failed, and they too were forced to migrate as colonists to the New World in the name of religious liberty and entrepreneurial opportunity. Their initial arrival into North America came under the leadership of John Winthrop who, in 1630, led around one thousand English Puritans to establish the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Given this history, I may use the term Puritans throughout the chapter as a representative summary of the federal covenantal theological views the Puritans and Pilgrims traditions held in common.

<sup>141</sup> Lutz, *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution*, xxii.

<sup>142</sup> Perry Miller, “The Marrow of Puritan Divinity,” in *Errand into the Wilderness* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1964).

Greek *diathēkē* as the English word “covenant.”<sup>143</sup> They also tended to translate *ekklēsia* as congregation instead of church, which further supported the covenantal overtones of the Old and New Testament’s covenant tradition. For these reasons, the proto-Puritan William Tyndale and his Puritan descendants were able to communicate conceptions of covenant that were remarkably similar to Hebraic articulations. As Tyndale wrote, “If we meek ourselves to God, to keep all his laws, after the example of Christ, then God hath bound himself unto us, to keep and make good all the mercies promised in Christ throughout all the Scripture.”<sup>144</sup> It was their emphasis on scriptural revelation, rather than ecclesiastical law, which Elazar explains “became a basis for construing the Bible as a kind of higher law constitution and, in turn, for the idea of human constitutionalism.”<sup>145</sup>

Whereas the topic of political constitution was sparsely treated in the New Testament and the Early Church, the great contribution of the federalists and the Puritans were to develop a Christian socio-political covenantal constitutionalism. The connection

---

<sup>143</sup> In older translations, the words *berith* and *diathēkē* were translated as “testament,” which tended to undermine or hide the covenantal overtones of Scriptural passages. Witnessing seemed to be emphasized over covenantal hearkening.

<sup>144</sup> Quoted by Michael McGiffert, “William Tyndale’s Conception of Covenant,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 32, no. 2 (April 1981): 170.

<sup>145</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Commonwealth*, 241. A number of other Puritans and theologians convey language more directly constitutional in tone. Richard Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity I*, ch. 10, writes, “Two foundations there are which bear up public societies: the one, a natural inclination whereby all men desire sociable life and fellowship; the other, an order expressly or secretly agreed upon touching the manner of their union in living together. . . . To take away all such mutual grievances, injuries and wrongs, there was no way but only by growing into composition and agreement amongst themselves, by ordaining some kind of government public, and by yielding themselves subject thereunto; that unto whom they granted authority to rule and govern, by them the peace, tranquility and happy estate of the rest might be procured.” John Milton writes, *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), writes, “The power of kings and magistrates is only derivative, transferred and committed to them in trust from the people to the common good of them all, to whom the power yet remains fundamentally, and cannot be taken from them without a violation of their natural birthright.” Henry Jacob, as quoted by P. Zagorin, in *A History of Political Thought in the English Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1954), writes, “by a free mutual consent of Believers joining and *covenanting* to live as members of a holy Society together in all religious

between the two was so interrelated for the federalists that Althusius went as far as using them interchangeably, writing “covenant or constitution” was that “by which the supreme magistrate is constituted by the *Ephors* with the consent of the associated bodies.”<sup>146</sup> If socio-political horizontal covenants relied on the consent of the people to make them, then a degree of moral legitimacy and popular “sovereignty” seemed to be implied by the covenantal idea. Thus, some of the earliest proponents of the federal covenantal idea were also often the earliest proponents of popular sovereignty, and these ideas had further implications for how the two political faces of power and justice functioned in a covenantal constitutional society.<sup>147</sup> The covenantal constitutional tradition provided a framework to understand a number of important related political issues, and covenantal obligations spawned political notions of rights, liberty, freedom, federalism, democracy, limits, checks & balances, constitutionalism, and popular consent. When the Puritans found themselves in frontiers that lacked political and social institutions—such as 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Colonial America—they appealed to the covenantal idea as a device to originate their polities, and build constitutions that incorporated and developed power and authority-related political ideas such as rights, liberty, and democracy. Their covenantal constitutionalism ultimately came to influence the United States’ later solution of vesting a type of popular sovereignty within the people, and the covenantal tradition did this

---

and virtuous duties as Christ and his Apostles did institute and practice in the Gospel. By such *free mutual consent* also all Civil Perfect Corporations did first begin.”

<sup>146</sup> Althusius, *Politica Methodice Digesta*, 118. Althusius argued that the origin of socio-political society was covenantal, which led him to argue for a popular sovereignty that was built upon the obligations and standards in God’s moral law.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 117. For an example of how Althusius’ covenantal convictions effect an understanding of power, see Althusius, where he writes, “power . . . is established for the utility of those who are ruled, not of those who rule, and the utility of the people . . . does not in the least require unlimited power.”

through influencing the ideas and documents that inspired and articulated the American Revolution.<sup>148</sup> As Lutz writes on the influence of covenant and constitution in America, “Local government in colonial America was the seedbed of American constitutionalism—a simple fact insufficiently appreciated by those writing in political theory.”<sup>149</sup> Pilgrims and Puritans established and maintained their local governments through the seminal idea of theopolitical covenants that often took written form, and “The concepts of equality, popular sovereignty, majority rule, representation, and constitutionalism are a few of those whose meaning and origins can be illuminated by reference to these documents.”<sup>150</sup>

The influence of the Puritan’s federal covenantal tradition during the periods leading up to the American Revolution is evident in the numerous theopolitical covenants that established colonial polities, and the numerous colonial pulpits where messages were preached that articulated political and covenantal convictions. As H. Richard Niebuhr notes, “one of the great common patterns that guided men in the period when American democracy was formed ... was the pattern of the covenant or of federal society.”<sup>151</sup> When the Puritans and Pilgrims escaped their former governments in the hopes of arriving to the New World to establish new societies, they proceeded to practice in frontier-realities

---

<sup>148</sup>For an impressive treatment of the influence of federal theology and Puritanism on the American Revolution, see Donald Lutz and Jack D. Warden, *A Covenanted People: The Religious Traditions and Origins of American Constitutionalism* (Providence, RI: John Carter Brown Library, 1987). Also see Daniel J. Elazar, *The American Constitutional Tradition* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).

<sup>149</sup> Lutz, *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution*, xx.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii–xix.

<sup>151</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, “The Idea of Covenant and American Democracy,” *Church History* 23 (June 1954), p. 129.

what the social contract theorists proposed in theory a generation later.<sup>152</sup> Not only did the Puritans draw a covenantal political theory from Scripture that guided their formulations on constitution, but they actually covenanted and constituted real socio-political societies in the New World before Hobbes and Locke ever wrote *Leviathan* or *Two Treatises on Government*; or in some cases, were even born.<sup>153</sup> That is a significant observation for political science. As Perry Miller notes,

To the [Puritans] the basic idea was the covenant ... primarily a grandiose theological conception, it became also a theory of society.... In the Puritan formulation it held that a body politic could be constituted only out of the consent of the governed, yet also out of an agreement not to terms of the people's own devising but only to the pre-stated terms of God's eternal law of justice.<sup>154</sup>

In virtually every town they established in New England, Pilgrims and Puritans instituted their churches, marriages, and civil governments through covenants.<sup>155</sup> The influence was so widespread that by 1776 over "half of the new nation's church congregations were based on covenant principles."<sup>156</sup>

One of the often overlooked yet primary sources of influence of America's covenantal tradition were the Puritan pastors and their pulpits. Although modern critics

---

<sup>152</sup> See Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*, for a discussion on how the Puritans preceded in theory and practice the social contract ideas of Locke and others. In the work, Perry argues that the Puritans preceded Locke by at least a generation.

<sup>153</sup> The *Mayflower Covenant* (1620) is an example of the actualization in theopolitical reality what the political theorist formulated in theory nearly thirty years later. John Quincy Adams went as far as to refer to the *Mayflower Covenant* as "perhaps the only instance in human history of that positive, original social compact which speculative philosophers have imagined as the only legitimate source of government." See John Quincy Adams, *The Writings of John Quincy Adams, 1767-1848* (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1968).

<sup>154</sup> Perry Miller quoted in Elazar, *Covenant & Constitutionalism*, 20. Also see Perry Miller, *The American Puritans* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956), for additional treatment by Miller on the Puritan's usage of the covenantal political idea.

<sup>155</sup> Ralph Barton Perry, *Puritanism and Democracy* (New York, NY: Vanguard Press, 1944), and Virginia Anderson, *New England's Generation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>156</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Constitutionalism*, 29.

often portray the Puritans as rugged individualists, they were actually greatly concerned with society and the common good. As Puritan Scholar Leland Ryken summarizes, Puritans viewed society as “a whole network of interdependent people,” and this network was primarily identified by their covenanted ecclesial communities.<sup>157</sup> Colonial clergyman and later Harvard president Samuel Willard typified the communal emphasis in a 1694 election sermon where he stated “every man in his place owes himself to the good of the whole; and if he doth not so devote himself, he is unjust.”<sup>158</sup> The Puritan’s communal emphasis culminated in understanding that the individual’s participation in society originated within a “covenant or contract,” and these covenantal participants were granted rights and duties in upholding the common good that extended beyond the ecclesial community and into the political.<sup>159</sup> Often, church covenants simultaneously functioned as the origin of ecclesial and political societies, and the Puritan ecclesial notion of covenant and community lent itself heavily to the development of related political ideas such as popular consent. Such was the case in 1630 onboard the *Arabella*, where Governor John Winthrop laid out in his sermon “A Model of Christian Charity,” which served as a covenant for the Holy Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Winthrop proclaimed it was “the nature and essence of every society to be knit together by some covenant, either expressed or implied ... by mutual consent.” Therefore, the *Arabella*’s

---

<sup>157</sup> Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1986), 175.

<sup>158</sup> Samuel Willard, *The Character of a Good Ruler*, (Swarthmore, PA: Swarthmore.edu), <http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/bdorseyl/41docs/22-wil.html>, Accessed April 10, 2013.

<sup>159</sup> Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 176.

passengers “entered into a covenant with Him for this work; we have taken out a commission, the Lord hath given us leave to draw our own articles.”<sup>160</sup>

The pulpit’s ability to distribute these covenant-inferred political ideas led to their widespread popularization across the colonies. John Davenport, a Puritan pastor and the co-founder of the colony of New Haven, provides a representative example of the Puritan pulpit popularizing political ideas such as consent of the government. He states in a sermon that people consent to their rulers “conditionally ... so as, if the condition be violated, they may resume their power of choosing another.”<sup>161</sup> The notions of a covenantal society rooted in the common good and the consent of the governed was a central characteristic of American political thought. Thus, John Cotton, the preeminent minister and theologian of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, stated that “all civil relations are founded in covenant.”<sup>162</sup> The social and political theories ultimately adopted by the Founding Fathers were long before popularized and championed by the Puritan’s pulpit, and this contributed significantly to the development of a national *ethos* that enabled and empowered American independence.<sup>163</sup>

---

<sup>160</sup> John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity,” in *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings*, eds. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1938), 195–199.

<sup>161</sup> John Davenport, *A Commencement Sermon*, as quoted in Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 184.

<sup>162</sup> Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 176.

<sup>163</sup> Appendix 11, “Symbol: America’s Early Political Sermons.” Also see Table 9, “Symbol: America’s Declaration of Independence, and Mayhew’s ‘A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance,’” for a comparison between the Declaration and a famous high-circulated political sermon by Pastor Mayhew. For examples of later politically important sermons that influenced the *ethos* and experience of America’s Independence and constitution, see Ellis Sandoz, *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730–1805* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1991). Sandoz provides a significant contribution to understanding the type of political theological culture being propagated by the pulpit. Particular sermons worth investigating include Isaac Backus, “An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty,” ch. 11; Charles Chauncy, “Civil Magistrates Must Be Just, Ruling in the Fear of God,” ch. 5; Samuel Cooper “A Sermon on the Day of the Commencement of the Constitution,” ch. 21; and Jonathan Mayhew, “The Snare Broken,” ch. 8, in *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era: 1730–1805: Vol.*

In addition to the influence of the Puritan's pulpit, a number of important political covenants were developed by Pilgrims and Puritans to originate and constitute their particular frontier polities. One of the earliest examples which represented the usage of written political covenants was the *Mayflower Covenant* (1620).<sup>164</sup> The document represents a clear attempt by early colonial pilgrims to utilize a theopolitical covenant to originate their particular polity, and to ground the development of a self-governing society's "Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions, and Offices."<sup>165</sup> The document itself was the product of a group of English Pilgrim separatists who left Holland onboard the *Mayflower* in 1620 with the goal of establishing a community in the New World that maintained their cultural and religious values. At the end of their voyage, the *Mayflower* and its passengers found themselves blown two hundred miles north of their intended landing point, which meant they were operating in a frontier outside of any existing political authority. William Bradford, who would later become their colonial governor, convinced the men onboard the *Mayflower* to enter into a "covenant" that would establish

---

1. Also see my child's namesake, John Leland, "The Rights of Conscience Inalienable," ch. 37, in *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era: 1730–1805: Vol. 2*.

<sup>164</sup> Commonly referred to as the *Mayflower Compact*. For survey and summary of the *Mayflower Covenant*, see Leonard O. Goenaga, "The Mayflower Compact," in *Encyclopedia of the Atlantic World, 1400–1900: Europe, Africa, and the Americas in the Age of Exploration, Trade, and Empires*, ed. David Head (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2018), 399–403. The document will be referred to as the *Mayflower Covenant* instead of the *Mayflower Compact* for its obvious covenantal nature, as well as additional reasons noted in the cited encyclopedia entry. It was not until Alden Bradford published *A Topographical Description of Duxborough, in the Country of Plumouth* in 1793 that the document was actually called a "compact." Rather, the document refers to itself with the synonymous terms "combination" and "covenant." As such, *Mayflower Covenant* and *Mayflower Compact* may be used interchangeably.

<sup>165</sup> Lyon Sharman, *Cape Cod Journal of the Pilgrim Fathers: Reprinted from Mourt's Relation* (New York, NY: The Roycrofters, 1920), 5. *Mourt's Relation* is one of the earliest works that contains the full text of the covenant, and it describes the situation for the *Mayflower Covenant's* creation as a scenario where "it was thought good there should be an association and agreement, that we should combine together in one body, and to submit to such government and governors as we should by common consent agree to make and choose."

“the first foundation of their government in this place.”<sup>166</sup> The *Mayflower Covenant’s*

brevity and representative importance of illustrating the colonial theopolitical covenantal tradition merits quoting it in full. *The Mayflower Covenant* reads,

In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign Lord King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland king, defender of the faith, etc. Having undertaken for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith, and the honour of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia; do by these presents solemnly and mutually, *in the presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic*, for our better ordering and preservation, and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to *enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, offices from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony*: unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names, Cape Cod, 11<sup>th</sup> of November, in the year of the reign of our sovereign Lord King James of England, France, and Ireland 18<sup>th</sup>, and of Scotland 54<sup>th</sup>, *Anno Domini* 1620.<sup>167</sup>

In comparison with English provincial and colonial charters, the document expressed the right of a free people to self-governance, to elect their leaders, to draft their constitution, and to pass their own laws. Ultimately, the *Mayflower Covenant* bound those who sealed it with their signatures to be one political body that created a self-governing civil society whose members could appoint their chosen political leaders and frame their community’s laws.<sup>168</sup> While the document was not itself a constitution which outlined a specific legal code, it did enable the people the authority to establish their own constitution and laws based on the needs of the “general good of the Colony.”<sup>169</sup> *The Mayflower Covenant*

---

<sup>166</sup> William Bradford, *Bradford’s History of Plymouth Plantation, 1606–1646*, ed. William T Davis (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, 1964), 106.

<sup>167</sup> Goenaga, “Mayflower Compact,” 401. Quoted originally from Sharman, *The Cape Cod Journal of the Pilgrim Fathers*. Italics added for emphasis.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Bradford, *Bradford’s History of Plymouth Plantation*, 107.

became the foundation for the development of the colony's constitution, and its authority was evident years later in 1636 when the colony placed a copy of the document on the first page of a codification of their laws, and described it as "a solemn & binding combination."<sup>170</sup>

The *Mayflower Covenant* was by no means an isolated and alien historical event by the early religious colonists to utilize covenants to originate and constitute their polities. In *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution*, Donald Lutz supplies an assortment of documents to evidence how common and foundational the political covenantal idea was in establishing actual polities in Colonial America, and thus ultimately influencing the formulation of the United States.<sup>171</sup> Lutz' reasons for producing the work were motivated in part by the general absence in mainstream academia of attributing the colonial covenantal tradition—such as evidenced in the "Mayflower Covenant"—as a seminal contributor to the American constitutional idea. Lutz argues that this unfortunate reality is evident in mainstream books dealing with American constitutional history, which often lack references to the many colonial documents written by Americans. Instead, they seem to favor brief references to the Magna Carta, the English Constitution, and the Declaration of Independence.<sup>172</sup> If the

---

<sup>170</sup> Nick Bunker, *Making Haste from Babylon: The "Mayflower" Pilgrims and Their World* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 282.

<sup>171</sup> Donald S. Lutz, *Documents of Political Foundation Written by Colonial Americans from Covenant to Constitution* (Philadelphia, PA: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1986); Donald S. Lutz, "From Covenant to Constitution," in *Covenant, Polity, and Constitutionalism*, eds. Daniel J. Elazar and John Kincaid (Lanham MD: Center for the Study of Federalism and University Press of America, 1986); and Donald S. Lutz and Jack D. Warden, *A Covenanted People: The Religious Tradition and the Origins of American Constitutionalism* (Providence, RI: The John Carter Brown Library, 1987).

<sup>172</sup> Lutz, *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution*, xx. Lutz states his work's thesis as follows, "If the authors of these books discuss the source of American constitutional theory beyond these

mainstream works manage to mention influences beyond these references, they usually only cite European thinkers such as John Locke, and ignore the seminal colonial Puritans and their pastors. As it relates to the existence of these political covenants and constitutions during Colonial America, Lutz writes,

in indigenous American developments these were in place before Locke, who conventionally is given credit for the idea of the two-fold founding, was even born. By paying careful attention to the language used as a guide to the myths that form the founding story of the American people, we can see even more clearly how covenantalism led to constitutionalism in colonial America and the United States.<sup>173</sup>

---

few documents, they will almost inevitably mention European thinkers, John Locke being prominent among them. It is the purpose of this volume to end such neglect and reverse such attitudes.”

<sup>173</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Constitutionalism*, 33. In Lutz, *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution*, xxvi–xxvii, Lutz helpfully defines the differences between a contract, a compact, and a covenant. He defines a contract as a term that “usually implied an agreement with mutual responsibilities on a specific matter; that is, a contract implied a restricted commitment such as in a business matter and involved relatively small groups of people. The contract could be enforced by law but did not have the status of law” (p. xxvi).

In contrast, a compact “was a mutual agreement or understanding that was more in the nature of a standing rule that, if it did not always have the status of a law, often had a similar effect. A compact implied an agreement that affected the entire community in some way, or relations between communities. The word had the root meaning of ‘knitting together’ or ‘bringing the component parts closely and firmly into a whole.’ A compact, therefore, was an agreement creating something that we would today recognize as a community” (pp. xxvi–xxvii).

Finally, a covenant “could be viewed as having two distinct though related meanings. As a legal term in England, it referred to a formal agreement with legal validity made under the seal of the Crown. This denoted an agreement of a serious nature witnessed by the highest authority. The religious counterpart of this secular or civil covenant was any agreement established or secured by God. The formal agreement made and subscribed to by members of a congregational church in order to constitute themselves as a distinct religious community had God as the witness and securer of the agreement. A religious covenant thus was essentially an oath, and if it established a political community, political obligation was secured by the oath rather than by merely resting upon the fact of consent having been given. Note that the civil and religious meanings of covenant were related in that each was characterized by being witnessed and therefore secured by the highest relevant authority” (p. xxvii).

Furthermore, the relationship between covenant and compact were direct. Both contained elements of consent and both established a community, however whereas a compact simply required consent, covenant enacted oath-bound obligations. A final note worth making is that covenant was often used simultaneously with a number of other terms to refer to the same idea, such as “combination.” See Lutz’ work on pp. xxxi–xxxv for additional treatments on related terms such as agreement, fundamentals, ordinance, patent, charter, and constitution.

In support of his claim, Lutz' work in *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution* provides an impressive collection of early political documents. On the importance of these covenantal documents Lutz states,

Using covenants such as the charters of the great London trading companies, the Mayflower Company, the Fundamental Order of Connecticut, and, ultimately, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of 1787, as well as the myriad little compacts that created towns, congregations, and commercial enterprises, those settlers created new social and political institutions to meet their needs “from scratch.”<sup>174</sup>

Lutz exposes this “myriad [of] little compacts” by collecting a representative sample of seventy-four documents between 1610 and 1721 from eleven of the thirteen colonies.<sup>175</sup>

The covenantal documents range in their complexity and scope. *The Salem Covenant of 1629* is the shortest of these colonial attempts to establish a community through covenant, and it articulates the general covenantal idea where it states in full, “We Covenant with the Lord and one with another; and do bind ourselves in the presence of God, to walk together in all His ways, according as he is pleased to reveal himself unto us in his Blessed word of truth.”<sup>176</sup> Additional examples of more politically obvious colonial covenants include New Hampshire’s “Agreement of the Settlers at Exeter in New Hampshire” (1639); Massachusetts’ “Dedham Covenant” (1636); Rhode Island’s

---

<sup>174</sup> Lutz, *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution*, 47.

<sup>175</sup> Appendix 8, “Praxis: Political Covenant & Constitution,” for selections from some noteworthy colonial theopolitical covenants.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 35. Spelling has been modified to reflect modern English. The complete text and spelling can be found in Williston Walker, *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* (Boston, MA: The Pilgrim Press, 1960), 197. As the number of the community’s non-church members grew, the community deemed *The Salem Covenant of 1629* was in need of revision and renewal. This led them to develop *The Enlarged Salem Covenant of 1636*, which specified in much greater detail the rights and responsibilities of community members (p. 57–59). It is noteworthy that the behavior seems to emulate that of the Israelites to renew and revise their political covenants. For a copy of the covenantal renewal in the original spelling, see Walker, *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism*, 116–118.

“Government of Pocasset” covenant (1638); and Connecticut’s “Guilford Covenant” (1639).<sup>177</sup> Examples of related colonial constitutions include Massachusetts’ “Pilgrim

---

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. Although it is beyond the scope of this work to treat each of these covenants in depth, it is worth highlighting samples of their usage of the political covenantal idea. New Hampshire’s *Agreement of the Settlers at Exeter in New Hampshire* (1639) is a rather typical example of the political covenant that shared much in common with the *Mayflower Covenant*; interestingly, the members of Exeter likely never heard or read the *Mayflower Covenant* (pp. 3–4). The most obvious example of its covenantal identity is its implementation of the oath “do in the name of Christ & in the sight of God,” which constitutes the covenantal agreement of its membership. As for the purpose of the covenant, the document states, “that we should not live without wholesome laws & government amongst us, of which we are altogether destitute; do in the name of Christ & in the sight of God *combine* ourselves together, to erect & set up amongst us such government as shall be to our best discerning, agreeable to the will of God, professing ourselves subjects to our Sovereign Lord King Charles, according to the liberties of our English Colony of the Massachusetts & *binding ourselves solemnly* by the grace & help of Christ & in his name & fear to submit ourselves to such godly & Christian laws as are established in the realm of England to our best knowledge, & to all other such laws which shall upon good grounds, be made & enacted amongst us according to God, that we may live quietly & peaceably together, in all godliness and honesty” (pp. 3–4). These and the following quotes have been rendered into common English. While editors often end their version of the covenant here, it proceeds in two parts to supply the oaths made by elders & rulers, and the people, which affirm the covenantal nature of the document even more.

Massachusetts’ *Dedham Covenant* (1636) represents another example, besides the *Mayflower Covenant*, of colony’s attempt to ground community and polity in the covenantal idea. The covenantal idea is evident in the document’s first section, which states, “One: We whose names are here unto subscribed do, in the fear and reverence of our Almighty God, *mutually and severally promise amongst ourselves* and each other to profess and practice one truth according to that most perfect rule, the foundation whereof is everlasting love” (p. 68). What is particularly interesting of the *Dedham Covenant* is that it sought, as Lutz writes, “to minimize the need for governmental intrusion into community affairs. In this instance section 3 lays out a process of mediation to regulate social conflict” (p. 68). Thus, the third section states, “That if at any time differences shall rise between parties of our said town, that then such party or parties shall presently refer all such differences unto some one, two, or three others of our said society to be fully accorded and determined without any further delay, if it possibly may be” (p. 68).

Rhode Island’s *Government of Pocasset* (1638) was its second colony, yet the first established by a political covenant. The first established colony was actually the product of Roger Williams and his *Providence Agreement* (1637), however Williams’ religious convictions prevented him from attaching an oath to his agreement (Matt 5:36–37), which makes Williams’ agreement more of a compact than a covenant. With the establishment at Aquidneck (Pocasset), the members opted for the usage of an oath that marked it as covenantal. The introduction of the covenant states, “We whose names are underwritten do here solemnly in the presence of Jehovah incorporate ourselves into a Body Politic and as He shall help, will submit our persons, lives and estates unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and the Lord of lords and to all those perfect and most absolute laws of His given us in His holy word of truth, to be guided and judged thereby (Exod 24:3–4; 2 Chr 11:3; 2 Kgs 11:17)” (p. 163). What is especially interesting about the *Government of Pocasset* is that, unlike other political covenants, it supplied three scriptural verses as support of its endeavor. The first of these verses describes that moment of the Mosaic Covenant where “all the people answered with one voice and said, ‘All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do.’ And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD” (Exod 24:3–4). The *Government of Pocasset* covenant seems to directly relate its political origination with the covenantal and constitutional idea and consent of the Israelite Sinai polity. The third passage also references a covenantal renewal and horizontal political covenant where Jehoiada “made a covenant between the LORD and the king and people, that they should

Code of Law” (1636); Massachusetts’ “The Massachusetts Body of Liberties” (1641); Connecticut’s “Fundamental Orders of Connecticut” (1639); and Pennsylvania’s “Charter of Liberties and Frame of Government of the Province of Pennsylvania in America” (1682).<sup>178</sup> These various influential political documents directly or indirectly applied

---

be the LORD’s people, and also between the king and the people” (2 Kgs 11:17). As for the second passage of 2 Chr 11:3, it simply represents a word from God that came to Shemaiah, but does not seem related to any covenantal idea. I believe this may have been a typo. Lutz derives his copy of the *Government of Pocasset* from J. R. Bartlett, *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England: Vol 1, 1636 to 1663* (Providence, RI: A. Crawford Greene and Brother, State Printers, 1856), 52–53. I checked the Bartlett source, and it seems to also quote 2 Chr 11:3. This puzzled me, as the verse just does not mention covenant, and it does not match the other two quotes. Without being able to know whether the typo came from Bartlett’s edition, or from the original, I believe I figured out that the intended passage is supposed to be 1 Chr 11:3, which contains an important political covenant related to David’s anointment. It states, “So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD. And they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD by Samuel” (1 Chr 11:3). Surely, that fits better alongside the other two verses.

Connecticut’s *Guilford Covenant* (1639) is another example of a covenant created onboard a ship, however the colonists produced this document before ever even arriving to America. The covenant in full states: “Individuals who, the next September, purchase Menunkatuck, afterwards Guilford, enter into the following *covenant*: We whose names are hereunder written, intending by God’s gracious permission to plant ourselves in New England, and, if it may be, in the southerly part about Quinnipiack, we do faithfully promise each to each, for ourselves and our families, and those that belong to us, that we will, the Lord assisting us, sit down and join ourselves together in one entire plantation, and to be helpful each to the other in any common work, according to every man’s ability, and as need shall require” (p. 216).

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. Massachusetts’ *Pilgrim Code of Law* (1636) is far more than simply a code of law (pp. 61–67). The document lays out the foundation for the community’s values and politics, and Lutz states it “is a candidate for the honor of being the first true written constitution in the modern world” (p. 61). Furthermore, the document characterizes American constitutionalism’s pattern of blending American and English forms. However, the *Pilgrim Code of Law*’s most important contribution to our thesis is that it self-identifies its constitutional project as building upon earlier covenantal elements and symbols. An example of the presence of these covenantal elements is evident in the *Pilgrim Code of Law*’s preface, which quotes a version of the *Plymouth Agreement* (1636) in the second paragraph. The covenantal elements are further present throughout the document in its usage of oaths for governors, freemen, assistants, citizens, and constables. As stated in the oath for any person residing within the government, “You shall also submit to and obey such good and wholesome laws, ordinances, and officers as are or shall be established within the several limits thereof. So help you God, who is the God of truth and punisher of falsehood” (p. 65). One final comment worth mentioning is that at this point in its history, Plymouth Colony was composed of several towns, which meant the colonial government established in the *Pilgrim Code of Law* functioned as one of modern Western civilizations first systems of federal government.

Massachusetts’ *The Massachusetts Body of Liberties* (1641) is a second constitution worth referencing (pp. 70–87). At this point in the colony’s history, a need arose to systematize its legal code. *The Massachusetts Body of Liberties* represents their attempt to systematize their law, which consisted of the adoption of a legal code created by a devout Puritan lawyer named Nathaniel Ward. On the nature and importance of this adoption, Lutz notes that “Ward drew heavily on the code of law proposed by John Cotton in 1636, which was based on Mosaic principles, and on the English common law. The result of this

---

blend was *The Massachusetts Body of Liberties*, one of the most important and underappreciated documents in American history” (p. 70). The constitutional document exhibits the broader covenantal influence where it states in its introduction, “We do therefore this day religiously and unanimously decree and confirm these following Rites, liberties, and privileges concerning our Churches, and Civil State to be respectively impartial and inviolably enjoyed and observed throughout our Jurisdiction forever” (p. 91). The document then proceeds to establish ninety-eight rights and principles for their polity’s constitution. What is especially interesting about these principles is that a number of them seemed to predate the U.S. Bill of Rights by over a century. As Lutz summarizes, “The *U.S. Bill of Rights* a century and a half later would contain twenty-six specific rights in its ten provisions. At most, seven of these rights can be traced to *Magna Carta*, the English *Petition of Right* (1628), or the *English Bill of Rights* (1689). Seven others can be traced in their origin to the *Massachusetts Body of Liberties*, which also included the seven English-originated rights and four more rights that were first codified in Massachusetts prior to 1641. All but three of the remaining rights in the *U.S. Bill of Rights* would originate in other colonial documents. . . . The *Massachusetts Body of Liberties* is considered the first post-medieval, or modern, bill of rights” (p. 70).

Connecticut’s *Fundamental Orders of Connecticut* (1639) was one of the earliest and longest lasting constitutions among the colonies (pp. 210–215). It served as the constitution of Connecticut for a total of 177 years, and exhibited another example of a constitutionally established federal political system. The covenantal constitutional character of the document is articulated in its first paragraph, which states, “Forasmuch as it hath pleased the Almighty God by the wise disposition of his divine prudence so to Order and dispose of things that we the Inhabitants and Residents of Windsor, Hartford and Wethersfield are now cohabiting and dwelling in and upon the River of Connecticut and the Lands thereunto adjoining; and Well knowing where a people are gathered together the word of God requires that to maintain the peace and union of such a people there should be an orderly and decent Government established according to God, or order and dispose of the affairs of the people at all seasons as occasion shall require; do therefore associate and conjoin ourselves to be one Public State or Commonwealth; and do, for ourselves and our Successors and such as shall be adjoined to us at any time hereafter, enter into *Combination* and Confederation together, to maintain and pursue the liberty and purity of the gospel of our Lord Jesus which we now profess, as also the discipline of the Churches, which according to the truth of the said gospel is now practiced amongst us; As also in our Civil Affairs to be guided and governed according to such Laws, Rules, Orders and decrees as shall be made, ordered & decreed, as follows” (p. 211). An additional contribution of the *Fundamental Orders of Connecticut* is the emphasis it places on oaths for the establishment of governments and governmental officials. The *Fundamental orders of Connecticut* is a candidate for consideration as the first full American constitution, and it is also worth noting that the colonial adopters of this constitution also accepted the Mosaic law as the basis of Connecticut’s legal system.

Pennsylvania’s *Charter of Liberties and Frame of Government of the Province of Pennsylvania in America* (1682) is a brilliant articulation of biblical and political principles articulated by William Penn, the founder of the Pennsylvania colony (pp. 271–296). The document also contained a number of noteworthy innovations, such as term limits, separation of powers, an amendment process, a bill of rights, free economic development, religious liberty, popular sovereignty and democracy, and even a bicameral legislature that provided a precursory model for the U.S. Senate. Furthermore, Penn’s innovations are derived from a mature political theological foundation. Penn opens the preface with a discussion of man’s granted dominion in the Garden, and then the entrance of political government in response to man’s Fall and depravity. Penn develops this line of thought to establish the purpose of government, writing, “This settles the divine right of government beyond exception, and that for two ends: first, to terrify evil doers: secondly, to cherish those that do well; which gives government a life beyond corruption, and makes it as durable in the world, as good men shall be. So that government seems to me a part of religion itself, a thing sacred in its institution and end” (pp. 272–273). Penn then continues to lay out his reasons for the particular frame and model of the constitution’s policy, writing, “Thirdly. I know what is said by the several admirers of *monarchy*, *aristocracy* and *democracy*, which are the *rule of one*, *a few*, and *many*, and are the three common ideas of government, when men discourse on the subject. But I choose to solve the controversy

covenant as a political idea to support the origination and constitution of their socio-political institutions.<sup>179</sup>

The fifth and most modern stage in the history of covenant as a political idea is the alleged secular compact and contract stage. This stage represents the secularization of the covenantal political idea, as well as the covenantal idea's indirect influence through the proponents of social contract theory and America's Founding Fathers. The modern era of political theory is often attributed to representatives such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, who allegedly produced a secularized "New Politics" that embraced Enlightenment ideals by detaching politics from theological dependency.<sup>180</sup> In particular, the theory is purported to have secularized the covenant tradition into civil compacts and contracts.<sup>181</sup> Elazar notes that the unfortunate result of this alleged secularization is that

---

with this small distinction, and it belongs to all three: *Any government is free to the people under it (whatever be the frame) where the laws rule, and the people are a party to those laws*, and more than this is tyranny, oligarchy, or confusion" (p. 273). Furthermore, part of Penn's brilliance is that his political theology grounds a political realism that understand "Wherefore governments rather depend upon men, than men upon governments. Let men be good, and the government cannot be bad; if it be ill, they will cure it. But, if men be bad, let the government be never so good, they will endeavor to warp and spoil it to their turn" (p. 274). Penn closes his constitution's preface with a firm affirmation of popular sovereignty, and a dependency on God's providence, writing, "*To support power in reverence with the people, and to secure the people from the abuse of power*, that they may be free by their just obedience, and the magistrates honorable, for their just administration: for liberty, without obedience is confusion, and obedience without liberty is slavery.... I humbly pray and hope *God* will please to make the lot of this Pennsylvania. Amen" (pp. 274–275).

<sup>179</sup> For further treatment of the influence of the political covenantal idea, see Daniel J. Elazar, "Covenant as the Basis of the Jewish Political Tradition," *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 20 (June 1978): 5–37; Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1969); Champlin Burrage, *The Church Covenant Idea: Its Origin and Development* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1904); E. Brooks Holifield, *The Covenant Sealed: The Development of Puritan Sacramental Theology in Old and New England, 1570–1720* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974); and Peter Ymen DeJong, *The Covenant Idea in New England Theology, 1620–1847* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964).

<sup>180</sup> See Hobbes' *Leviathan* and Locke's *The Second Treatise on Government* as representatives of the "New Politics" of contract and compact theory. Regardless of Locke's alleged secularity, note how Locke appeals to Creation and a number of biblical passages and theological ideas throughout his work.

<sup>181</sup> Johannes Althusius is actually the first full exposition of the covenant idea in modern political philosophy. See Johannes Althusius, *Politica Methodice Digesta* (1603), ed. Carl J. Friedrich (Cambridge,

scholarship traces the development of modern constitutionalism, republicanism, and federalism “solely through the secular stream that flowed from the ancient Greeks and Romans through medieval contractualism and then through Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and others without also taking into account the covenantal stream that ran above ground through ancient Israel and the Reformation.”<sup>182</sup> A connected stream of distinctly American constitutionalism is evident in the usage of covenant as a political idea among the colonial pulpits, and the founding documents of Puritan colonial societies. However, even the allegedly secular ideas of social contract theory have been heavily influenced by the covenantal notion.<sup>183</sup> Surely, John Locke did not see himself or his social contract theory as operating on a secular foundation.<sup>184</sup> Rather, Locke seemed to be the inheritor

---

MA: Harvard University Press, 1935). For a treatment on Althusius’ life, doctrines, and historical development, see Otto Gierke, *The Development of Political Theory* (New York, NY: Norton, 1939). For a treatment on the differences between a covenant, compact, and contract, see Lutz, *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution*, xxvi–xvii, and Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 30–32.

<sup>182</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Commonwealth*, 46–47. An example of these other approaches, see Thomas Lee Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988), and Charles Howard McIlwain, *Constitutionalism: Ancient and Modern* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1975). Interesting, Locke does not even really use the word “contract” to describe his sociopolitical theory, but rather opts for the more covenant-friendly term “compact.”

<sup>183</sup> Virtually all of the important social contractarians were clustered in the same geographical regions as the federal theologians: Switzerland, England-Scotland, Western Germany, Eastern France, and the Colonial United States.

<sup>184</sup> Locke sees himself as operating within the Protestant tradition. Note how he speaks of the authority of the Holy Scriptures in his “Postscript to a Letter to the Right Rev. Edward Lord Bishop of Worcester,” in *The Works of John Locke*, vol. 4 (London: Printed for T. Tegg, 1823), 96: “[Scripture] always will be, the constant guide of my assent; and I shall always *hearken* to it, as containing infallible truth, relating to things of the highest concernment. . . . and I shall presently condemn and quit any opinion of mine, as soon as I am shown that it is contrary to any revelation in the holy scripture.” Italicized for emphasis. During his lifetime, some of Locke’s peers considered him to be a theologian. Even in his most popular political work, “Two Treatises of Government,” in *The Works of John Locke*, 5:207–485, Locke’s biblical references and his dependence on creation evidence his political theological commitments. Often, only Locke’s second treatise is studied (pp. 338–448), however this second part presupposes a number of the biblical and theological arguments made in the first (pp. 212–337). For an example of Locke’s exegetical and theological basis, see Locke’s treatment of Adam and sovereignty in Gen 1:28 (pp. 227–244). Although Locke does not reference the term “covenant” in his “Two Treatises of Government” (he prefers the term covenant-influenced “compact”), he does reference “covenant” throughout his more

---

theological works, such as in “A Third Letter Concerning Toleration,” in *The Works of John Locke*, 6:469, 482, 503, and 527; “The Reasonableness of Christianity,” in *The Works of John Locke*, 7:103–115, and 122–124; “A Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity,” in *The Works of John Locke*, 7:234–236, and 342–352 (especially p. 344); “A Paraphrase and Notes on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans,” in *The Works of John Locke*, 8:263, 300, 306–307, 316, and 328; and “A Paraphrase and Notes on St Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians,” in *The Works of John Locke*, 8:414–415, 419, 420, and 424.

While Locke spent the middle of his life producing his famous philosophical and epistemological works, he also produced a defense of his faith and Christianity. For his defense, see John Locke, “A Letter Concerning Toleration,” in *The Works of John Locke*, 6:1–58. Also see his responses to critiques of his defense in “A Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity, from Mr. Edwards’s Reflections,” in *The Works of John Locke*, 7:159–190, and “A Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity,” in *The Works of John Locke*, 7:191–424. For Locke’s understanding of the political institution and the likely origin of Jefferson’s “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness,” see “A Letter Concerning Toleration,” in *The Works of John Locke*, 6:10, where he states: “Civil interest I call *life, liberty*, health, and indolency of body; and the *possession* of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like. It is the duty of the civil magistrate, by the impartial execution of equal laws, to secure unto all the people in general, and to every one of his subjects in particular, the just possession of these things belonging to this life.” Locke then defines the ecclesial institution, where he writes, “A church then I take to be a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to the public worshipping of God, in such a manner as they judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls” (p. 13). Interestingly, Locke’s ecclesial definition had an influence on the American Baptist Isaac Backus, who was very influential in advocating for religious liberty and America’s adoption of the first constitutional amendment. Backus even quotes Locke’s ecclesial definition from “A Letter Concerning Toleration.” Alan Sell, *John Locke and the Eighteenth-Century Divines* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), 178, concludes that “towards the end of the eighteenth-century Locke was still being invoked on the nature of the Church as a voluntary covenanted body is clear from the writings of the American Baptist Isaac Backus. He supports his view that the Church is a voluntary society of believers by quoting from Locke’s *A Letter Concerning Toleration*.”

Locke spent the latter half of his academic career writing verse-by-verse commentaries on Scripture. In John Locke, *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Galatians, I & II Corinthians, Romans, Ephesians* (London: Printed by J. H. for Awnsham and John Churchill, 1707), Locke provides a verse-by-verse paraphrase and commentary of the Pauline epistles noted in the work’s title. His interpretation of Rom 13:1–7 is especially interesting, given it shares some of the conclusions on sovereignty, consent, and constitutionalism made in the chapter’s earlier appraisal of political covenant and the New Testament. On Rom 13:1–7, Locke writes, “For he speaks here of the *Higher Powers*, i. e. the Supreme Civil Power, which is every Commonwealth Derived from God, and is of the same Extent everywhere, i. e. is absolute and unlimited by anything but the end for which God gave it, (*viz.*) the Good of the People sincerely pursued, according to the best of the Skill of those who share that Power, and so not to be resisted. But how Men come by a rightful Title to this Power; or who has that Title, he is wholly silent, and says nothing of it. To have meddled with that would have been to decide of Civil Rights, contrary to the Design and Business of the Gospel, and the Example of our Savior, who refused meddling in such Cases with this decisive Question: *Who made me a Judge or Divider over you?* Luke 12, 14” (p. 121). There are not many political philosophers who write verse-by-verse commentaries on books of the Bible, who are not also considered to be political theologians.

Another aspect worth mentioning about Locke’s influence in America is that it was largely the result of ministers. One of the primary influences on the political ethos of American Independence was the circulation of political sermons that help popularize political ideas such as liberty. Among political philosophers, Locke received a disproportionately higher amount of citations from ministers when compared to other thinkers. As Donald S. Lutz, *A Preface to American Political Theory* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 137, notes, “An unusual aspect of the list [see Tables 3–5], one that deserves emphasis, is that Locke’s prominence is due largely to reprinted sermons by ministers. The forty-one

of his Puritan background, and his political theories seem to borrow heavily from Calvinists such as Reverend Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661), whose political theological formulation of limited government, constitutionalism, and popular consent predated Locke’s theory by several decades.<sup>185</sup> As Peter Judson Richards states in a *Journal of Law and Religion* article surveying Rutherford’s influence on Locke, Locke was “a religious thinker whose Christianity colors the entire fabric of his political philosophy; as, even more specifically, the ‘heir of Puritan political theorists.’”<sup>186</sup> Locke is rightly

---

sermons that cited at least one secular author amounted to a little less than 5 percent of the items in the total sample and about 9 percent of the 446 pamphlets in the sample. These sermons together accounted for almost 20 percent of the citations to secular authors, including just about half of the references to John Locke. If we exclude the references to Locke generated by ministers, his count falls to 1.5 percent of the total, which placed him between Beccaria and Trenchard and Gordon, whose positions in the ranking are not affected by dropping the sermons. The rank of no other name in Table 5.2 [provided in Table 3] is affected by more than one or two places in the order by excluding the reprinted sermons. One interesting implication is that those defending the importance of Locke will probably also have to defend the importance of biblically based theology for American political theory during the founding era.”

Therefore, Joshua Mitchell, in *Not by Reason* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 73, rightfully concludes regarding the Christian and theological nature of Locke’s thought, “To comprehend it fully, this flowering, this enlightenment clarification, this seemingly explicit political vision in which reason, property, and toleration play so large a part, must be understood as an attempt to grasp the meaning of biblical history and the place of humankind within the particular moment of history in which it dwells. As such, Locke’s vision, like the vision of Luther and Hobbes that preceded it, is best understood as a political theology.” For a general introduction to Locke and his thought, see Leonard O. Goenaga, “John Locke,” *Encyclopedia of the Atlantic World, 1400–1900*, 2:372–375.

<sup>185</sup> Samuel Rutherford, *Lex, Rex: Or, The Law and the Prince: a Dispute for the Just Prerogative of King and People; Containing the Reasons and Causes of the Most Necessary Defensive Wars of the Kingdom of Scotland* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1982), 1, 6–7. See also John Eidsmoe, *Christianity and the Constitution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987), 21. Rutherford argued in his classic, *Lex Rex*, that rulers derive authority from God (Rom 13:1–4), and that God gives this authority to rulers through the people. In *Lex Rex*, Rutherford states, “The people establish a form of government and choose a particular man to be their ruler, [and] the ruler then acts under the direction of God.” Rutherford bases this argument upon passages contained in 1 Sam 12:1; 2 Sam 16:18; Judg 8:22; 9:6; 2 Kgs 14:21; and 2 Chr 23:3. Calvinistic covenantal theology can be traced through Rutherford to Locke. As Eidsmoe concludes, “Locke, a Puritan by background, based his political theories on Rutherford’s *Lex Rex*” (p. 25). The theologian Richard Hooker also had considerable influence on Locke (Locke refers to Hooker admirable throughout his work as the “Judicious Hooker”).

<sup>186</sup> Peter Judson Richards, “‘The Law Written in their hearts’?: Rutherford and Locke on Nature, Government and Resistance,” *Journal of Law and Religion* 18, no. 1 (2002): 151–189. For an analysis of Locke’s inheritance of the Calvinist Reformed political tradition, see W. M. Spellman, *John Locke and the Problem of Depravity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2014); and Winthrop S. Hudson, “Locke: Heir of Puritan Political Theorists,” in *Calvinism and the Political Order*, eds. George L. Hunt and John T. McNeill

regarded as being arguably the Founding Fathers' most influential modern political theorist, as well as a primary influence on the contents of the Declaration of Independence.<sup>187</sup> However, the influence of Calvinism and the Reformed tradition on Locke further establish that covenant was a seminal political idea that directly and indirectly influenced the origination and constitution of the American polity. As Elazar concludes, "if the major political achievement of Western political thought is a constitutional government that governs by the consent of the governed, the English

---

(Washington, D.C.: Westminster Press, 1965), 108; Herbert D. Foster, *International Calvinism Through Locke and the Revolution of 1688* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1927); and Harold J. Berman, "Religious Foundations of Law in the West: An Historical Perspective," *Journal of Law and Religion* 1, no. 1 (1983): 3–43. Richards notes that "The general impression seems to be that Locke's Calvinist upbringing places him in a long line of Reformed Christian resistance theorists" (p. 152). American historian Herbert D. Foster went as far as to call Locke the "carrier of Calvinism from the Reformation to ... 1688." Furthermore, Foster claimed "through Locke there filtered to the American Revolution five points of political Calvinism held by hundreds of Calvinists, but clarified through his Civil Government: fundamental law, natural rights, contract and consent of people, popular sovereignty, resistance to tyranny through responsible representatives." Thus, Hudson argues that Locke likely derived his political ideas "by the sons of Geneva with whom he was in contact throughout his life. Even a conservative Presbyterian like Samuel Rutherford, in *Lex Rex* ... invoked almost every argument that was later used by Locke, including an appeal to the law of nature, the ultimate sovereignty of the people, the origin of government in a contract between the governor and the governed, and the right of resistance when that contract is broken" (p. 113). In agreement, Berman states that Locke was "much influenced by Calvinism. Locke derived from Calvinism his theories of natural law, the social compact, and government by consent of the governed. He also accepted the Calvinist Two Kingdoms doctrine, which encouraged the transfer to civil government of many features of ecclesiastical polity" (p. 29).

<sup>187</sup> On Locke's importance to the Declaration of Independence and American political thought, Jefferson is recorded in *Thomas Jefferson to John Trumbull* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1789), <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/jefferson/18.html>, that Locke—alongside Bacon and Newton—was one of the "three greatest men that have ever lived, without any exception, and as having laid the foundation of those superstructures which have been raised in Physical and Moral sciences." Locke's influence on Jefferson and the Declaration are also clearly evident in the usage of Locke's "life, liberty, and property [happiness]" (see fn. 182). Furthermore, among the number of times a thinker was cited by the Founding Fathers in political treatises, Locke ranks fourth, and is out-cited only by St. Paul, Montesquieu, and Blackstone. For a listing of the number of times the Founding Fathers quoted specific thinkers, see Donald S. Lutz, "The Relative Importance of European Writers on Late Eighteenth Century American Political Thought," *American Political Science Review* (1984): 189–197; also see Table 4, "Symbol: Founding Father's Frequency of Citation by Thinkers (1760–1805). It is also noteworthy to point out that reprinted sermons circulated during the early American episode accounted for almost twenty percent of the citations of secular authors, and half of all of Locke's references. Remarkably, Lutz notes that at least eighty percent of political pamphlets during the 1770s and 1780s were written by ministers! See Donald S. Lutz, *A Preface to American Political Theory* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 135–137.

Puritans and their covenantal/federal ideas were a major force introducing those principles into the modern world.”<sup>188</sup>

### **Covenant and Constitution and Its Significant Political Contributions**

The repeated worry illustrated in the introduction’s seminar experience, and voiced throughout the chapter’s appraisal, has been a concern that modern scholarship has favored secularized political theory to the detriment of recognizing a significant biblical and historical tradition that uniquely applied covenant as a seminal political idea. Recent scholarship by Oliver O’Donovan, Donald Lutz, Ellis Sandoz, Daniel J. Elazar, Perry Miller, and others have made major contributions to rediscovering the importance of political theology and the political covenant. From contributions in historical political theology, to the political and social thought of the Puritans, to the influence of federal theology in Colonial America and American’s Independence, and to the surveys of covenant as a viable and historical political idea that explains the origination and constitution of polities, the last century’s worth of scholastic contributions has established a firm foundation for appraising covenant as a seminal ecclesial, marital, and political idea.<sup>189</sup>

---

<sup>188</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Commonwealth*, 239.

<sup>189</sup> While O’Donovan and Sandoz have remained mostly absent throughout the chapter, their contributions are significant. O’Donovan’s contribution in *From Irenaeus to Grotius* provides a substantive selection of important political theological contributions throughout pre-Modern Church history. Ultimately, this dissertation in conjunction with *The Desire of the Nations* and *The Ways of Judgment* evidence the significant contributions political theology can make to the wider Western political tradition. Sandoz’s own contributions occur in works such as *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era: 1730–1805*, 2 vols (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1998), which provides a wide number of revolution era sermons that explain the political theological convictions and moods behind the American Revolution.

In order to orient the reader towards the issue of political origination, the chapter first explored the central importance of identifying sovereignty in political theory and political theology. Modern political theory is the product of the attempts of figures such as Jean Bodin to identify sovereignty in connection with secularized concepts of power and authority. In contrast, political theology shares the importance of identifying sovereignty, but rightly starts by attributing Sovereignty to God. For an authentic political theology, only God can truly claim ultimate political supremacy, authority, and territory. The presupposition of theocentric sovereignty formulates the foundation for further addressing the two primary questions of power and justice, and these in turn help address a number of other important and dependent political ideas (such as authority, judgment, rights, representation, legitimacy, and constitution). A pursuit of the identification of sovereignty naturally leads to the question of identifying the origination and form of particular polities. Elazar served as a guide who introduced the three classical explanations of origination and constitution (conquest, organic development, and covenant [contract]), and also proposed answering the question of origination with the meritorious significance of the theopolitical covenantal idea.

With the political nature and prospective merit of the covenantal idea identified, the chapter proceeded to appraise covenant as a political idea in Scripture and Church history. The appraisal began with the Old Testament, which immediately introduces political themes of *memshalah* (“dominion”) and *radah* (“reign”) at creation and the Adamic covenant (Gen 1–3). Adam and Eve’s rejection of God’s sovereignty and their own regal responsibility leads to a corruption of the created order, and their banishment

from the garden of Eden (Gen 3–4). The descent of depravity continues throughout Genesis, and themes of civil urbanization and justice are introduced in conjunction with Cain’s murder of his brother and his founding of the Bible’s first city (Gen 4:17). The problematic degeneration precluded by Adam, Eve, and Cain’s behavior became so severe that Genesis states that man’s “every intention [*yetzer*] of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5). Creation was deeply corrupted to the point that “the earth was filled with violence [*khamas*]” (Gen 6:11). God’s punitive and corrective response to this condition of *khamas* and *yetzer* comes with the Flood and the universal Noahic covenant, which establishes a number of moral covenantal obligations and promises upon all future human descendants (Gen 9:8–16). Part of this moral establishment consists of the legitimization and function of government to protect human life, which appears to be a covenant-inferred measure of restraining man’s external actualization of his violent intent, and thus an ordination of an earthly institution to prevent the fullness of man’s moral public degeneration (Gen 9:6).

The remainder of the Old Testament appraisal developed political themes related to the Abrahamic (Gen 15:9–18; 17:2–21), Mosaic (Exod 19:8–24:8), Moabite (Deut 29:1–16), and Davidic covenants and covenantal renewals (2 Sam 7:1–17; 1 Chr 17:11–14). These covenants narrate the story of how the development of a particular political *edah* (“people, congregation”), became a particular *goy* (“nation”), by establishing a particular polity in a particular established territory (*Eretz Yisrael*). The three major partitions of the Old Testament detail the political life of these Israelites and the ever-present struggle against degenerating into *khamas* and depraved *yetzer*. Throughout the

recordings, Israel becomes not only the recipients and renewers of universal and special vertical covenants, but also engage in a number of particular horizontal covenants to meet various political needs and establish moral political relationships (Gen 14:13; 21:27–32; 26:28–31; 31:44; Exod 23:32; Josh 9:6, 7, 11, 15–20; 1 Sam 18:3–4; and 2 Sam 3:12, 13, 21; 5:3).

Ultimately, the Israelite polity experiences the decay and depravity of their forefathers. Their polity experiences numerous schisms, declines, and exiles. In response, the political contribution of the prophets occurs in their identification of a messianic fulfillment of the old covenants and the establishment of a new universal covenant (Jer 31:31–33; Isa 42:6; Ezek 16:59–63; Mal 3:1). The arrival of Christ Jesus as the fulfillment of the former covenants and his establishment of the New Covenant marks the entrance of the second major episode in the history of covenant as a political idea (Heb 8:6–12; 9:15; Rom 9:25–26; Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 3:6; Phil 2:9–11). The New Covenant fulfills the prophetic messianic promises of the former covenants to bless all the nations by extending the *edah* to both Jews and Gentiles (the *koinōnia*, “covenanted fellowship”). These covenantal members are universally marked by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5), and particularly identified in their *ekklēsia* (“local congregated assembly”) through the covenantal signs of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Unlike the former covenants and their particular political polity, the New Testament’s New Covenant lacks the establishment of a particular political community in the “here-and-now.” Rather, the stress is placed on Jesus as the absolute political capital “S” Sovereign. Only Jesus, in his divinity, is called the “Lord of lords and the King of kings” (Matt 28:18; Rev 19:16).

Only Christ is supreme over all princely political powers (Phil 2:9–11). Instead of electing a particular polity in the “here-and-now,” the messiah’s particular political polity is a future promised and universal “not-yet” (Mark 13:24–27; Rev 19:15–16). In place of appointing a political polity, Christ Jesus instead appoints a covenanted people, whose work is to focus on a Spirit-empowered development of the “Kingdom of God,” which is the “here-and-now” recognition of Christ’s sovereignty across all of humanity and their institutions (Matt 6:9–15). Given the “here-and-now” and “not-yet” dynamic of the “Kingdom of God,” the New Covenant upholds the function and legitimacy of the political institution as a restraint against *khamas* and *yetzer* (Rom 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:13–14; Gen 9:6; Exod 2:14, 22). Furthermore, the lack of specifying a particular constitution in the “here-and-now,” in conjunction with the direct or indirect acknowledgement of the legitimacy and restraints of New Testamental governments (Luke 3:14; Acts 10:1–8; Matt 22:21; and Acts 4:18–20; 5:29; Matt 2:8), seem to infer a morally-bound Christ-honoring liberty as to the actual origination and constitution of “here-and-now” polities.

With these biblical parameters in place, the remainder of the chapter appraised political covenantalism across its five major historical stages. After the initial Hebraic stage, the second of these stages extended the New Testament’s contributions by detailing the Early Church’s primarily theological reflection of the implications of the New Covenant. During this early period, the Church was forced to consider the political implications of a Roman Empire driven acquisition and sanctioning of political and theological ideas. The direction ultimately drove the Church to forgo covenant as a political idea in favor of the organic hierarchicalism of Roman imperial theory, which

arguably became an influence on the plenary papacy of the Dark and Medieval ages. The third major stage in the history of covenant occurs in the Reformation's response to the political and theological problems of the papal temporal synthesis. As Protestant theologians sought to fill the newly-established political vacancies that were the byproduct of their theological reformation, the Reformed tradition of Calvin and Bullinger recovered the theopolitical covenantal idea as a biblically-influenced means to originate and constitute their polities within their respective frontiers. The fourth main stage in the history of the theopolitical covenantal tradition occurs with the Puritan and Pilgrim inheritors of this Reformed federal theology. The Puritans sought to explain the particularity, origination, and constitution of their various socio-political institutions through modeling their covenantal theory after the vertical and horizontal covenants of the Old and New Testament. As these federal theologians migrated as colonists to the New World, they often found themselves in political frontiers outside the presence of any existing political authorities. From their pulpits and their political documents, Puritans appealed to covenantal idea to establish their polities. In these environments, the Puritans popularized the covenantal idea in their preaching (Samuel Willard; John Winthrop; John Davenport; John Cotton), originated actual polities into existence with written covenants ("The Mayflower Covenant;" the "Dedham Covenant;" and the "Guilford Covenant"), and structured these polities with covenant-grounded-and-inspired constitutions (the "Pilgrim Code of Law;" "Massachusetts Body of Liberties;" and "Fundamental Orders of Connecticut"). In addition to their direct colonial influence, the theopolitical covenantal tradition indirectly contributed to the American constitutional tradition through their

influence on political theorists like John Locke. The indirect influence on modern social contract theory, and the later secularization of the covenantal idea, formulate the fifth and modern stage in the history of covenant as a political idea.

While the limitations of this work prevent a fuller presentation of the many areas where the federal and covenantal tradition directly influenced the American experiment, the chapter has sampled the seminal contributions covenantalism has made to Western political thought. Furthermore, application of the covenantal idea seems to offer fruitful contributions to furthering the understanding of the American political story. As an example, Daniel J. Elazar has sought to examine the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States as partial products of the covenantal idea.<sup>190</sup> After examining the covenantal structure of the Torah in *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, Elazar notes in *Covenant & Constitutionalism* that the Declaration of Independence seems to share the form of ancient Near Eastern covenants.<sup>191</sup> Not only do they share in covenantal structure, but they also share similar political circumstances.<sup>192</sup> Both the Decalogue and the Declaration episodes share the role of originating societies within their respective frontiers; both establish a foundation of organizing a people (the Decalogue's "edah," the Declaration's "One People"); and both establish a shared moral vision.

In addition to the political contributions made by the covenant tradition, covenant seemingly provides some significant methods for formulating and evaluating a public

---

<sup>190</sup> See Appendix 10, "Symbol: America's Declaration of Independence and its Covenantal Structure."

<sup>191</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Constitutionalism*, 53–71. See Appendix 10.

moral framework that addresses O'Donovan's problem of the particularity and universality of socio-political institutions. At the height of public moral theology is the problem of addressing transcendent truths that originate with God, together with the seemingly secular socio-political entities originating with man. The social, political, and theological question asks how both the worldly and spiritual elements come together in day-to-day human living, without sacrificing either God's sovereignty, or man's covenant-enabled liberty. The difficulty of answering this question is self-evident across two millennia where great theologians sought to address the relationship between "Church" and "State." Notable attempts included Augustine's "two cities," Gelasius I's "two swords," Luther's "two kingdoms," Locke's "two treatise," and Elazar's "two faces of politics." In comparison, covenant seems uniquely adept to address God's sovereignty, man's liberty, reality's morality, and depravity's severity. Elazar articulates the importance of covenant in helping address these questions by developing a public moral framework, where he writes,

Covenant is one of the major recurring principles of political import that informs and encompasses all three themes—an idea that defines political justice, shapes political behavior, and directs humans toward an appropriately civic synthesis of the two in their effort to manage political power. As such, covenant is an idea whose importance is akin to natural law in defining justice and to natural right in delineating the origins and proper constitution of political society.<sup>193</sup>

A covenantal socio-political analytical framework provides rich potential gains in explaining major political values held within Western civilization. However, it is also

---

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 50. As Elazar notes, akin to the Mosaic covenant's Decalogue, "the Declaration is not a constitution. It does not establish a particular form of government. That is left open to subsequent constitutional action on the part of the people announced by the Declaration."

<sup>193</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 19.

able to balance, check, and legitimize morally-bound aspects of public political life. The potential of the covenant tradition to identify sovereignty and address political questions of power and authority, also seem to prospectively supply answers to other related political and social questions. Thus, the federal theologians implemented the covenantal idea to originate and constitute their ecclesial, marital, and political institutions.

The covenantal tradition also merits appreciation for its ability to help America understand itself. Covenant contributes an important vocabulary and narrative context to America's own particular story and tradition. Elazar writes,

In the course of time, a tradition becomes embodied in certain texts that reflect the political ideas of a particular body politic, its political vocabulary, and celebrate the figures, events, and concepts that most embody the tradition.... In sum, a tradition is a major integrative force within the body politic. Some polities rely on tradition more than others for integration. Covenanted polities are particularly in need of an appropriate political tradition for their integration. In every case they are covenanted polities because their political tradition rests upon the covenant idea and a covenantal political culture.<sup>194</sup>

America's reliance on its covenantal and constitutional story is especially foundational to its political narrative and tradition. The American experience, by its nature, lacked the historicity of other nations. It also lacked their ethnic, racial, and geographical continuity. In this social and political frontier, the American story sought to develop an *e pluribus unum* identity that was uniquely forged through a covenantal and constitutional pursuit of God-given liberty. The introduction to this American story is told across chapters written from the Mayflower Covenant to the Declaration of Independence. It is also written with the blood of men who sacrificed themselves for the cause of God-given liberty. As the earlier image of the *chuppah* conveyed the institutional importance of people over

possessions, and God’s presence over people, *covenant* helps convey the American story of those who “mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor” for a covenanted and constituted Creator-endowed pursuit of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” undertaken “with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence.”<sup>195</sup>

---

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>195</sup> After Thomas Jefferson submitted his draft of the Declaration of Independence, Congress made three edits that are worth mentioning, and which seem to support the overall covenantal tone of the document suggested by Elazar (see Appendix 10, “Symbol: America’s Declaration of Independence and its Covenantal Structure”). These changes can be observed in Appendix C in Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1998), 235–241. The Declaration undeniably begins with a theocentric dependency to establish the validity of its grievances. Congress made no changes to Jefferson’s original first paragraph, where it affirms its theocentric assumption by stating, “to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them.” The first noteworthy change comes in the second paragraph, which originally read: “We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with *inherent and* inalienable rights.” Congress instead edited it to strikeout “*inherent and*,” and insert in its place the word “certain.” Thus, it read in its final form as “endowed by their Creator with *certain* inalienable rights.” It seems as if Congress sought to de-emphasize the anthropocentricity of the word “inherent,” in favor of a more theocentric sense of being “certain inalienable rights” endowed and derived by God.

The second editorial change is even more interesting, and provides even stronger evidence of the direct or indirect influence of the covenantal tradition on the Declaration of Independence. In his submitted original, Jefferson only mentioned God in the first two paragraphs. Congress’ edits sought to remedy this by making sure theocentric references formed an *inclusio* at the beginning and the end of the document. The noteworthy second change occurs in the first sentence of the final paragraph, which originally read as “We therefore the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled, do, in the name and by authority of the good people.” Congress instead sought to reaffirm the introduction’s theocentric dependency by editing it to insert the phrase “appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions,” so that the final version read as “We therefore the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled, *appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions*, do, in the name and by authority of the good people....”

The final editorial change worth referencing is also the most covenantal, and occurs in the Declaration’s last sentence. Jefferson’s draft originally read as “And for the support of this declaration, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.” Perhaps this seemed too secular and anthropocentric to the Founding Fathers, for they instead sought to insert the phrase “with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence,” so that the final version of the Declaration ended with “And for the support of this declaration, *with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence*, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.” God’s providence seemed to be quite important to the Founders, given its continued symbolic reference in the draft and final versions of the Great Seal of the United States.

See Appendix 13, “Symbol: America’s Seal and Divine Providence (America’s Symbol of Political Chuppah),” for examples of the symbolism of God’s providence, which share the imagery of the *chuppah* over marriage by recognizing God’s glory and providence over the American polity. Also

In conclusion, covenant serves as a seminal idea that helps explain the American political experience, and gives it moral meaning. Covenantalism arguably represents the longest running tradition in political theory. It contributes to the understanding of Western political thought, to the establishment of a public moral framework, and to the explanation of the origin of major social institutions, all of which merit a serious reappraisal of covenantalism by the wider scholastic and political community. The covenant tradition deserves to be seriously considered as a seminal political idea alongside the hierarchical, organic, and contractual models of origination, and its appraisal provides the third needed contribution to finally articulate a response to O'Donovan's criticism of tradition Protestant social theory.<sup>196</sup>

---

noteworthy is the contents of the "First Prayer of Congress" (1774) in Appendix 12, "Symbol: America's First Prayer of Congress (1774)," which begins with providence and political imagery ("*chuppah*"), where it opens, "O Lord Our Heavenly Father high and mighty *King of Kings and Lord of Lords* Who dost from Thy throne behold all the dwellers of the earth and *reignest with power supreme* and uncontrollable *over the kingdoms empires and governments* look down in mercy we beseech Thee." Also noteworthy is John Adam's letter to a friend describing this historical episode as deeply providential. Read Adam's description of the prayer in Appendix 12.

<sup>196</sup> The covenantal constitutional contributions from the Colonial and early American pulpit, as well as the general religious *ethos* and vocabulary common among early Americans, helps depict the type of political narrative Christianity and covenantalism helped influence in the American polity. Terms and notions throughout the Declaration such as "Nature's God entitle them;" "endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights;" "that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed;" "to institute new government;" "appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world;" "firm reliance on ... divine providence;" "we mutually pledge;" and "our ... our ... our;" seem to emulate the idea and images of political covenantalism. Political covenantalism deserves to be recognized alongside English common law, social compact theory, and Greco-Roman natural law theory, as being a seminal influence on American constitutionalism. While many of these quoted terms are crucial to a secular social contract theory, the Declaration's theocentric *inclusio*, the intentional appeals to God's moral-order, authority, and providence, and even the Declaration's intellectual reliance on someone like Locke—who was quite *literally* birthed by the Puritan covenantal tradition—lend themselves to the argument that covenant was a seminal idea that directly and indirectly influenced the Declaration of Independence (and thus, American constitutionalism). This merits broader appraisal by mainstream academia of covenant as a political idea. However, let me say in closing and with intended clarity what the chapter, these footnotes, or the later appendices are not attempting to do. They are not attempting to "baptize" American political history. They are not arguing for a "Christian America." Rather, they are simply acknowledging that the political theological influences on the unique story of the American polity are often ignored, to the detriment of political theoretical reflection. These political theological and

---

covenantal observations are too quickly rejected for political appraisal out of a fear of theocracy or a disdain of religion and theology. Therefore, a number of additional documents, textual comparisons, and historical episodes have been provided in the appendices to help depict what the religious *ethos* and political theologizing was like prior to and during the American Revolution. These supplements are not designed to argue that all of early America evidenced the noted characteristics. Rather, their insights and tone contribute something significant to understanding the American narrative (especially given they follow the Great Awakenings). At minimum, their merit is enough to warrant being additional supplications for the more curious reader. At maximum, the chapter and these appendix documents should lead a reader to re-examine the contributions political theology and political covenantalism can make to modern—and arguably post-modern—political science. For a general sense of the religious affiliation of the signers, and the sense in which they appealed or engaged with political theological sources, see Table 3, “Symbol: Founding Father’s Frequency of Citation by Type (1760–1805);” Table 4, “Symbol: Founding Father’s Frequency of Citation by Thinkers (1760–1805);” and Table 5, “Symbol: Founding Father’s Religious Affiliation.” For a comparison of political ideas and themes between the Bible, the Mayflower Compact, and the Declaration of Independence, see Table 6, “Symbol: America’s Declaration of Independence (1776), The Mayflower Compact (1620), and the Biblical Symbols.” For a survey of biblical themes in the Declaration and the Constitution, see Table 7, “Symbol: America’s Declaration of Independence (1776) and its Biblical Principles,” and also Table 8, “Symbol: America’s Constitution (1787) and its Biblical Principles.” For a depiction of the political and historical *ethos* that was being propagated and popularized by the pulpit, see Appendix 11, “Symbol: America’s Early Political Sermons;” and the earlier mentioned Appendix 12, “Symbol: America’s First Prayer of Congress (1774).” Also see Table 9, “Symbol: America’s Declaration of Independence, and Mayhew’s ‘A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers’,” which compares Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence with a widely distributed sermon by Jonathan Mayhew that exhorts and popularized a number of the Declaration’s political principles decades before it was even drafted. In all, these tables and appendices help evidence the political theological tone of America’s political narrative and independence—especially when made in comparison with their contemporary France and her secular revolution.

## CHAPTER 6 COVENANT AND CONSTITUTION AS AN ANSWER TO THE PROBLEM OF PARTICULARITY AND UNIVERSALITY

A long journey has been conducted to address O'Donovan's criticisms and his critical social question. The journey began by sharing O'Donovan's conviction that political theology can make significant and apologetic contributions that help Western civilization understand the origins of many of its most important political values.<sup>1</sup> The culmination of

---

<sup>1</sup> Throughout our appraisal, we have come to find O'Donovan's conviction has been shared by a diverse group of 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish and Christian theorists, theologians, philosophers, historians, and sociologists. O'Donovan's theological conviction has been shared by Elazar and Novak's political theoretical contributions, Lutz's historical contributions, and Wilhelmsen's philosophical contributions (and arguably, also Zimmerman's sociological contributions). At minimum, all are attempting to address a vacancy in scholarship, and identified by Voegelin, where Christianity's political contributions can help Western civilization understand many of its foundational values. At maximum, they are attempting to illuminate political ideas born from Christian Liberalism that can help prevent the West's social and political descent into *khamas* and degenerate *yetzer*. In Oliver O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), xii–xiii, O'Donovan writes, “Christian political thought has also acquired a secondary value in the circumstances of our time, which may, however, be no less important: it has an apologetic force when addressed to a world where the intelligibility of political institutions and traditions is seriously threatened.... Western civilization finds itself the heir of political institutions and traditions which it values without any clear idea why, or to what extent, it values them.” In David Novak, *Covenantal Rights: A Study in Jewish Political Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), xi, Novak writes, “Surely Judaism is an indispensable component of the political history of the West, one that should be studied by all who are concerned with the survival of our civilization and its societies.” In Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel: Biblical Foundations & Jewish Expressions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995), xiii, Elazar writes, “By the end of the 1950s, the convergence of these various lines of exploration brought me to a recognition that covenant was a truly seminal concept in Western civilization and stimulated me to begin what has been a decades-long exploration of the covenant tradition in the Western world, especially in its political dimensions.” In this same spirit, Donald S. Lutz produces *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2007), and claims as his purpose being able to illuminate the source of many of American constitutionalism's symbols and ideas as originating—and in continuity with—the colonial covenants and constitutions (pp. xx–xxii). Also see Frederick D. Wilhelmsen, *Christianity and Political Philosophy* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1978), 9, for a more philosophical contribution in the same spirit as O'Donovan and the others. In a sense, all are also in debt to Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), whose work challenging mainstream secular assumptions enabled the possibility of political theology crossing over and contributing to mainstream political theory.

two millenniums worth of the Church's political reflections and engagements with the state and society have produced a foundational political tradition O'Donovan calls Christian Liberalism. The importance and apologetic utility of this tradition leads O'Donovan to conclude,

The liberal tradition ... has right of possession. There is no other model available to us of a political order derived from millennium of close engagement between state and church. It ought, therefore, to have the first word in any discussion of what Christians can approve, even if it ought not to have the last word.... We cannot simply go behind it; it has the status of a church tradition, and demands to be treated with respect.<sup>2</sup>

The covenantal idea has a rightful claim to a share of this classical Christian Liberal tradition. Our appraisal of covenant as an ecclesial, marital, and political idea has sought to bring covenantalism into the forefront, and to recognize that its seminal contributions to the development of Western civilization merit appraisal and respect. At the heart of covenantalism is the universal and particular pursuit of liberty, and liberty is at the heart of Christianity and Christian Liberalism.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 228–229.

<sup>3</sup> The central political promise of the New Covenant is liberty. Liberty is at the heart of the Bible's political theology. Whereas the principle political idea related to God is sovereignty, the principle idea related to man is liberty. Akin to sovereignty, real capital "L" Liberty can only be recognized as being theocentric. Both sovereignty and liberty begin and end with hearkening our covenantal relationship to the liberating LORD. It is achieved by the gracious work of the Lord, and not the endless toil of humans. Outside of this covenant relationship is a faux anthropocentric antithesis of liberty. Outside of the Garden is the slavery of soil and toil (Gen 3:17–19), of bestial barbarity (Rom 1:22–32), and of degenerating depravity (Judg 21:25). In contrast, the political promise of the Bible's covenants is the promise of the Garden, the Exodus, the Jubilee, the Sabbath rest, and the Prince of Peace. God is a LORD who takes slaves, and gives them liberty, and makes them a people (Lev 26:12–13). The promise of the Covenant is true capital "L" Liberty. As Scripture attests, "The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after King Zedekiah had made a *covenant* with all the people in Jerusalem to make a proclamation of *liberty* to them," (Jer 34:8, ESV); "And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim *liberty* throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a *jubilee* for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan" (Lev 25:10); "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to *proclaim liberty to the captives*, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound" (Isa 61:1; Luke 4:18); "Now

---

the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is *freedom*” (2 Cor 3:17); “For *freedom* Christ has set us *free*; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a *yoke of slavery*” (Gal 5:1); “So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, ‘If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you *free*’” (John 8:31–32); “So if the Son sets you *free*, you will be *free indeed*” (John 8:26); “For the law of the Spirit of life has set you *free* in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2); Live as people who are *free*, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as *servants of God*. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor” (1 Pet 2:16–17).

Whereas man works without end wandering after a libertine lifestyle that counterfeits freedom and ends in slavery, God’s work establishes an endless liberty through the life-giving work of the truly Sovereign-One called “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace” (Isa 9:6). The Lord of lords and the King of kings does not call man to shoulder the work of achieving real liberty by man’s politics, for “the government shall be upon *his* shoulder” (Isa 9:6). For “the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. *The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this*” (Isa 9:7). God’s love—and not man’s labor—is the origin of Christian liberty. Christian liberalism as a political tradition is thus the Church’s reflection that government exists to restrain violence and depravity, so that there may be a space conducive to the peacemaking work of the Kingdom of God (1 Tim 2:1–4).

The South American Liberationists are partially correct to acknowledge the tremendous metanarrative importance of the concept of liberty. Among them, Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), is perhaps the strongest articulation of the Liberationist exegetical understanding of liberty. Furthermore, Liberationists such as Gutierrez were also partially correct to emphasize theology needs to be “a critical reflection on Christian praxis in light of the word of God” (p. xxix). Surely, a theology that cannot inspire Christian praxis that illuminates actualized moral conviction in a matter visible to a non-churched audience seems to lack the beauty and magnitude of the Gospel, and the power and conviction of the sovereign LORD. Such a theology seems bland and powerless for the task in which theology pursues—love of God and love of neighbor.

However, where the Liberationists erred, is that they ignored the tremendous degenerative and violent heart of man. They confused a depraved heart with a corrupted political and social system. The irony in their approach is that much of it was rebelling against the negative impact the Roman Catholic Church’s temporal domination policies had on South American society (such as evident in a historical survey of the ride of South America’s racial caste systems). In its place, they simply proposed another political solution that mistook one institution’s function for another’s. In addition to their historical experience, the Scriptural evidence as appraised throughout our earlier work suggests that concentrated power in the hands of the political institution is dangerous. Political politics that confuse their power to restrain with the power to redeem, are demonstrated in Scripture and history to produce episodes of exacerbated violence. Although the Liberationists are correct to note the metanarrative and practical importance of liberty and praxis, they rob themselves of their insights by appropriating sociology and socialism to pursue and practice liberation. Christ did not call for a *bourgeoisie* revolution. He called for a spiritual liberty with gratitude-empowered practical implications that truly do impact social liberty in the “here-and-now.” One of Gutierrez and South American Roman Catholicism’s sharpest critics is the South American Evangelical, Rene C. Padilla. His work provides an excellent example of an approach to navigating the biblical emphasis of liberty, but without succumbing to the errors of the Liberationists. See Rene C. Padilla, *Hacia una teologia evangelica latinoamericana* (San Jose, CA: Editorial Caribe, 1984); *Mission Between the Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985); and “Revolution and Revelation,” in *Is Revolution Change?*, ed. Brian Griffiths (London: IVP, 1972). In short, Padilla argued a thesis against the Liberationist’s priority of context, in favor of the context and light of Scripture. As he summarizes in “Revolution and Revelation,” the problem of this liberationist hermeneutic is that “instead of showing the relevance of revelation to revolution, it makes revolution its source of revelation. The result is a secular gospel whose dominant emphases parallel those of Marxism” (p. 80).

O'Donovan's own contribution to aiding our understanding of the political theological importance of Christian Liberalism and Christendom's political contributions comes in a political theology he develops across three major works. In *Resurrection and Moral Order*, O'Donovan contributes the eschatological and Christological overtones of an evangelical ethic and political authority.<sup>4</sup> The work's core recognition is that "the foundations of Christian ethics must be evangelical foundations; or, to put it more simply, Christian ethics must arise from the gospel of Jesus Christ."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, "In the sphere of revelation, we will conclude, and only there, can we see the natural order as it really is and overcome the epistemological barriers to an ethic that conforms to nature."<sup>6</sup> These observations on order and revelation orient his study of political authority, which he argues occurs "when one whose possession of might is in accord with the established order of a society takes responsibility for the rightings of wrongs within that society."<sup>7</sup> The second work, *The Desire of the Nations*, develops the implications of these insights into a full-fledged political theology, complete with a development of the basis for political acts and authority as residing in man's act of judgment, and God's political triumph of Christ's exaltation. O'Donovan traces these insights throughout a historical survey of Christendom, and ultimately concludes that there is value in the political tradition of Christian Liberalism, which was the byproduct of the Church's attempt to publically live out its mission. O'Donovan adds a third work to close out this political

---

<sup>4</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 19–20.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

project, *The Ways of Judgment*, which focuses more on the political theoretical perspective. O'Donovan brings together the insights of the former works to conclude that legitimate political authority exists "where power, the execution of right, and the perpetuation of tradition are assured together in one coordinated agency."<sup>8</sup> The exegetically-derived concept not only helps O'Donovan understand God's kingship in the Old Testament, but also makes an important theoretical claim about political acts and authorities.<sup>9</sup> Thus, O'Donovan argues, "The threefold analysis of divine rule as salvation, judgment and possession will provide a framework for exploring the major questions about authority posed by the Western tradition."<sup>10</sup> Throughout his development of the theopolitical idea of judgment, O'Donovan criticizes social contractarianism and constitutionalism, argues for a form of representation based on organic development, and concludes with an ecclesial turn that examines how the Church can interact with the culture and society it finds at the horizon of its ecclesial mission.

It is in his third work that O'Donovan introduces his criticisms against traditional Protestant social theory. The classical approach adopted throughout Protestantism sought to address social and political questions within a framework that argued God instituted three primary orders: the Family, the Church, and the State. O'Donovan argues that the

---

<sup>8</sup> O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 142.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 45. At this point O'Donovan is able to define what Scripture means when it talks about the LORD God ruling as king. He writes that the LORD God "gives Israel victory; he gives judgment; he gives Israel its possession."

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

traditional theory leaves him unsatisfied, and suffers from a “superficially evident weakness.”<sup>11</sup> He argues

it appears to be based on nothing stronger than intuition, with no exegetical or doctrinal argument to support it; but this is true of many great insights, and is not fatal. In this case there is a deeper weakness, which is that it ranges the church among a number of elementary social forms.<sup>12</sup>

Besides the criticism that the traditional Protestant social theory is superficially deficient in its scriptural and theological support, O’Donovan is concerned that it also fails to answer the critical question of social theory, which asks, “How are we to understand the concreteness of particular societies?”<sup>13</sup> O’Donovan also worries that the theory undermines the ecclesial and eschatological identity of the church by belittling it aside other social institutions, and that this arrangement further lends itself to particular social institutions confusing their particularity as universality.<sup>14</sup> The consequences of the particular/universal confusion are severe, as evidenced in a critical view of the Medieval plenary imperial papacy, the Crusades, the Thirty Years’ War, or the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s totalitarian ideologies and genocides.

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 254–255.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. When appraised in the light of the covenantal insights, the traditional Protestant approach actually does the opposite of simply ranging the church among a number of elementary institutions. Rather—and in the very spirit of his approach to the Church conducting political theology as a missional and apologetic reflection to the other at the missional horizon—the covenantal approach to those institutions actually explains their particularity and universality. It does not belittle the Church, but rather adds substantial moral meaning to each of the institutions, and how the universal Church ministers to them through the particular and visible churches. Rather than the Church be confused or reduced before the other institutions, the view actually appraises the institutions in a manner that redemptively points to their objective intent, and the Church’s central importance of proclaiming and initially refracting Christ’s sovereignty. It establishes a real and operating morale framework that maintains the particularity and universality of the institutions, while capturing the missional spirit of O’Donovan’s *Resurrection and Moral Order*.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 254–255.

However, perhaps there exists another theopolitical idea that grounds O'Donovan's notion of judgment, undergirds the Israelite political experience, explains the origination of universal and particular polities, and addresses O'Donovan's criticisms and critical social question. Throughout O'Donovan's works, he seems to note the importance of covenant in securing the nature of political act and authority. While discussing the fact that *khesed* is not simply momentary disposition of God's goodwill, O'Donovan claims, "[*khesed*] is his enduring commitment to those who lived within his covenant."<sup>15</sup> A couple of pages later, O'Donovan notes the importance of covenants with even stronger terms, writing that "the unique covenant of YHWH and Israel can be seen as a point of disclosure from which the nature of all political authority comes into view."<sup>16</sup> The importance of covenantalism are not alien to his other major works, and O'Donovan admits early in *The Ways of Judgment* that the very idea of divine judgment "presupposes a context of covenant relations, in which 'I shall be your God and you shall be my people' (Lev 26:12; Jer 7:23). YHWH's covenant with Israel constitutes the political relation in which he rules, and so judges; judgment is part of that covenant activity to which he has *sovereignly bound* himself."<sup>17</sup>

O'Donovan even takes his major social and theological ideas of creation, communication, and space, and grounds them in the covenantal idea. He writes that "creation is a covenant, grounding a coexistence of God and his creatures. The Garden of Eden is the first communication, the space where God and humankind are to be at home

---

<sup>15</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 37.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 45. For other references to the covenantal idea made by O'Donovan in *The Desire of the Nations*, see pp. 49, 60, 61, 63, 64, 68–69, 72, 79, 132, 185, & 220.

together.”<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, O’Donovan does little to develop this important presupposition and communication throughout his work. Perhaps he worries that the reader will confuse the covenantal idea as being contractarian.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps he was unaware of the many vertical and horizontal usages of the covenantal idea. Perhaps he sought to intentionally concentrate his attention elsewhere. Or perhaps he simply forgot. Regardless, O’Donovan overreaches by simply assuming in passing the seminal importance of the covenantal idea, and it is a major weakness of his otherwise stellar work.<sup>20</sup>

Jewish political theorist David Novak sees in O’Donovan’s work an attempt to preserve a “notion of community” that “comes from the covenantal community proposed by the Hebrew Bible, not from the association of rational adults.”<sup>21</sup> Novak astutely notes,

---

<sup>17</sup> O’Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 11. Italics added for emphasis.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

<sup>19</sup> O’Donovan often criticized the contractarian idea across his works. He structures *The Ways of Judgment* in part to argue against the “voluntarist”—and for his “expressivist”—view of representation. This is evident in the three-fold division of the work, where the political act of judgment precedes the reorganization of representation.

<sup>20</sup> The covenantal idea as expressed here and in the earlier chapters does not undermine or refute O’Donovan’s arguments about the role of judgment in politics. Arguably, O’Donovan’s covenantally augmented thesis stands on a firmer foundation, given judgment’s needed presupposition of the covenantal idea in creation (and, arguably, polity). O’Donovan’s conclusions seem well appropriated to explaining the political realities of a non-believing world, and the organic development theory of origination and constitution. However, the deficient treatment of the covenantal idea produced aspects of his thought that are deserving of criticism. This includes his critique against the traditional Protestant social theory, as well as the direction he takes against constitutionalism, which has been shown to be a seminal component of Western civilization’s political tradition, and a product of covenantalism in the Hebraic and American experiences. Perhaps O’Donovan’s deficient treatment also lends itself to his criticisms against social contractarianism and popular consent, given he does not make a needed distinction in the contractarian idea between contract, compact, and covenant, and so seems to ignore how covenant alleviates those criticisms and merits distinction. Furthermore, as shall be shown in the following chapters, an appraisal of the covenantal idea reveals a strategic and apologetic path forwards towards addressing political and social postmodernity.

<sup>21</sup> David Novak, “Oliver O’Donovan’s Critique of Autonomy” *Political Theology* Jul2008 Vol. 9 Issue 3 (2008): 333.

the most basic aspect of *mishpāt* is God’s prior right to consistently, coherently, and directly command those with whom God has covenanted, “grounding a coexistence of God and his creatures,” as O’Donovan puts it. That is why neither the individual claim nor the collective claim can ever totally trump each other, because the divine claim that Israel positively respond to God’s continual election of them, both collectively and individually, is prior to either the collective or the individual claim on each other.<sup>22</sup>

Novak also makes an important critical observation of O’Donovan’s work. Novak writes, “But at this point, I must disagree with O’Donovan’s seeming rejection of social contract theory. I think it does have theological validity when properly understood.”<sup>23</sup> Novak argues that covenant merits prioritization, and while “Surely biblical teaching does not regard our most basic social ties to have been constituted by a contractual act,” Novak does point out that “Instead, we are born into families that arose when our forefathers freely covenanted with our foremothers who freely accepted their covenantal offer to procreate a family.”<sup>24</sup> However, even with that observation Novak claims the impossibility of a covenantal state in a modern pluralistic society given the variety of covenants upheld by citizens.<sup>25</sup> Instead, Novak makes an appeal to social contracts as

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 335–336. Novak describes O’Donovan’s “expressivism” as the understanding that “Government represents a people, then, not by serving as a conduit of the popular will, but by symbolizing the people to itself: the representative ‘stands for’ our consciousness of our common association.” Also see John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 11, and David Novak, *The Jewish Social Contract* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 1–29.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 336.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. See Gen 24:57–58; *Babylonian Talmud*: Kiddushin 2b.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. Novak writes, “All that notwithstanding, a foundational covenant itself is insufficient to found a state in which there are a variety of covenants upheld by the citizens, let alone a state in which some of the citizens are members of no covenanted community at all.” The issue of a pluralistic society is not only problematic for a modern covenantal state, but also problematic for O’Donovan’s understanding of representation. In “Representing a People: Oliver O’Donovan on Democracy and Tradition,” Jonathan Chaplin raises the problem of a pluralistic society and O’Donovan’s notion of representation, writing, “Even if it were true that a people like Britain once displayed such a cohesive moral identity, it is very difficult to envisage such a cohesive identity today given the growing phenomenon of radical moral and spiritual pluralism, what Charles Taylor calls ‘deep diversity’” (p. 306).

the best way for a covenanted community to overcome its political insufficiency in a world it cannot and should not dominate or be dominated by is for the members of that covenanted community to enter into a social contract with the members of other covenanted communities, and the members of no such community, to set up a state that looks to the consent of all its citizens for its political legitimacy. However, the contracted state itself is not where the citizens themselves (or at least most of them) look for their own legitimacy. Instead, they can and should look to a source that transcends the humanly constructed state for their legitimacy. They can and should look to divine law and the divine lawgiver, the sovereign of their covenanted community (who is, ultimately, to be the king of the whole world when he finally redeems it).<sup>26</sup>

Novak's response to O'Donovan concludes with him stating that,

although a social contract is not a covenant, or even an extension of a covenant, a Jew or a Christian could make a very good case that a covenantal commitment makes a contractual agreement believable, indeed more believable than the reasons secularists give for their commitment to a social contract.<sup>27</sup>

Novak's interactions with O'Donovan are useful for two reasons. First, Novak helps bring attention to O'Donovan's sparse treatment of the seminal theopolitical concept of covenant. Second, Novak provides an interesting appraisal of social contract theory that appeals to the apologetic, missional, and moral contribution of covenant members.<sup>28</sup>

While these observations from Novak are helpful, they do get ahead of themselves by appealing to a modern pluralistic society prior to surveying the usages and utility of the covenantal idea. Furthermore, they seem to ignore the rich heritage of political

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 337.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. For additional information on Novak's position, see his comments in "The Jewish Social Contract," *Hebraic Political Studies* 1 (2006): 613–621.

<sup>28</sup> In David Novak, *Covenantal Rights: A Study in Jewish Political Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), Novak makes a powerful attempt at developing a covenantal political theory that approaches his Judaic faith with authenticity, while contributes the broader value of helping Western civilization understand the Judaic-origins of many of its political values. In particular, Novak's work attempts to appraise the biblical covenantal idea to ground the modern and postmodern focus on rights and community.

covenantalism that grounded the origination of Colonial and Early American polities, and inspired a covenant-oriented pursuit of liberty and constitutionalism.

### **Response to O'Donovan's Twofold Criticisms of Traditional Protestant Social Theory**

In his response to Novak's observations, O'Donovan admits "This thought-experiment avoids making individual rights basic, yet it avoids the expressivist state that claims powers in all domains."<sup>29</sup> O'Donovan even admits Novak's "model works perfectly as a thought experiment!"<sup>30</sup> These observations highlight covenant as a potential solution to O'Donovan's criticisms, yet O'Donovan sees it as a mere thought experiment. Is it? While O'Donovan's superficial treatment of covenant lacked scriptural and doctrinal development, it is not fatal to his overall political theological program. Rather, this weakness opened up an opportunity to pursue a corrective to O'Donovan's overall thesis by defining and appraising the idea of covenant across traditional Protestant social theory's three ordained institutions. The opportunity to pursue the covenantal idea inspired the past three chapters' appraisal of covenant as an ecclesial, marital, and political idea. Ultimately, what the appraisals reveal is that O'Donovan is wrong to state traditional Protestant social theory lacks scriptural and theological support. The appraisals uncover three major contributions that undermine both of O'Donovan's criticisms.

---

<sup>29</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, "Judgment, Tradition, and Reason: A Response," *Political Theology*, no. 29 (1999), 399.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

The first major contribution from the appraisal of the covenantal idea reveals that covenants in the Bible often occur within two main categories.<sup>31</sup> The first of these first-level categories were called “Vertical Covenants,” and consisted of covenants describing episodes where God entered into covenants with men. Within this category are two additional second-level subtypes, and identifying their typological differences depends on whether God’s “Vertical Covenant” intended a universal audience (“Vertical Universal Covenants,”), or a select and special audience (“Vertical Special Covenants”). Examples of “Vertical Universal Covenants” include the Adamic Covenant of Creation (Gen 1–2; Jer 33:20); the Noahic Covenant (Gen 9:9–17; Isa 54:9–10); and the New Covenant (Heb 9:15; 8:6–12; Jer 31:31; Rom 9:25–26; Gal 3:13; Eph 5:23; 2 Cor 3:6; Phil 2:9–11). Examples of the “Vertical Special Covenants” include the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 15:9–18; 17:2–21; Exod 2:24; 6:4; Lev 26:42); the Mosaic Covenant (Exod 19:5–8; 24:7–8; 31:16; 34:10–28; Deut 4:13; 9:9); the Davidic Covenant (Ps 89:3–4; 2 Sam 7:1–17; 1 Chr 17:11–14; 2 Chr 6:16); and the Priestly Covenant (Num 25:12–13; Mal 2:1–9; Neh 13:29). Furthermore, a third-level subtype exists within the “Vertical Special Covenant” category, which consists of covenantal episodes where the human partners of earlier “Vertical Special Covenants” initiate additional covenants to renew and reaffirm the originals (“Vertical Special Covenantal Renewals”).<sup>32</sup> Examples of the “Vertical

---

<sup>31</sup> See Table 2, “Model: Vertical and Horizontal Covenant Passages.”

<sup>32</sup> These categories are not intended to be perfect, but to be primarily illustrative of the fact that God initiates covenants with humans, and humans initiate covenants with themselves (before God). An example of the imperfection of the categories is seen in the New Covenant’s categorization, which actually contains both universal and particular aspects (depending on one’s soteriology). It is universal in the sense that Christ is the New Covenant’s “Last Adam” and the Noahic fulfillment of promised peace (1 Cor 15:45; 2 Cor 5:17–21). The New Covenant is also in a sense a “Vertical Special Covenant” in that it creates a specific *koinōnia* marked by the covenantal sign of Spirit Baptism (Acts 1:5), and identified in their

Special Covenantal Renewals” include covenantal renewals between Joshua and the people (Josh 24:25); Jehoida and the people (2 Kgs 11:17; 2 Chr 23:3); Hezekiah and the people (2 Chr 29:10); Josiah and the people (2 Kgs 23:3); and Ezra and the people (Ezra 10:3–5).<sup>33</sup> They also consist of the various calls by the prophets for renewal, and the promise of a New Covenant (Jer 31:31–33; Isa 42:6; Ezek 16:59–63; Mal 3:1). The second of the first-level categories were called “horizontal covenants,” and consisted of covenants describing episodes where men and women initiated and entered into covenants with each other before the LORD (Gen 31:48–53). Examples of these “horizontal covenants” include covenants between Abraham and the Amorites (Gen 14:13); Abraham and Abimelech (Gen 21:27–32; Prov 2:17); Edom and allies (Obad 1:7); Isaac and Abimelech (Gen 26:28–31); Jacob and Laban (Gen 31:44); Joshua and the Gibeonites (Josh 9:6–20); David, Abner, and the people (2 Sam 3:12–21); David and the elders of Israel (2 Sam 5:3; 1 Chr 11:3); Zedekiah and the people (Jer 34:8–18); Jehoida and the captains (2 Kgs 11:4; 2 Chr 23:1–3); David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18:3–4); husband and wife (Gen 1–2; Prov 2:16–17; Mal 2:14–15); and between men in general (Hos 10:4; Gal 3:15; 2 Chr 15:12–15; Neh 10:28–32; Ps 50:5). These two first-level Vertical and horizontal categories seem to provide a preliminary outline that contributes

---

“particular covenants” that ground their visible manifestation in particular churches. However, as the fulfillment of the “first covenant[s]” it makes sense the New Covenant encompasses and synthesizes all the covenantal categories (Heb 9:15).

<sup>33</sup> The Moabite Covenant arguably fits in either the “Vertical Special Covenant” or “Vertical Special Covenantal Renewal” category (Deut 29:1–16).

towards a covenantal understanding of the possible particularity and universality of institutions.<sup>34</sup>

The second major contribution from the appraisal of the covenantal idea comes in three parts, and reveals that the “Vertical Covenants” and “horizontal covenants” occur in Scripture across all three of the ecclesial, marital, and political institutions recognized by traditional Protestant social theory. Covenants are used in Scripture across the three orders to develop particular and universal relationships that ultimately presuppose God’s covenantal metanarrative for their moral viability and meaning. The second major contribution’s first part is the biblical appraisal of Vertical and horizontal ecclesial covenants. At its most universal religious level, God establishes his fundamental relationship—and the redemption of that relationship—through the promised “mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant” (Heb 9:15). In the Old Testament, God establishes the very possibility of God-and-mankind and man-and-woman relationships in the “Vertical Covenant” of the Adamic Covenant of Creation (Gen 1–2; Jer 33:20–26). In Gen 1–3, God’s prohibition against eating the forbidden fruit is ultimately a universal injunction against false worship.<sup>35</sup> Upon humanity’s sin-induced Fall, God’s redemptive

---

<sup>34</sup> The capitalization of “Vertical” versus “horizontal” is intentional. The intent is to emphasize the degree to which covenants are initiated by men or God, which contributes to the broader covenantal constitutional formulation that hierarchicalizes seemingly subjective and particular covenants and constitutions within the objectivity and universality of Covenants and Constitutions.

<sup>35</sup> As part of the Covenant of Creation, God calls Adam and Eve to recognize his Lordship through acknowledging their role and reign in Creation. Eve’s pursuit of wanting to “be like God,” and Adam’s abandonment of his “protectorate” and “pastoral” role, formulates a Federal Fall. Man’s universal call to hearken his ultimate religious covenantal obligation is present and persistent in Adam and Eve’s fruit-

response occurs within the promise of a “seminal” Covenant (Gen 3:15). The remainder of the Old Testament tells the story of God’s development of a particular *edah* through various “Vertical Special Covenants,” which include the identification of a specific land and lineage through the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 15:9–18). God also used a “Vertical Special Covenant” to establish a specific ecclesial institution and priesthood through the Priestly/Levitic Covenant (Num 25:12–13; Mal 2:1–9; Neh 13:29). At times, members of the *edah* even utilize “horizontal covenants” to constitute and renew their congregational worship (2 Chr 15:12–15). The ecclesial covenantal contribution of the Old Testament’s prophets is to remind the *edah* that their ecclesial covenants orient towards a promised New Covenant that will open the restricted *edah* to all universal humanity, and thus fulfill the promises of the Old Covenant that foreshadowed the New (Jer 31:31–33; Isa 42:6; Ezek 16:59–63; Mal 3:1). The heralded arrival of this New Covenant comes with the prophet, John the Baptist, who comes in the promised spirit of Elijah to proclaim and make way for the arrival of the Messianic promise and fulfillment of the former covenants (Mal 4:5; John 1:29; Matt 11:12–14). The promised “Vertical Universal” New Covenant incurs the wrath warranted by man’s *khamas* and *yetzer*—and warranted by the disobedience of former covenants—through the propitiation and mediation of the New Covenant’s messiah. Christ Jesus thus fulfills, in the fullest sense, the former covenantal blessings and promises of peace, life, rest, and relationship (Heb 8:6–12). The culmination of this New Covenant is called the “Gospel,” and it produces a fulfillment and an opening of the *edah* that the New Testament describes with the covenantal term

---

illustrated idolatry, the *Shema*, the first table of the Decalogue, and the first command of the Great

*koinōnia*. Those persons who embrace—by faith—Christ and the New Covenant receive the covenant’s blessings of salvation, and become part of the New “Vertical Special” covenanted community that is territorially marked by the universal yet invisible covenantal sign of Spirit Baptism (Acts 1:8; 2:38). However, this *koinōnia* is also visibly manifested in the particular “horizontal covenant” local assemblies of these New Covenant members usually called the *ekklēsia*. The Spirit-enabled entrance and maintenance of membership in these congregations are covenantally marked, modeled, and memorialized by the universal and particular signs of believer’s baptism and the Lord’s Supper (Rom 6:4; Gal 3:27; 1 Pet 3:21; Matt 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25).<sup>36</sup>

The second major contribution’s second part is the biblical appraisal of Vertical and horizontal marital covenants. The Bible begins with the story of a particular marital covenant with universal covenantal implications. Genesis 1–2 is the foundational primordial account of marriage as a covenantal idea. The episode in the garden contains various covenantal elements such as oaths and signs, and is directed to the ends of what Augustine called *fides* (Gen 2:18), *sacramentum* (Gen 1:27), and *proles* (Gen 1:28; 2:24).<sup>37</sup> The particular “horizontal covenant” of Adam and Eve’s marriage is also the sign

---

Commandment.

<sup>36</sup> I say it is both a “universal and particular” sign because baptism and the Lord’s Supper are manifestations of the universal covenantal sign of being baptized by the Spirit. The Spirit enables entrance into the covenant community through conviction that leads to baptism (John 16:7–8), and the Spirit enables participation in the covenant fellowship through repentance and reconciliation maintained in the Lord’s Supper (Phil 2:1–2; 1 Thess 1:5; 2 Cor 13:14). In addition to the Spirit enabling the *koinōnia*’s covenantal origination of the universal invisible *Ekklēsia*, and the particular visible *ekklēsia*[s], the Spirit also empowers the New Covenant’s constitution through directing its mission (Acts 1:8), empowering its proclamation (2 Tim 1:7–8), appointing of its officers (Acts 1:1–2; 6:3–6; 13:2–5; 20:28), articulating its “laws” of love (Gal 5:22–26), denoting its authority (Luke 11:20; Rom 15:19), guiding its discipline (Gal 6:1), and ultimately producing/exhaling its written Constitution (2 Tim 3:16).

<sup>37</sup> All three elements of Augustine’s marital idea seem present in Gen 1–2. On *fides*, the passage states, “It is not good that the man should be alone,” (Gen 2:18). On *sacramentum*, the passage states, “in

of the “Vertical Universal” Covenant of Creation which hearkens humanity to fulfill a cultural mandate of creative propagation and creation cultivation (Gen 1:26–28).<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the particularity of the original Adamic marriage covenant also explains the “Vertical Special” covenantal identity of *humankind*’s relationship/kinship with one another, given in a very real sense all of humanity is part of a very distant family per being shared descendants of a common primordial marriage. In other words, the Adamic marriage simultaneously serves the entire spectrum of covenantal categories and types. It is a “Vertical Universal Covenant” in that Adam and Eve’s particular marriage covenant is simultaneously a Covenant of Creation God enters into with all of humanity via the federal headship of Adam. It is a “Vertical Special Covenant” in that the covenant constitutes a specific family, which has the collective last name “Human,” given they share Adam’s last name (“Man”) and are all distant relatives (Adam and Eve’s very-distant great grandchildren). Finally, it is a “horizontal covenant” in that Adam and Eve’s one-flesh union before God is their particular marriage (Gen 2:23). While the origination of other “Vertical Universal” and “Vertical Special” familial covenants are unavailable to humans outside of this primordial reality, a continued appraisal of covenant as a marital idea in Scripture reveals that marriage is continually understood as particular “horizontal covenants.” Some passages make indirect references to marriage as a particular and “horizontal” covenantal idea (Hos 2:18–22; Ezek 16:8). Other passages make direct reference to the origination and constitution of marriage as covenantal (Prov 2:16–17;

---

the image of God he created him; male and female he created them,” (Gen 1:27). On *proles*, the passage states, “they shall become one flesh,” (Gen 2:24), and “Be fruitful and multiply,” (Gen 1:28).

Mal 2:14–15). Additional passages also suggest marriage as a covenant through the manner in which they condemn divorce and contrast it with the covenantal idea (Matt 19:1–10; Mal 2:15–16; Prov 2:17). Ultimately, an appraisal of marriage as a covenantal idea returns to the restoration of its universal implications, through an analogous interpretation of the New Covenant as a Universal and Special marriage covenant between Christ and the Church (Eph 5:21–33).

The second major contribution's third part is the biblical appraisal of Vertical and horizontal political covenants. In addition to having universal ecclesial and marital themes related to worship and cultivation, the "Vertical Universal" Adamic Covenant of Creation also introduces important political themes related to sovereignty. God had created humanity in his royal image, and called for them to actualize their *imago dei* regality through hearkening his imperative to "have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen 1:28). However, Adam and Eve instead sinned against God in a manner that violated the ecclesial, marital, and political implications of created order. They denied their ecclesial obligation to worship the LORD God by instead seeking to worship the self ("be like God;" "a delight to the eyes," Gen 3:3–7). They denied their marital obligation to be a "one flesh" union and a helper unto the other (Gen 2:16–18), by permitting the eating of the fruit (Gen 3:6), and tearing their union through their attempted covering of nudity-

---

<sup>38</sup> The universality of this Adamic/Covenant of Creation is seen in the continuation of the cultural mandate (Gen 9:1, 7), and the continuation of Adam's federal headship (Rom 5:12–14).

induced shame (“they sewed fig leaves,” Gen 3:7).<sup>39</sup> Finally, the Garden also evidences a violation of their covenantal political obligations, for they rejected God’s Sovereignty and their borrowed sovereignty through inverting the created order. Whereas they were intended to wear a crown and rule over creation, they allowed their desires and the created creature to have sovereignty and reign over them (“The serpent deceived me, and I ate,” Gen 3:13).<sup>40</sup> The result of this rejection of God’s sovereignty is a type of proto-*khamas* and proto-*yetzer*. Violence and death are introduced between man, the serpent, and the soil (Gen 3:15, 17–19), and man’s depraved intent is foreshadowed in his need to be expelled from the Garden and restrained/guarded by a flaming sword (“lest he reach out his hand ... and live forever,” Gen 3:22–24). The proto-violence and dangerous intent become actualized violence and depraved resolve with Cain’s murder of his brother. Instead of accepting God’s providence, Cain leads himself “away from the presence of the LORD” and favors protecting himself by establishing the Bible’s first created city (Gen 4:16–17). Cain’s behavior foreshadows the spiral of violence and degenerate will, which ultimately leads God to state “every intention [*yetzer*] of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5), and that “the earth was filled with

---

<sup>39</sup> Adam and Eve were intended to be one-flesh, but their disobedience to one another by their allowance of partaking of the forbidden fruit, leads them to introduce division in their marriage through their discomfort of being naked before one another. What a remarkable commentary on marital sexual unity for our age of digitized perversions.

<sup>40</sup> There is poetic irony in that the punishment of Adam’s rebellion against God’s sovereignty, and his rejection of his own image-induced regality, was to toil over soil and thorns until death. However, Christ’s ultimate redemption of Adam’s sin involved wearing a crown of thorns. Christ’s toil came with a whip, and his labor came on a cross. He was intended to be “buried” per the death that came from Adam, but rather Christ defeats the soil, the toil, and the thorns. He returns from death with a resurrected crown of glory, and restores humanity to their intended regality.

violence [*khamas*]” (Gen 6:11).<sup>41</sup> God’s response to this universal degenerate condition is to punish humanity with a Flood, and after rescuing a remnant of humanity, God enters into a “Vertical Universal Covenant” with Noah that establishes the ordination of civil government as a restraint against a total descent into *khamas* and degenerate *yetzer* (Gen 9:6). God then identifies a lineage and a land through the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 15:9–18), and originates and constitutes a special particular polity through the “Vertical Special Covenant” of the Mosaic Covenant (Exod 19:8–24:8). The specific polity of Israel further uses “Vertical Special Covenantal Renewals” to renew and modify their political constitution—such as evidenced in the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:1–17). Furthermore, the Israelites also used a number of “horizontal covenants” among themselves and their neighbors to establish relationships before the LORD that institute morally-bound political treatises (Obad 1:7); constitutions and the consent of rulers (Jer 34:8–18); political pledges (2 Kgs 11:4); and even *fraternitas* (1 Sam 18:3–4).<sup>42</sup> As both Israel’s political history and its Prophets reveal, the political

---

<sup>41</sup> No wonder God did not want man to grasp eternity (Gen 3:22), and why he dispersed man’s Tower of Babel’s concentration and consolidation of power (Gen 11:6–8). One need only consult the actualization of the fear underscoring the Tower of Babel, as evidenced in the tens of millions that died by the hands of the totalitarian concentration of power and violence produced by the secular ideologies of the twentieth century (Nazi Germany and Stalinist Communism being two obvious examples).

<sup>42</sup> It is noteworthy that in some cases, the Israelites entered into “horizontal covenants” with their pagan neighbors (Gen 14:13). The viability of covenanting “before the LORD” is a recognition of God’s foundational moral order, regardless of whether we believe that order exists. However, God does instruct the Israelites not to make covenants with specific nations and peoples (Exod 23:32), but he seemingly does not invalidate the various types of political “horizontal covenants” utilized by the Israelites with themselves and some neighbors throughout the Old Testament. Rather, in some cases such as David’s kingship appointment, God includes the particular horizontally-initiated political covenant as a part of his “Vertical Special” Davidic Covenant (1 Chr 11:3 compared with 2 Sam 7:1–17). Clearly this does not intend to convey a horizontal covenant in any way drives God’s sovereignty one way or the other. It simply conveys the continued viability of “horizontal covenants” as political ideas; perhaps even political ideas that do not necessitate certain participants be members of the “Vertical Special Covenants” that worship the LORD

institution can only restrain—and not redeem—man’s *khamas* and his depraved *yetzer*. Throughout the episodes of families, tribes, cities, towers, judges, kings, kingdoms, and empires, the Old Testament reveals a clear pattern that even man’s collective political polities fall victim to *khamas* and *yetzer* (and actually often exacerbates it!).<sup>43</sup> The political institution only contains a borrowed and refracted sovereignty that serves God and the people by restraining temporal violence (Rom 13:1–7). With the New Covenant comes an invitation to partake in the recognition of God’s Sovereignty through confessing Christ Jesus as the “Lord of lords and King of kings” (Rev 19:16). Notably absent with the Gospel’s messiah is a “Vertical Special Covenant” that originates and constitutes a particular political polity. Rather, the New Testament affirms the continued function and legitimacy of the political institution’s “here-and-now” restraint against *khamas* and degenerate *yetzer* (Rom 13:1–7; Gen 9:6; 1 Pet 2:13–14). The political institution’s service, under the New Covenant and in the eschatological “here-and-now,”

---

God, since they derive their moral meaning by existing under God’s *chuppah* (however, this is a cautionary observation deserving of an entirely separate exploration).

<sup>43</sup> An example an Israelite polity leading to a quickening and magnifying of degeneration is clearly evident in the historical trajectory of their kings. Perhaps this was a reason why God did not desire for them to have a king like their pagan neighbors, but rather a king in the regal image of pre-Fall Adam. However, this social deterioration is also present in the trajectory of Judges, which ultimately concludes, “in those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes,” (Judg 17:6). Man’s tendency to exacerbate his degeneration, consolidate power, and multiply violence is arguably the main theme and contribution of Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1960). Niebuhr summarizes the work’s contribution, where he critiques a group of moral and religious optimists who believe man’s egoism can be checked by his sociability. Rather, Niebuhr argues man’s egoism is actually exacerbated and magnified through immoral society. He writes, “Inasfar as this treatise has a polemic interest it is directed against the moralists, both religious and secular, who imagine that the egoism of individuals is being progressively checked by the development of rationality or the growth of a religiously inspired goodwill and that nothing but the continuance of this process is necessary to establish social harmony between all the human societies and collectives” (pp. xxv–xxvi). He continues with his criticism, writing, “What is lacking among all these moralists, whether religious or rational, is an understanding of the brutal character of the behavior of all human collectives, as the power of self-interest and collective egoism in all inter-group relations. Failure to recognize the

is to protect a temporal peace that is conducive to the *koinōnia*'s Gospel proclamation of recognizing Christ's Sovereignty and thus serving the actualization of the Kingdom of God (1 Tim 2:1–4). Ultimately, a “not-yet” establishment and fulfillment of a “Vertical Special” Kingdom polity will come to fruition in the future, yet its arrival is an obvious work of Christ Jesus and his Second Coming (Mark 13:24–27; Rev 19:15–16). Until then, the political implications from the “here-and-now” New Covenant imply a moral-bound liberty for particular polities and their constitutions that awaits the “not-yet” Kingdom fulfillment (Phil 2:9–11).

The third major contribution from the appraisal of the covenantal idea reveals in three parts that throughout the Church's history, the covenantal idea was utilized to explain the origination and constitution of particular ecclesial, marital, and political institutions. In moments that the Church found itself in ecclesial, familial, and political frontiers that lacked existing authorities or rightful institutions, various social frontiersmen appropriated covenant as a seminal theopolitical idea. The third major contribution's first part is the historical actualization of covenant as an ecclesial idea. The historical example of the actualization of ecclesial covenantalism is the Baptist, Free Church, and Congregationalist approaches to originate and constitute their particular churches through “horizontal covenants” that took the written form called “church covenants.” Baptists and Free Church Congregationalists found themselves in an ecclesial frontier produced in part by their ecclesiological convictions of believer's baptism, and their rejection of the papal or magisterial synthesis of church and state.

---

stubborn resistance of group egoism to all moral and inclusive social objectives inevitably involves them in

Radical Reformers such as Balthasar Hubmaier claimed this church and state synthesis confused ecclesial and political particularity as universality, and had the unfortunate result of actually exacerbating the type of physical and spiritual violence they were supposed to restrain and redeem.<sup>44</sup> In this social frontier, churches modeled their appropriation of ecclesial covenants after the relationship between worship and covenantal bodies in the Old Testament (2 Chr 15:12); after the inferences of the New Testament's covenantal *ekklēsia* (1 Cor 1:9; Matt 18:20; 1 Tim 6:12); after the covenantal structure of the Lord's Supper (Mark 14:24; 1 Cor 10:16); after the covenantal analogy of the Church as a Marriage (Eph 5:21–33); and after the practical implications merited by the New Testament's teachings on ecclesial authority and church discipline (Matt 18:15–20).<sup>45</sup> As noted in the “London Baptist Confession” (1644), the “Savoy Declaration” (1658), and the more contemporary “Baptist Faith and Message” (2000), Baptists evidenced a historical appraisal of covenant as a seminal ecclesial idea to explain the origination and constitution of their particular churches through written communications called church covenants.<sup>46</sup>

---

unrealistic and confused political thought” (p. xxx).

<sup>44</sup> One of the longest and most devastating wars in Europe was the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) fought between Roman Catholic and Protestant alliances. While the war later became a geopolitical struggle, its origins are greatly the blame of the confusion of particularity for universality. In specific, Ferdinand II's election as the Holy Roman Emperor sought to impose religious universality through his available political temporal powers. The result was a war that lasted thirty years, and produced millions of fatalities. Some estimates suggest as many as twenty percent of Germany's total population died in relation to the conflict. For more on the tragedy, and an example of the severity and solemnity of the particularity and universality social question, see Peter H. Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy: A New History of the Thirty Years War* (London: Penguin, 2010), 787.

<sup>45</sup> “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them,” (Matt 18:20).

<sup>46</sup> For examples of church covenants, see Charles W. Deweese, *Baptist Church Covenants* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1990), and Appendix 6, “Praxis: Ecclesial Church & Covenant.”

The third major contribution's second part is the historical actualization of covenant as a marital idea. The first theologian to provide a substantive theological treatment of marriage was Augustine. His formulation of marriage as containing the elements of *fides* (fidelity), *sacramentum* (holiness), and *proles* (fertility), greatly shaped the Church's understanding of marriage. As the Medieval church sought to navigate the legal and religious difficulties derived from their church and state synthesis, the Vatican fluctuated between understanding marriage as originating in consent (*fides*) or consummation (*proles*). They later ended up with a synthesis between the two and a proto-Tridentine sacramental understanding. In contrast, the Reformation produced a social frontier that necessitated Protestants provide an understanding of the origination and constitution of marriage. In this social frontier, early Protestant responses from figures such as Calvin and his disciples sought to emphasize marriage as a covenantal idea; and sought to do so without sacrificing the Augustinian elements. The Vatican's response to the Protestant formulations came in the Council of Trent's solidification of a Tridentine sacramental understanding of marriage as primarily a sacrament. In contrast, the Reformed tradition and Puritans such as Robert Cleaver, Robert Pricke, William Perkins, Thomas Gataker, William Gogue, and Richard Baxter, helped develop and popularize marriage as a covenantal idea. Ultimately, the notion of marriage as covenantal became the most widely recognized understanding among both Protestants and Roman Catholics.<sup>47</sup> The wide-spread acceptance is evident throughout numerous

---

<sup>47</sup> In John Witte, *Covenant Marriage in Comparative Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), Witte evidences the covenantal idea across the majority of Protestant denominations.

marriage liturgies, Protestant marriage ceremonies, and the conciliar and catechistic teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>48</sup>

The third major contribution's final part is the historical actualization of covenant as a political idea. The history of covenant being utilized as a political idea to explain the origination and constitution of polities occurs in five stages. The first stage is the Jewish covenantal stage, and primarily consists of the "Vertical Special" covenantal polity surveyed earlier in the appraisal of political covenants in the Old Testament. The second stage is the early Christian covenantal stage, and it begins with the New Testament's intentional lack of a "Vertical Special Covenant" political polity in the "here-and-now." However, it notably affirms the continuation of the political institution's *khamas*-restraining function until the "not-yet" consummation of the Kingdom. The early Christian covenantal stage also includes the extra-biblical attempts of the Early Church to live out the seemingly "anti-political" and "political" implications of the New Covenant. With the decline of the Roman Empire's dominion, the Church was driven by social urgencies to address the function of the political institution, and their reflections drove them towards a model of organic hierarchicalism that consolidated and synthesized

---

<sup>48</sup> For examples of contemporary Protestant covenantal marriage liturgies and ceremonies from Episcopal, Presbyterian, and United Methodist traditions, see Perry H. Biddle, *A Marriage Manual* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994). For examples of the appraisal of marriage as a covenantal idea among contemporary Baptists, see section XVIII in "Baptist Faith and Message (2000)," in The Southern Baptist Convention, 2000, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>. For examples of the appraisal of marriage as a covenantal idea in Roman Catholicism, see Joseph Ratzinger *et al.*, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican: Liguori Publications, 1994), 400, and Vatican II's statements on marriage and covenant in "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World—*Gaudium et Spes*," n.d., [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_cons\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html). Although twentieth century Roman Catholicism sought to emphasize more the covenantal nature of the marriage institution, it should be noticed that they did so without forfeiting their sacramental understanding. Regardless, it does provide an ecumenical advantage.

temporal and spiritual powers in the Dark and Medieval ages. Similar to their ecclesial and marital experiences, the Reformation drove Protestants into a political and social frontier, which initiated the third major covenantal stage. During this Reformation and Reformed Christian covenantal stage, Calvin, Bullinger, and Reformed theologians appraised the covenantal idea into a federal theology to explain the origination and constitution of their political polities. The Radical Reformer theologians contributed to this idea by sobering the extent of the particularity and universality of the political institution's authority. The fourth major stage of the covenantal political tradition then consists of the Puritans' continuation of the Reformation's political insights into modernity. In particular, this Colonial covenantal stage consists of the inheritors of federal theology migrating to the New World, and finding themselves in a frontier that lacked political authorities and institutions. In this frontier, Pilgrims and Puritans' popularized the political covenantal idea in their sermons (Samuel Willard; John Winthrop; John Davenport; John Cotton), originated their polities through written covenants ("The Mayflower Covenant;" the "Dedham Covenant;" and the "Guilford Covenant"), and developed covenant-grounded constitutions (the "Pilgrim Code of Law;" the "Massachusetts Body of Liberties;" and the "Charter of Liberties and Frame of Government of the Province of Pennsylvania in America").<sup>49</sup> The fifth stage of the

---

<sup>49</sup> For samples of the political covenantal idea in colonial pulpits, see John Davenport and John Cotton's sermons in Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1986). For political covenantal sermons closer to America's Independence, see Ellis Sandoz, *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era: 1730–1805*, 2 vols (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1998). For examples of Colonial era political covenants and constitution, see "The Mayflower Covenant;" "The Dedham Covenant;" the "Guilford Covenant;" "Pilgrim Code of Law;" "Massachusetts Body of Liberties;" and "Charter of Liberties and Frame of Government of the Province of Pennsylvania in America" in Donald S. Lutz, *The Origins of American Constitutionalism* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana

political covenantal tradition consisted of the secularization of the covenantal idea into compact and contract theory, and the continued influence of the Puritan federal theological tradition on major political theorists such as John Locke. The direct influence through the Colonial pulpits and political covenants, and the indirect influence through theorists such as John Locke, establish covenant as an actualized political idea that was also a seminal inspiration behind the Declaration of Independence and American constitutionalism.<sup>50</sup>

In conclusion, an appraisal of covenant as an ecclesial, marital, and political idea in Scripture seems to strongly suggest that the threefold framework of traditional Protestant social theory finds biblical warrant. At minimum, the common usage of the covenantal idea to originate and constitute ecclesial, marital, and political institutions in their “Vertical” and “horizontal” categories surely invalidate O’Donovan’s criticism that the three-fold social theory is “superficial” and biblically insufficient. Furthermore, the appraisal of the covenantal idea across history undermines O’Donovan’s accusation that the threefold pattern is without doctrinal support. However, at maximum, the covenantalism evidenced throughout Scripture and the Church’s history suggest a seminal idea that helps not only refute O’Donovan’s criticisms against traditional

---

State University Press, 1988). Also see a sermon and covenant hybrid in John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity,” in *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings*, eds. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1938), 195–199.

<sup>50</sup> It may even be argued that the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution are a direct example of the inheritance of covenantal constitutionalism and Christian Liberalism. It not only combined the political insights of the Christian Liberal tradition, but Elazar points out in Appendix 10, “Symbol: America’s Declaration of Independence and its Covenantal Structure” that the Declaration serves the function and format of a political covenant. Furthermore, this observation seems supported by the evidence of the editorial changes made by Congress to Jefferson’s original draft, which suggest editorial

Protestant social theory, but also suggests a powerful political theological response to the critical social question. Covenant seems to explain the particularity and universality of the Church & churches, the Family & families, and the Kingdom and kingdoms.<sup>51</sup>

### **Covenantal Constitutionalism, Political Theology, and the Critical Social Question**

O'Donovan represents one of the most rewarding and innovative approaches to producing a political theology that rightfully seeks to restore a moral framework to political theory. At the forefront of his endeavor is the challenge of producing a political theology that is first and foremost theological, and then political. Both O'Donovan and Luther attempt the political theological task by starting with similar exegetical foundations. Both hearken to the texts of Scripture to produce insights that carry over into the realm of politics. Both are biblical, Christocentric, and evangelical. In the end, both of their political theologies and corresponding social theories are helpful. However, implications from the covenantal appraisal, and the persistence of post-modernity's variation of the critical social question, invite an articulation of a covenantal constitutional political theology that addresses the political act, the political authority, and the institutional horizon beyond this act and authority.

O'Donovan's political theology and social theory is a theology of judgment, representation, and communication. O'Donovan sees the political act as residing in the act of judgment. What gives this political act authority, is when the represented

---

intent to frame the document with a theocentric *inclusio* that depicted the Declaration as operating before the LORD God, and in the name of his power, presence, judgment, providence, and provision.

community organically recognizes their representative's action as legitimate because it combines a trifecta of power, right, and tradition. Life beyond this political act and authority then consists of the places and spaces where individuals exchange communications and commune over what they have in common. In O'Donovan's efforts to provide a novel approach that dismisses the framework of the traditional Protestant social theory in favor of his concept of placed social communication, he errs by being too quick with his dismissal. Among the theologically diverse supporters of traditional Protestant social theory are renowned Protestant theologians such as Luther, Calvin, Balthasar, Baxter, Kuyper, Bavinck, Troeltsch, Bonhoeffer, and Henry. Whereas he faults their traditional Protestant theory for failing to explain the particularities of churches, families, and states, his abstraction seems to ignore a rich tradition starting with the Israelites and continuing into the American polity that utilized covenant as an ecclesial, marital, and political idea. Furthermore, O'Donovan's criticisms of traditional Protestant social theory as being unbiblical seem unwarranted per the biblical appraisals of the prior three chapters. Unfortunately, O'Donovan does little in *The Ways of Judgment* to make his case against traditional Protestant social theory, and instead opts to simply mention his criticisms in passing, and produce an alternative theory that seems more the product of his theological creativity than biblical exegesis.<sup>52</sup> Without a doubt, his notion of placed

---

<sup>51</sup> For an argumentative outline of the appraisal-supported response to O'Donovan's criticisms, as broken down hierarchically by contributions, categories, and parts, see Appendix 2, "Outline: Covenantal Appraisal Answer Outline to O'Donovan's Criticisms of Traditional Protestant Social Theory."

<sup>52</sup> In *The Desire of the Nations*, O'Donovan provides the more exegesis-focused treatment of the topic, and in *The Ways of Judgment* he focuses more on the political theoretical implications. However, O'Donovan still errs in *The Ways of Judgment* by rejecting traditional Protestant social theory as unbiblical, without ever telling the reader why. He then proceeds with a biblically-absent treatment of "place," which further undermines his criticism for itself being scripturally and doctrinally deficient.

social communication has great potential in providing a theologically-minded perspective that explains particular communities. After all, the act of a covenant—in either its oral or written form—is in a very real sense an act of communication that creates a moral-bound community. However, in the end, O’Donovan seemingly provides an answer to the critical social question that falls victim to his initial criticisms—perhaps it is superficial and scripturally deficient.

Luther’s political theology and social theory is a theology of stations, kingdoms, and orders. Luther sees the political act as residing in the actions needed to fulfill the duties of one’s station. What gives these political actions authority, is that they propagate the external dimensions of the law of love within Kingdom-specific political stations. Life beyond this political act and authority then consists of propagating the internal and external dimensions of the law of love within stations specific to the ecclesial and familial orders. In Luther was discovered an early articulation of the traditional Protestant social theory that identified the three-fold institutions in a biblically-rooted exegesis that unfolded as Luther wrestled with Matt 5:2–12, Rom 13:1–7, and several other passages. From this *sola scriptura* mentality, Luther developed a doctrine of stations and orders that provided a modified Augustinian explanation to the internal and external social experience of believers. Luther’s political theology and his social theory sought to argue that the answer to the critical social question was found in the Christian’s love-driven Kingdom of Heaven vocational engagement with—and within—the kingdoms of the earth. Many of the other Protestant theologians in the second chapter’s survey of traditional Protestant social theory came to similar conclusions regarding the existence of

three or four divinely instituted orders per their scriptural exegesis, and maintained their own notable contributions to the theory. However, the main problem with Luther's political and social theology, is that it seems to lack clarity as to identifying the boundaries of the three institutions. Luther's commitment to explaining the reality of political life under a New Covenant that incorporates both Matt 5:2–12 and Rom 13:1–7 is commendable. Furthermore, Luther's modification of Augustine's Two Cities thesis by emphasizing the internal and external components of the political act and authority are especially helpful.<sup>53</sup> Ultimately, a perversion of early twentieth century German Lutheranism exposed the severity of confusing particularity for universality. German Lutheranism was used to support a confusing social buffer that enabled Nazism and its pyramidal political model of totalitarianism. O'Donovan may here agree that the weakness of Luther's social doctrine was its inability to clearly define the territorial boundaries of the three orders in a manner that better prevented their particularity as being confused as a universality; or, from another angle, better prevented the institutions from claiming the acts and authority of another.<sup>54</sup>

The political theologies of Luther and O'Donovan, and their related social theories, reveal six contributions that lend themselves to an exploration of covenantal constitutionalism as a political theology that augments the traditional Protestant social theory. Luther contributes, first, an introductory analysis of the three orders; second, an emphasis on love as being the seminal motivator of social and vocational behavior; and

---

<sup>53</sup> Ironically, Luther's Radical Reformer critics appealed to Luther's own social insights to criticize his magisterial church-state synthesis as a confusion of a particular for being a universal.

third, a modification of Augustinianism that examines the importance of the internal and external dimensions which further clarifies the authorities of the Two Cities/Kingdoms. In addition, O'Donovan provides, first, an explanation of the critical social question that cautions against confusing particularity as universality; second, the claim that even the act and authority of judgment presupposes covenantal relations; and third, the observation that acts of communication explain the particularity and universality of particular and universal social institutions. These observations orient and invite a political theological formulation we shall call "Covenantal Constitutionalism." This political theology connects the insights of the scriptural and historical covenantal appraisals with a covenantal and constitutional articulation of the political act, the political authority, and life beyond political act and authority. Ultimately, the formulation of the covenantal constitutional political theology, fettered with the earlier biblical and historical appraisal, provide a sufficient answer to O'Donovan's twofold criticisms, and the critical social question.

#### Covenantal Constitutional Political Theology: On Covenant, On Constitution, and Covenantal Constitutions

A covenantal constitutional political theology and social theory is a theology of covenants, constitutions, and covenantal constitutions. It sees the political act as initiated and oriented in the act of origination. What gives this political act authority, is dependent on however a political polity originated and then constituted legitimacy. Life beyond this political act and authority consists of the origination and constitution of additional institutions. The critical social question asks, "How are we to understand the concreteness

of particular societies?”<sup>55</sup> Covenantal Constitutionalism’s answer begins with the response, “by examining their origination and constitution.”

### ***The Political Act: On Covenant***

In a way, a covenantal constitutional political theology simultaneously originates with how O’Donovan’s works begins and ends—with creation and communication. If O’Donovan’s *Resurrection and Moral Order*, *The Desire of the Nations*, and *The Ways of Judgment* are considered as a trilogy, O’Donovan’s work begins with *Resurrection and Moral Order*’s treatment of creation in its first two chapters, and ends with *The Ways of Judgment*’s attempt in its final chapters to develop a social theory of the communication of space and place. O’Donovan’s reason for beginning the work with creation is in part an admission that origination and constitution matters. The fact that God created the universe *ex nihilo*, and the fact that he gave Creation purpose and function through an intended moral Constitution, reveal a possibility for an objective moral order.<sup>56</sup> However, in contrast to a naturalist ethic, the mere presence of an Originator and a Creation are not enough for creatures to grasp the objectivity of moral ordering *de facto*.<sup>57</sup> Rather, creation

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>56</sup> O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 17. On God’s order and morality, O’Donovan writes, “The order of things that God has made is there. It is objective, and mankind has a place within it. Christian ethics, therefore, has an objective reference because it is concerned with man’s life in accordance with this order. The summons to live in it is addressed to all mankind, because the good news that we may live in it is addressed to all mankind. Thus Christian moral judgments in principle address every man.... They are founded on a reality that God has given it.... The way the universe is, determines how man ought to behave himself in it.”

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 19. On the epistemological barrier to ethics, and the ontological possibility of ethics, O’Donovan writes, “The epistemological program for an ethic that is ‘natural,’ in the sense that its contents are simply known to all, has to face dauntingly high barriers. But we are not to conclude from this that there is no ontological ground for an ‘ethic of nature,’ no objective order to which the moral life can respond. We may only conclude that any certainty we may have about the order which God has made depends upon God’s own disclosure of himself and of his works.” This conclusion is especially evident in

is dependent on revelation—and Christian ethics on resurrection—to resurrect the possibility of comprehending the ontological objectivity of the created moral order. Thus, O’Donovan states, “In the sphere of revelation, we will conclude, and only there, can we see the natural order as it really is and overcome the epistemological barriers to an ethic that conforms to nature.”<sup>58</sup>

A covenant is an act of communication, creation, revelation, restraint, and redemption. Furthermore, a political act is an act of communicative creation. As O’Donovan acknowledges, “creation is a covenant, grounding a coexistence of God and his creatures. The Garden of Eden is the first communication, the space where God and humankind are to be at home together.”<sup>59</sup> In the act of a “Vertical” or “horizontal” covenant, a relationship becomes originated and created through an act of verbal or written communication, and sealed with an act of symbolic communication. God himself originates all creation through an act of communication, and the first occurrence of verbalization happens early in Gen 1:3, where it states, “And *God said*, ‘Let there be light,’ and *there was light*.”<sup>60</sup> Notice the continued pattern in Genesis of God’s creation through communication:

---

the Garden and the history of the Israelites. Adam quite literally walked with God in the Garden, and was given a clear moral command, and still rejected God’s sovereignty and fell into sin. The Israelites too, had a relationship where God himself appointed their polity, yet they still worshipped golden calves and coveted their pagan neighbor’s kings. If those incidents reveal the severity of the condition of man’s degenerate heart, then what hope can there truly be for a naturalist ethic? Thus, O’Donovan is correct to champion the ontological possibility of ethics as dependent on a resurrection, revelation, and redemption of the moral order.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 19–20.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>60</sup> What ensues below is a heavy number of biblical citations attached to theological prose. These verses have not been chosen in vain, and they are not an attempt of proof-texting. They serve two important functions: (1) They circle around the same covenantal “Vertical” and “horizontal” passages discovered throughout the earlier appraisals to help deepen the political, social, and theological implications of these

And *God said*, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. *And it was so* (Gen 1:6–7).

And *God said*, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” *And it was so* (Gen 1:9).

And *God said*, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” *And it was so* (Gen 1:14–15).

And *God said*, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” *And it was so* (Gen 1:24).

God’s manner of communication reflects the epitome of regality and sovereignty.

The most perfect political statement of the political act and political authority is

“God said, ‘Let there be,’ and it was so, and it was good.”<sup>61</sup> By the mere act of his word,

---

covenants. The circularity and repetition are intentional, and are meant to symphonically construct their covenantal ideas. The underlining goal is to invite the reader to reference the biblical verses alongside the prose, and assumes the reader comes with the exegetical context of the earlier chapter appraisals and summaries. The general pattern usually consists of circling around a specific theme by providing relevant citations from Creation related passages, from “Vertical” covenant related passages, and from “horizontal” related covenant passages. The narrative movement then ultimately circles back to a recreated creation through the New Covenant’s redemption of Creation and creatures. (2) They are intended to communicate the metanarrative utility that a covenantal constitutional political theology potentially brings towards understanding covenants, politics, and society. At times, the dissertation’s narration may seem like it transitions from prose into poetry. This too is not done in vain, but simply acknowledges that some of the theological insights are better expressed quasi-poetically due to their intrinsic beauty (akin to what makes Phil 2:9–11 so politically and theologically powerful). In short, the biblical citations and their covenantal constitutional articulation attempt to demonstrate how ecclesial, marital, and political covenants serve to help understand and actualize the covenantal metanarrative and particular covenantal narratives.

<sup>61</sup> The executive, legislative, and judicial components of the political institution are in a way present within God’s sovereign communicative acts of creation. The legislative component is present in “And God said, ‘Let there be.’” The contents of what he “said” and the “let”—which constitute the form of the created thing and thus give it legal meaning and restriction—serves as a legislative function that legislates something into existence. The executive function is present in that his legislative constituting decree simultaneously executes itself, as represented by the statement “And it was so.” Finally, the judicial function is present where God continues to judge his various creations as “good.” Upon crowning his creation with a creature in his regal and representative image, he ultimately renders the judgement, “it was *very good!*”

God's creaturely subjects originate and conform to the Sovereign's executive-legislative-judicial decree. Furthermore, God even creates humanity and grants him his own image-reflecting regality with an act of communication. Genesis states,

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Gen 1:26–27).<sup>62</sup>*

In the most "Vertical Universal" sense imaginable, God originates the creation of a capital "P" Place, a capital "S" Space, and a capital "H" Home in an act of communication. Covenants also create relationships. God originates humankind—the global extended human family whose last name is אֱלֹהִים—through the "Vertical Special" Adamic Covenant (Gen 2:18). The Adamic Covenant also doubles as a "horizontal covenant" between Adam and Eve, which originates the creation of their particular one-flesh union marriage in an act of covenantal communication (Gen 2:23). Even non-verbal and non-written communication serves the function of creation and covenantal communication in the form of signs and seals. Covenants begin and close with communications; they begin with verbal or written communications, and they end with symbolic communications. A signature itself is often a type of moral communication. It does not merely convey a person's name and identity, but a person's moral relation to the thing signed. When someone signs a document, they are not merely expressing "my name is Leonard," but they are simultaneously making a moral and verbal expression. The signature is an action that signs and assigns a moral relationship (usually in the form of a

commitment or obligation). Non-written and non-verbal signs/signatures function in the same way. Thus, biblical covenants contain a number of covenantal signs that seal and symbolize the covenant. Signs and seals are continuations and culminations of the verbal or written act of covenantal communication that create creatures and relationships.

Arguably, God provides his signature to Creation by signing it with his image-bearing humanity.<sup>63</sup> The more obvious examples of the covenantal symbolic communicative signs are the Adamic Covenant's naming ceremony (Gen 2:23), the Noahic Covenant's rainbow (Gen 9:13), the Abrahamic Covenant's circumcision (Gen 17:10), or the Mosaic Covenant's Sabbath (Exod 31:14).<sup>64</sup> However, horizontal covenants also exhibit a number of covenantal symbolic communications that create moral relationships between humans, such as hand-shaking (Ezek 17:18), shoe-loosing (Ruth 4:7–11), present-giving (Gen 21:27–30; 1 Sam 18:3–4), feast-eating (Gen 26:30), monument-making (Gen 31:45–46, 49–53), salt-shaking (Lev 2:13), and animal-sacrificing (Jer 34:18–19).

Furthermore, covenants are communicative acts that create revelations.

Humanity's *imago dei* is a plural designation, with Gen 1:27 stating "So God created man

---

<sup>62</sup> The connection between God's verbal communication, man's regality, and his *imago dei* invite the question that asks whether God's image in man is directly related to regal communication.

<sup>63</sup> With his earlier creaturely creations, God uses the regal and impassive "Let the..." When he creates image-bearing humanity, he uses a more personal "Let us" and "our." After he beholds creation after signing it with his *imago-dei* signature, he states it was "very good" (Gen 1:31). His cessation from work in the following chapter evidences a sense of completion, marked by his signature.

<sup>64</sup> Not all covenantal signs and seals are non-verbal or non-written symbols. Sometimes the signs and seals are literal signs and seals. They can be written documents, such as the book of the covenant that gets sprinkled in blood, or the copy of the Decalogue in the Ark of the Covenant. With the Adamic Covenant of marriage between Adam and Eve, a name serves simultaneously as all three. It may sound paradoxical for something to be all three, but in a sense, a name is a written sign (literally formulates a signature), an oral sign (you call someone by their name), and a symbolic sign (the name represents and symbolizes a person, not merely a physical thing). Illustrations are another example of written or oral signs that can also function in this symbolic sense. The illustrations that begin the dissertation's chapters three

in his own image ... male and female he created *them*.” God reveals something about himself, the nature of the *imago dei*, and the regality of humanity, when he brought Adam and Eve together in a marriage covenant communication where he states, “It is not good that the man should be alone; *I will make* him a helper fit for him” (Gen 2:18).

Interestingly, man’s first recorded verbalization in creation is an act of covenantal communication that reveals something essential about humanity, as well as creates a particular marital and moral relationship. Genesis states, “Then the *man said*, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man’” (Gen 2:23). Furthermore, God reveals his love of humanity across his “Vertical Universal” and “Vertical Special” covenantal communications. Whether it is the creation of a restoration of order (Gen 9:9, 11), a people and a place (Gen 15:9), a political polity (Exod 19:5–6; 20:1–3; 24:3–8), a priesthood (Num 25:12), or a redemptive lineage (2 Sam 7:16), God reveals himself, his plan, and his love through covenantal communications that consist of verbal and written covenants.<sup>65</sup> Men also

---

through five—local church’s covenant, chaotic XYZ pronouns, and the *chuppah*—all function as symbols that help close the dissertation’s act of communication in chapter 7.

<sup>65</sup> The very act of communication is revelatory, as it reveals unspoken and unwritten realities. Thus, to Noah he covenantally communicates a universal restraint, stating, “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you ... I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth” (Gen 9:9, 11). Thus, to Abraham, he covenantally communicated the creation of a people and a place, where it states, “On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates’” (Gen 15:9). Thus, to Moses and the Israelite, he covenantally constitutes a political polity through verbal communication, where it states, “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel” (Exod 19:5–6); and written communication, where it states, “And God spoke all these words, saying, ‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.’ ... Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, ‘All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do.’ And Moses wrote

reveal themselves in covenantal communications. In numerous “Vertical Special Covenants,” humans reveal their intention to hearken the Lord’s covenants (Exod 19:8). In “Vertical Special Covenantal Renewals,” they even utilize the covenantal idea to reveal re-commitments to hearken former covenants (Josh 24:25; 2 Kgs 11:17; 23:3; 2 Chr 29:10; 29:10; Ezra 10:3–5). Humans even use “horizontal covenants” with one another to reveal their love of God (2 Chr 15:12), and their love of one another (Gen 2:23; 1 Sam 18:3–4; Mal 2:14).

Furthermore, covenants are communicative acts that create restraints. In the covenant of creation, restraints originate at the very moment God constituted the purpose of creations and creatures. Light and darkness were restricted to day and night (Gen 1:5). Plants were restricted to yielding seed according to their own kind (Gen 1:12). Time was restricted to night, day, seasons, and years (Gen 1:14). Creatures were restricted to their habitats (Gen 1:21). Creaturely procreation was restricted to their species (Gen 1:24). Ultimately, humanity’s regality was restricted to reign over creations and creatures—not the Creator (Gen 1:26). The presence of covenant as an act of creation, communication, revelation, and restraint, is present throughout the Old Testament in God’s “Vertical

---

down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, ‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.’ And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, ‘Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words’” (Exod 20:1–3; 24:3–8). Thus, to Phineas and the Levites, he covenantally communicated the creation of a priesthood, where it states, “‘and it shall be to him and to his descendants after him the covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel’” (Num 25:12). And finally, to David, he covenantally communicated the revelation of a specific redemptive lineage, where it states, “‘And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever’” (2 Sam 7:16).

Universal” and “Vertical Special” Covenants. The Adamic covenant restricted Adam and Eve to monogamy (Gen 2:24), the Noahic Covenant restricted man’s violent behavior (Gen 9:1–7), the Abrahamic Covenant restricted Abraham’s path (Gen 12:1), the Mosaic Covenant restricted the Israelites worship (Exod 20:3), the Priestly Covenant restricted the Israelite’s priesthood (Neh 13:29), and the Davidic Covenant restricted the messiah’s lineage (2 Sam 23:5). In particular, in the Noahic Covenant, God ordained the political institution to restrain the anti-communicative acts of static-like *khamas* and *yetzer* (Gen 9:6). Along these lines, several men established “horizontal covenants” amongst themselves that communicate restraints against horizontal acts of *khamas* and *yetzer* in the form of peace treaties (Josh 9:16), and defensive alliances (2 Kgs 11:4–5).

Finally, and ultimately, covenants are communicative acts that create redemption. Violence (*khamas*), and degenerate intent (*yetzer*), are the great antithesis of covenant and communication. They are the anti-communicative disruptions of static and ignorance. They are acts of impassioned yelling and ignoring. They are illustrated by raw and white noise. Within the setting of his creative communication, God reveals his disdain for Adam and Eve’s ignorant betrayal (Gen 3:9–13), and communicates a punishment that restrains exacerbated violence by restricting their lives with labor and lifespans (Gen 3:16–19). However, God also communicates a covenant of redemption through a promise to Eve that her seed will crush bestial violence and depravity for good (Gen 3:15). The covenantal contribution of the Old Testament’s prophets is that they herald the coming of this seminal messiah through communicating a forthcoming “New Covenant” (Jer 31:31–31; Isa 42:6; Ezek 16:59–63; Mal 3:1). Furthermore, the prophets reveal how the former

covenants all communicate the promises, identity, and redemptive mission of this seminal, regal, priestly messiah. The messiah's actual identification comes with the prophet John the Baptist's emphatic communication, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Redemption comes in the highest communication conceivable—The Word (John 1:1–5). The Word is the Sovereign (Rev 19:16; Phil 2:9–11). Through the incarnate Word—Christ Jesus—all creation was communicated into existence, and through the Word's communicated New Covenant, creation is redeemed. The Word's communicative act of the New Covenant becomes signaled with a virgin birth (Isa 7:14), signed with a blood-soaked cross and an empty tomb (Matt 12:38–42), and sealed with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13). Through a communication of confessing faith in the Word (Rom 10:9–10), human creatures enter the New Covenant and become restored to their intended regality and eternity as "children of God" (John 1:12–15; 3:16–17). Their entrance and membership in the New Covenant community is signaled, signed, and sealed by a simultaneous "Vertical Special" and "horizontal" covenant through the communicative acts of the confession of believer's baptism (Rom 6:4; 1 Pet 3:21), and the communion of the Lord's Supper (Matt 26:28). These *diathēkē* communicative acts mark their entrance and continuation into the invisible universal *koinōnia* community that congregates and communes locally as an *ekklēsia*. This covenant community is called to a great commission to communicate the Gospel of the New Covenant (Matt 28:18–20), and to beautifully *communicate* and illuminate the "here-and-now" recognition and refraction of the Sovereign's Kingdom (Matt 5:3–16). Finally, New Covenant members are given this

communicative commission until the future “not-yet” restraint and restoration of all creation and created institutions are unsealed by the Word’s second coming (Rev 5–8; 19).

### ***The Political Authority: On Constitution***

The act of covenantal creation constitutes the origin of authority. By virtue of being a creator, the originator of a created thing commands creative authority over his creature.<sup>66</sup> O’Donovan acknowledges the importance of the Creator’s covenant in establishing political authority, writing, “the unique covenant of YHWH and Israel can be seen as a point of disclosure from which the nature of all political authority comes into view.”<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, as the prior section stated, covenants are communicative acts that create morally-bound relationships. These covenantal relationships further originate and reveal narratives. As a political act, covenants originate and constitute the trifecta of power, right, and tradition.<sup>68</sup> O’Donovan recognizes that even judgment presupposes a context of covenantal relationships “in which ‘I shall be your God and you shall be my people’ (Lev 26:12; Jer 7:23). YHWH’s covenant with Israel constitutes the political relation in which

---

<sup>66</sup> The connection between creation and authority is self-evident. God’s authority is connected to him being the absolute Creator. The authority of parents over their children is connected to them having created them. The authority of a baker over who he sells his cakes to is connected to him having baked them. Authority corresponds to creation.

<sup>67</sup> O’Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 45.

<sup>68</sup> As a communicative act, the narrative of Creation in Gen 1–3 somewhat evidences this trifecta: power (“God said”), right (“Let there be,”), and tradition (“and it was so, and it was good”). As an earlier footnote noted, these could also be used to symbolize the perfected presence of the legislative, executive, and judicial acts.

he rules, and so judges; judgment is part of that covenant activity to which he has sovereignly bound himself.”<sup>69</sup>

However, in contrast to his comments on covenant, O’Donovan is quite critical of constitutionalism and contractarianism. He argues “Any political failure is traceable to a failure to grasp the fact of popular unity prior to political constitution, the constitutionalist approach failed to see that this popular unity was a moral unity, comprised by a common good rather than by a political structure.”<sup>70</sup> Instead of something like a social contract originating a political society and defining its authority, O’Donovan argues that representative legitimacy is a product of people simply recognizing themselves and their common good within their representatives.<sup>71</sup> As O’Donovan puts it, “Political authority does not ‘make’ a people; it finds it.”<sup>72</sup> Jonathan Chaplin described

---

<sup>69</sup> O’Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 11.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 156. O’Donovan’s criticisms against the social theories of social contractarianism and constitutionalism seem specifically directed at Hobbes, Bossuet, and Suarez. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1.16.13, states, “it is the unity of the representer, not the unity of the represented, that maketh the person one. . . . And unity cannot otherwise be conceived in multitude.” Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, *Politics Drawn from Holy Scripture*, 1.3.3, trans. P. Riley, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 15, states “It is by the sole authority of government that union is established among men. . . . Otherwise there is no union; the people become wanderers, like a flock dispersed.” Francisco Suárez, “*De Lege et Deo Legislatore*,” pp. 723–742, in *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100–1625*, eds by Oliver O’Donovan and Joan Lockwood O’Donovan (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 3.2, states, “Unity arises in large measure . . . from subjection to a single rule; . . . if there were not a government, this body could not be directed to one end and to the common good.”

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 161. As O’Donovan puts it, “We speak of this ‘seeing’ of ourselves in the representatives as ‘recognition.’ To ‘recognize’ something is not simply to know it, but to know it in relation to oneself.”

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 154. O’Donovan’s view on representation seems to have a lot in common with Eric Voegelin’s own formulation of representation as the act of “political articulation.” Perhaps it is even an influence on O’Donovan. In Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), 37, Voegelin writes, “This process in which human beings form themselves into a society for action shall be called the articulation of a society. As the result of political articulation we find human beings, the rulers, who can act for the society, men whose acts are not imputed to their own persons but to the society as a whole—with the consequence that, for instance, the pronouncement of a general rule regulating an area of human life will not be understood as an exercise in moral philosophy but will be experienced by the members of the society as the declaration of a rule with obligatory force for themselves. When his acts are effectively imputed in this manner, a person is the

O'Donovan's position as an "expressivist" view of representation and authority, which is contrasted against what he calls the "voluntarist" approach of the social contract theories.<sup>73</sup> From the perspective of the three theories of origination, Elazar would likely categorize O'Donovan's position as part of the organic development origination model.<sup>74</sup>

In a sense, O'Donovan's criticisms are correct. He rightly states that any system which forgoes a "moral unity" sets itself up for "political failure." Unfortunately, O'Donovan makes his criticism of constitutionalism and contractarianism without comparing them with covenantalism. As Elazar exhibited with the operative role of *khesed* ("covenant loving kindness"), and *shamo'a* ("hearkening"), covenants contain strong "voluntarist" components. Covenants are different from contracts, for they establish moral kinships, whereas contracts primarily establish amoral exchanges. However, covenants are also "expressivist" in that people are expressing their symbolic representation through their participation in the communicative act. Covenants simultaneously "'make' a people," and constitute the "point of disclosure from which the nature of all political authority comes into view." As O'Donovan stated earlier, covenants

---

representative of a society." He concludes, "Articulation, thus, is the condition of representation. In order to come into existence, a society must articulate itself by producing a representative that will act for it" (p. 41).

<sup>73</sup> Jonathan Chaplin, "Representing a People: Oliver O'Donovan on Democracy and Tradition" *Political Theology* Jul2008 Vol. 9 Issue 3 (2008), 301. Chaplin describes O'Donovan's "expressivist" view as a view where "Government represents a people, then, not by serving as a conduit of the popular will, but by symbolizing the people to itself: the representative 'stands for' our consciousness of our common association."

<sup>74</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Ancient Israel: Biblical Foundations & Jewish Expressions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1998), 36. In review, Elazar describes the organic development model as "the development of political life from families, tribes, and villages into large polities in such a way that institutions, constitutional relationships, and power alignments emerge in response to the interaction between past precedent and changing circumstances with the minimum of deliberate constitutional choice."

“constitute the political relation.”<sup>75</sup> However, covenants are not simply constitutions, and constitutions are not simply covenants.

A constitution is the constitutionalization of a thing or relationship. A constitution in covenantal constitutionalism does not originate a relationship, but presupposes its origination as its moral-framework. Constitutions are dependent on the covenant’s communicative act to begin a constitution, and it can be understood as a symbiotic extension of the constituted kin’s framework, form, and function. A covenant is a communicative act that produces moral-bound actors, and a constitution is the conformation of how these actors will perform the acting out of the covenant. Covenants constitute a relationship by originating, restricting, and revealing it. In politics, a covenant may have elements that lend themselves to constituting aspects of a relationship, but the chief contribution of a political constitution is that it takes the covenantal relationship and builds upon its moral framework the functions and forms that constitute a polity. In Covenantal Constitutionalism, a constitution describes how the relationship will live out the covenant. Constitutions help a political relationship morally conform to its covenant. Political constitutions may be written documents, or may even be unwritten organic agreements established through custom and tradition. Ultimately, constitutions are a triad whose base incorporates covenant as its moral framework (either a theocentric or an anthropocentric ethic), and whose sides establish the function

---

<sup>75</sup> O’Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 11.

(distribution of power), and form (structure of authority), of a polity (political relationship).<sup>76</sup>

A political constitution explains how the people in a relationship are going to relate to one another over time. Constitutions occur across social institutions. A local church may originate itself with a written church covenant that establishes that the “two or three gathered” in Jesus name constitute themselves to be the brothers and sisters of First Baptist Church of Raleigh. However, after this act, they may also create a church constitution that specifies how their relationship will unfold. The document may contain sections on how they will distribute power, such as by stating their views on church officers, or how those officers are legitimized. The church constitution may specify the voting rights of members, or the distribution of funds, or the ownership rights to the building, or even how the church will conduct its discipline. Like any good relationship, it is also a living document that may be developed through amendments and bylaws that reflect changes within the same covenantal relationship. Simply because a relationship does not have a written constitution, does not mean it has no constitution. Constitutions are also often products of organic developments that combine written, oral, and

---

<sup>76</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel*, 29. See also Appendix 4, “Angle 4.2.1: Constitution: Covenantal Constitution.” Elazar defines a constitution as “delineated along three dimensions: its moral constitution, its socioeconomic constitution, and its frame of government.” He further explains the three dimensions as follows:

“1. The *moral* basis of the constitution refers to the generally accepted ideas about how people in a particular polity should live. It includes the conception of justice that is held to be the guiding standard of the polity, the picture of the good polity in the minds of citizens, plus other opinions about what kinds of political and social actions are right and good.

2. The *socioeconomic* basis of the constitution refers to the ways people actually live. It includes such things as class structure, ethnic composition, type of economy, and the actual distribution of power; in other words, who is important and influential and why.

behavioral articulations of a relationship’s framework, form, and function (often through representative and authoritative tradition; called “custom”). As an example, these types of covenants are often found in marriages.<sup>77</sup> Written covenants are often penned revelations of these operative unwritten constitutions.<sup>78</sup> However, a key advantage of written constitutions—especially with political institutions—is that they clearly reveal powers, roles, laws, rights, authorities, limitations, expectations, representatives, checks and balances, etc.<sup>79</sup>

Throughout Scripture, covenants often constitute relationships that are then given constitutions that organize the foundation, function, and form of the relationship. In Scripture, constitutions are acts of written, oral, and symbolic authoritative

---

3. The *frame of government* refers to the institutions and structures of government itself, including the document (or collection of documents) that sets out the institutions of government, establishes their powers and limits of those powers, and indicates who shall govern and how the governors shall be chosen.”

<sup>77</sup> A more political example would be the English Constitution.

<sup>78</sup> Federal systems often are dependent on written constitutions, because the tiers of relationships, and the size and distance of the federated territory, command clarity of form, function, and framework. The smaller a polity, the more likely it is to have an unwritten constitution, given the increased intimacy of a relationship such as husband and wife. However, even a marriage can have a written constitution. An example would be a couple who constitutionalizes their marriage vows, and then perhaps decides to create some written rules upon having children. An example of something that is operating as a familial constitution is Kent Hughes and Barbara Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004). The work is dedicated to helping guide families on establishing a family tradition, navigating discipline, education, and other familial issues. The appendix is especially helpful for providing an assortment of pedagogical guides. Although they likely did not intend it to be identified as a constitution, the Hughes’ are essentially writing out their unwritten constitution and written constitutional elements that had operated in the constitutional capacity within their family.

<sup>79</sup> Elazar, *Covenant & Constitutionalism*, 75. An excellent example Elazar gives of the political relationship between a covenant and a constitution is “The Massachusetts Constitution” (1780). The document, which is written by John Adams, is the oldest written constitution in the world that is still in use. It states, “The body-politic is formed by a voluntary association of individuals: It is a social compact, by which the whole people *covenants* with each citizen, and each citizen with the whole people, that all shall be governed by certain laws for the common good. It is the duty of the people, therefore, in *framing a Constitution of Government*, to provide for the equitable mode of making laws, as well as for impartial interpretation, and a faithful execution of them; that every man may, at all times, find his security in them.” Similar examples of this statement are found across the covenants, compacts, and constitutions of America’s fifty states. See Donald S. Lutz, *The Origins of American Constitutionalism* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

communication. Constitutions derive their authority from their source of origination, and it serves as their moral foundation. In addition to originating creation with his word, God also constituted the form and function of his creation with an act of communication. As Genesis states,

And God said, “*Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.*”  
And it was so (Gen 1:11).

Whereas the communicative act of origination is represented in “God said, ‘Let there be,’ and it was so, and it was good,” the constitutionalization of a thing or creature is represented by its form and function. Thus, the constitution of the earth was to “sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth” (Gen 1:11). Throughout Scripture, “Vertical” and “horizontal” constitutions presuppose their covenantal moral foundations, and communicate the form and function of covenantal relationships. In a sense, the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Bible as a whole, are a capital “C” Constitution *par excellence*.

As has been the emphasis with the continued exegesis of Genesis, God originates all of creation in his communicative act, and gives it a capital “C” Constitution. The Human Civilization established in Gen 1–2 begins its Constitution upon the foundation of a theocentric ethic that rightly recognizes God’s sovereignty and justice as the foundation and purpose of Garden existence (Gen 1:1; 2:16–17).<sup>80</sup> Ultimately, a constitution’s moral

---

<sup>80</sup> An example of a verse in Genesis that identifies this constitutional moral foundation is Gen 2:16–17. Here, God articulates the two options: Adam may either build human civilization off of God’s Justice (God’s knowledge of Good and Evil), or he can reject God’s sovereignty and build his

foundation can be either theocentric, or anthropocentric. The Constitution of Creation in Gen 1–3 is clearly theocentric (“In the beginning, God,” Gen 1:1).<sup>81</sup> From this basis, the Garden Civilization’s Constitution of Creation specifies the function of creations and creatures. Creations are organized into the classes of light, darkness, heavens, water, earth, plants, fish, birds, mammals, serpents, and humans. These classes are further given ethnicities, such as the lights being organized into stars that specify night and day. They are constituted an economy, where the vegetation yielded seeds, which yielded plants, which were eaten and owned by animals and humans, who were ultimately owned by God (Gen 1:29–30). They are also given functional powers, such as separating darkness, ruling the day, implanting the earth, swarming the seas, flying in skies, creeping on grounds, multiplying and filling the lands, and ultimately cultivating and keeping all of Creation (Gen 1:28).

In addition to the Constitution of Creation articulating its theocentric moral foundation and creation’s functions, it also specifies its form. First and foremost, it is a form that was created *ex nihilo* (Gen 1:2). This form was formulated with words, and the existence of inspired writing provides a written form of its constitution (Gen 1–3, but

---

uncivilization off of his own justice (man’s formulation of good and evil). The eating of the fruit was a question of serving or rebelling against God’s sovereignty. Justice is the confirmation of truth, fact, or reason. Politically, it is giving someone what is due to them, and depriving someone what is not rightly theirs. Justice begins with recognizing God’s sovereignty.

<sup>81</sup> The foundation of a constitution articulates where a society or civilization gets its moral meaning. Ultimately, there are only two foundations (only one of which is viable and real): (1) God, or (2) man. Whichever of these foundations form the moral framework of a civilization, and ultimately orient which direction a civilization will go between objectivity and subjectivity. As modernity illustrated, man’s attempt to establish a third—nature/creation—was a failure (thus postmodernism). He had erred in trying to achieve an *objectivity* by focusing on the object to the loss of the Subject. The basis of a civilization is its ethic, which can also be understood as its sense of justice, or its *zeitgeist*. Only two options are available to a constitution. It can either be built on the moral foundation of the Spirit, or it is built on the subjectivity of a *zeitgeist*. One is eternal, the other temporal.

ultimately the entirety of Scripture). The document specifies powers and limits across the functions of created things and creatures. Checks and balances are in place between the day and the night, as well as between over-vegetation via creaturely consumption. The created form also contains ruling hierarchies, and humanity is given the position of being the regal representative of God. His position is merited by both God's sovereign voluntary appointment, and man's expression of God's sovereignty via the *imago dei*. This representative role grants humanity the authority to cultivate the earth, and rule over its creatures (Gen 1:26–28). God also constitutes a complementarity by creating humanity as male and female (Gen 2:18; 22–25). Ultimately, the form of the constitution, and its regal representatives, are the subjects of the Sovereign who literally formed them (Gen 2:7). Upon the regal representatives' violation of their Constitution's foundation, form, and function, the Sovereign enacts justice by rendering judgment, distributing punishments, and amending his Constitution (Gen 3:14–24).

In addition to this universal notion of a Constitution of Creation, written and unwritten constitutions are evident across Scripture in relation to “Vertical Special” and “horizontal” covenantal communications. In a sense, the Adamic Covenant—understood as a particular covenant that established the particular family, Adam and Eve—contains an example of the constitutionalization of its marital kinship.<sup>82</sup> Their constituted relationship contains a constitutionalized foundation in their theocentric moral legitimacy

---

<sup>82</sup> It may seem confusing to refer to the Adamic covenant as examples of “Vertical Universal,” “Vertical Special,” and “horizontal” covenants. However, the broader origination of creation serves universal, special, and particular illustrations. Furthermore, Adam and Eve's origin as the first human family (last name “Humankind”), and also as a particular family (first names Adam and Eve), serves the function of illustrating a “Vertical Special Covenant” via God utilizing a covenant to create all of special

(*sacramentum*; Gen 2:22–23), a constitutionalized function through their one-flesh propagative unity (*proles*; Gen 1:28; 2:15–18), and a constitutionalized form in their shared intimacy, complementarity, regality, and fidelity (*fides*; Gen 1:26; 2:24–25). However, the clearest example of a constitution that best illustrates the earlier definition occurs in connection with the Mosaic Covenant.<sup>83</sup> The Deuteronomic Constitution contains an introduction (Deut 1:1–3:29), a body that specifies the form and function of the Israelite people and polity (Deut 4:1–26:15), and an epilogue (Deut 30:11–31:29). The preamble of the Deuteronomic Constitution establishes a theocentric moral foundation on the basis of God’s historical covenanting with the Israelite people (Deut 1:6–3:29). The body of the constitution orients its covenant participants to hearken to the covenant (Deut 4:1–40), by living the constitution’s theocentric legal principles (Deut 4:41–16:17).<sup>84</sup> The constitution also articulates its form of government and the domains of authority (Deut 16:18–17:13), its constitutional review and judicial system (Deut 16:18–18:22), its local government (Deut 25:1–19), and even its economic principles (Deut 25:13–16; 26:1–15). The Deuteronomic Covenant closes with the constitution’s enactment, and the people’s ceremonious expression to hearken it (Deut 26:16–30:20).

A covenant originates a moral-relationship, and a covenantal constitution incorporates a covenant’s moral foundation to constitutionalize the form and function of

---

humanity. Furthermore, it also illustrates a “horizontal covenant” through the human and horizontal exchanging vows and consummating a marriage.

<sup>83</sup> For a verse by verse, section by section, treatment of the constitutional structure of the Deuteronomic Covenant, see “Appendix II: Schematic of the Deuteronomic Constitution” in Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel: Biblical Foundations & Jewish Expressions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 214–222.

the relationship. However, there is one final component that is informally but essentially related to the communicative act of constitutionalization. Harkening a covenant and its constitution leads to relational blessedness. God connects his creative communicative act with blessedness, which he also constitutes in the act of communication. Thus, Genesis states,

And *God blessed them*, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And *God Blessed them*. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.... So *God blessed the seventh day* and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation (Gen 1:22, 27–28; 2:2–3).

Blessings are inherent in the act of conforming to the form and function of the Constitution of Creation. They are built right into the system of created reality, and are an integral part of the moral foundation of social experience.<sup>85</sup> God does not only call humanity into existence to form relationships that enable the cultivation and reign of the created order, but he gives these relationships moral meaning and beauty. The connection between covenant, constitution, and blessings, are repeated throughout Scripture. The Deuteronomic Covenant concludes with the promises of blessings for those who observe it (Deut 28:1–14). The blessings of the Deuteronomic Covenant are connected to the same themes of regality and fertility that are present across the Adamic Covenant (Gen 1:28), the Noahic Covenant (Gen 9:1, 7), the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1), the

---

<sup>84</sup> The legal code consisted of the Decalogue (Deut 5:1–30), the Shema (Deut 6:1–25), international law (Deut 7:1–26), and property law (Deut 8:1–9:6; 11:8–25). The goal of the Deuteronomic Constitution is the circumcision of the heart, and its fundamental principles are listed in Deut 10:12–20.

<sup>85</sup> God makes honey sweet, and sweetness contains a blessing inherit to its sweetness.

Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:12–13), and the New Covenant (Ps 2:1–12; Matt 5:2–12).<sup>86</sup>

In short, covenantal constitutions invite us to live morally, meaningfully, beautifully, and blissfully.

### ***The Life Beyond the Political Act and Authority: On Covenantal Constitutionalism***

Covenants are communicative acts that create kin from kinds.<sup>87</sup> Constitutions are the constitutionalization of the form and function of kinship as it conforms to the moral foundation of a covenant.<sup>88</sup> Covenants and constitutions ultimately derive their origin,

---

<sup>86</sup> Notice the connection between covenants, constitutions, regality, fertility, and blessing: “And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth’” (Gen 1:28); “And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth’” (Gen 9:1); “And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing” (Gen 12:2); “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Sam 7:12–13); “I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.’ ... Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him” (Ps 2:7–8, 12). Sometimes we are invited to experience blessedness in the “here-and-now,” both in the ultimate sense of knowing and having a relationship with Jesus Christ, but also in a horizontal sense by experience blessings through loving our neighbors. Even the sweetness and yumminess of honey is a blessing, how man’s degeneration is so severe that instead of seeing the blessing as the work of God’s love, he interprets it for the love of self (which is illustrated in gluttony).

<sup>87</sup> The most obvious example of covenants as communicative acts that create kinship occurs with the marriage covenant. A marriage covenant takes two kinds of humans—a male and female, a Leonard Goenaga and a Katrina Martinez—and makes them kin—husband and wife, the Goenagas.

<sup>88</sup> The word “origin” can also be used instead of “covenant” to reflect a social model who finds its origination in conquest, accident, or contract (although the latter is amoral). Regardless of the model of origination, cohering to God’s sovereignty by refracting it in creation corresponds with blessedness. This can be in a very literal sense, given God created his order to be ordered, and following this order leads to a good. However, given man’s state of *khamas* and *yetzer*, some political models are less attractive than the others, because they may exacerbate and concentrate violence and degeneration (example being Nazi Germany and totalitarianism), or may blur the lines between institutions, universality, and particularity (as accident does), or may fracture, atomize, and disorder particularities (as contract does). Covenant has biblical precedent, and major advantages, in recognizing God’s sovereignty, clarifying institutional boundaries, and constitutionally checking itself of its particularities against God’s universalities. Arguably, outside of God’s providence and the religious character of the American people, the success of the American polity was largely a product of its constitution system of checks and balances that sought to

foundation, form, function, and beauty from the sole Sovereign (Col 1:16–17), whose name is Lord of lords and King of kings. The result of recognizing the Sovereign by lovingly hearkening to his covenant and constitution is blessedness.

God did not create humanity to live simply. He created humans to live beautifully (Gen 1:28; Matt 5:2–12). The degree and type of beauty and blessedness corresponds to the category and level of the covenant and constitution. Within a “Vertical Universal” covenant, the beautiful blessing of knowing God, and being called by him “son” or “daughter,” is infinite (1 John 3:1). That is what makes the Gospel such good news. Being a member of the New Covenant means ultimate God-given liberty, peace, and wealth in a very real sense that surpasses their temporal versions, and impacts how we live beautifully in the “here-and-now.” Part of experiencing this beauty is that we get to participate in refracting God’s illuminating sovereignty across his vertical—and our horizontal—covenants. We get to experience true humanity through revealing God’s regal image throughout our particular institutions, and thus our neighbors and neighborhoods. Furthermore, God built blessings into his very creation. When we live in accordance to his Constitution, we experience life’s many blessings.<sup>89</sup> Or, put another way, the more our relationships—our covenants and constitutions—reflect and refract his

---

distribute and restrain powers. A chief influence for this distribution was the inherited doctrines of depravity.

<sup>89</sup> The Reformed tradition often referred to these as common grace blessings. Picture the deliciousness of a cheeseburger, or the touch of a loved one, or financial security, or physical health. These are creation/life’s little blessings, and usually correspond to living as God intended us to live. Life’s big blessing is to live in submission to the Sovereign.

Covenant and Constitution, the more beautiful and blessed our social relationships. God's Constitution is good for us, and it is Good.<sup>90</sup>

Covenantal Constitutionalism does not argue that covenants and written constitutions are the only way to originate and constitute an ecclesial, marital, or political institution. On the contrary, covenantal constitutionalism expects that among humans, all sorts of origins, forms, and functions will occur among their institutions. Part of man's regality and *imago dei* is that he is a co-creating creator. Man is a creative artist. He can think up as many ways to constitute a polity as he can to sin, or entertain himself, or cook dinner. Humanity is inherently creative, because it derived its creativity from God's very creative breath and image. However, the fundamental claim that Covenantal Constitutionalism makes is that man cannot escape from originating and building his particular institutions within God's universal Creation and Constitution. Humanity is covenantally and constitutionally locked into God's Covenant and Constitution. Ultimately, a man's institutions will either recognize God's sovereignty, or ignore it, in much the same way that Adam and Eve ignored God's majesty in favor of their own divinity. When man originates and constitutes an institution, it can only ever be

---

<sup>90</sup> There are a number of ways to illustrate this in a very real and obvious sense. The one that comes quickest to mind is sexual promiscuity. God has built-in blessings related to sex and monogamy. Sex feels good. Intimacy is good. It is not a surprise that decades of social research show that the two go well together. Intimacy actually makes sex better, as multiple surveys and studies that are easily accessible attest to. In contrast, the opposite becomes the case with sexual promiscuity. The sexually promiscuous report less fulfilling sex lives than the intimate monogamous. Furthermore, the more likely someone is to focus on pursuing promiscuous pleasure, the more likely they are to experience build-in/constituted curses such as sexually-transmitted diseases (of which, an average of one third of North Carolinians have). Illustrations can be made for any number of other aspects related to God's Constitution; especially those related to the Decalogue. People who lie, cheat, and steal do not live beautiful lives. Their lives are ugly, and they rob themselves of the blessings that come from recognizing Christ's sovereignty, and then being able to refract that sovereignty across their institutions. For more insights along these lines, see Daniel R. Heimbach, *True*

particular, as only God's Creation and Constitution can ever profess true universality. When man confuses his particular institutions as being universal, it is because he has chosen an anthropocentric framework as the foundation of his constituted institution, or he has ignored God's order for his own. It is also not good for him, and is not good.

Men originate and constitute their polities with symbols, which can be imaged, or can be written and spoken (words). Words are subject-driven, and communication is action-oriented. God utilizes the communicative word to create, constitute, and redeem. Man, too, uses spoken, written, and symbolic words to create ecclesial, marital, and political institutions. Through his communicative acts, man constitutes and constructs churches, families, and states. He may do it by force, by accident, or by choice. Words are not merely aesthetics reflections, but they are in a very real sense actions and power. Subjects use words to do things. Words can originate polities, express rights, establish judgment, deliver death penalties, start wars, command armies, accept peace, induce laughter, engender tears, inaugurate hope, and as evident in the earlier appraisals, they can create. When man makes a political communicative act, he does it in a manner that either recognizes he is a subject to the Sovereign, or he is subjectively atomistic.<sup>91</sup> As the earlier theological, scriptural, and historical surveys reveal, only the Sovereign can create universal institutions and a universal civilization, and he does this through covenants and

---

*Sexual Morality: Recovering Biblical Standards for a Culture in Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004).

<sup>91</sup> An example of the latter would be the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Martin Heidegger. Ultimately, the atomistic subjectivity leads to existentialist isolation, absurdity, and angst that they often symbolize with the image of nihilistic laughter.

constitutions. Man can either reflect theocentric reality in his horizontal existence, or he can anthropocentrically rebel against it. However, man cannot escape it.

The missional advantage of humans implementing covenants to originate and constitute their particular ecclesial, marital, and political institutions—as opposed to other models—is that it clarifies, orients, and limits their particularity from being confused for universality. The scriptural and historical appraisals reveal the viability of utilizing “horizontal covenants,” however the very possibility of them being viable and actual covenants is that they presuppose God’s own “Vertical” covenants as their moral foundation. Without a theocentric moral order, they are meaningless. Covenantal constitutionalism not only models itself after God’s approach to originating and constituting relationships, but does so with the awareness of its own *subjectivity* and *particularity*. By participating in a horizontal covenant, a particular constitution attests to God’s universality and moral reality.

Overall, the systems of covenants and constitutions serves the function of checking and balancing particular institutions from attempting to become universal. This is especially the case with checking the particularity of political institutions, given that the earlier scriptural appraisal reveals God’s constitutionally limited design for the political civil powers. The moment the political institution attempts to universalize themselves, or attempt to redeem when they should restrain, they violate the constituted functions and forms revealed in the Noahic covenant (Gen 9:6), and implied under the New Covenant (Rom 13:1–7). Furthermore, Covenantal Constitutionalism prevents these political institutions from claiming universality by reminding them they may only refract

sovereignty, or rebel against it. To do otherwise is to claim Christ's crown, and that does not go well, as history attests with the many exacerbations of violence when particulars confused themselves as universals. In short, swords are quite dangerous. They are tools—not toys.

Particular institutions exist within a universal federal system of original covenants and constitutions whose ultimate federal headship can only ever be the Sovereign. It does not matter how much humanity wants to ignore the reality of this capital "C" Covenant and Constitution. Genesis starts, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." It does not begin with "In the beginning, man." If this is reality, then a political theology should only ever start by acknowledging God as the Sovereign, and then working down—and not up—from his Creation and Constitution. To do otherwise is inauthentic, unwise, and slanderous to the King.

Does this imply that the only legitimate or real social institution is a theocracy? *Au contraire, mon frère!* It actually restrains an attempt at "here-and-now" theocracies, given they are the universalization of a particular, and they rob Christ of his sovereignty. Christ assured humanity that he—and only he—will bring all authority and order into one single polity. Furthermore, he said it would be undeniably obvious when it takes place. For man to try and make it happen on his own robs the Sovereign of his scepter, and it is not a good idea to steal from a king. The earlier survey of covenants reveal that God instituted social institutions with certain functions and forms in mind. Society's members who are outside of the *koinōnia* covenant community can surely perform these forms and functions—and in a sense, refract God's sovereignty—when they adhere to Creation's

Constitution. After all, Paul was speaking of a pagan government in Rom 13:1–7, and even called them *diakonos*. The same is the case with the marital institution, which performs its constituted function whenever it propagates the human species.<sup>92</sup> However, their utility ends with merely serving the institution’s function. They are not salvific. Nor does this diminish the raw power of *khamas* and *yetzer*. Their utility and goodness is credited to God’s mercy, and the extent of man’s depravity is evidence in how quick they are to attack the form and functions of these institutes, or to utilize them with sinful motives. Or to even credit themselves as being the source of their goodness, when in fact the goodness is an extension of the refraction of the Sovereign. The rainbow’s arch is a continuous reminder that God blessed creation with institutions that restrain the human heart’s worst actualization of its desire for total violence and total degeneration.<sup>93</sup>

The ecclesial meets the marital and political institution at the horizon of the church’s Gospel commission. In short, the Church’s Gospel mission is to proclaim the lordship and sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ to all the nations. Under the New

---

<sup>92</sup> This is why a non-believing parent can look upon their newborn baby and experience real goodness. It is because in fulfilling their propagative function, they are experiencing a refraction of God’s Sovereignty—not their own. Experiencing the good does not make them any gooder—it simply attests to God’s grace and love. However, man’s depravity attempts to ignore the sovereign source of this refraction, and instead credit the good to his or her own doing. The tragedy is that God is not given the worship and gratitude his majesty deserves.

<sup>93</sup> Two non-biblical illustrations of the extent of this *khamas* and *yetzer* would be Plato’s ring of Gyges, and digital pornography. With both, depravity is quickly actualized under the condition of guaranteed anonymity. As an experiment, I had asked two university ethics courses I was teaching what they would do if I had given them the ring of Gyges, which could guarantee invisibility. Their responses were all in the same spirit: if they were guaranteed invisible anonymity, they would steal from the cafeteria, spy on people, play pranks, do violence to individuals they thought was evil, walk into a bank and take money, etc. Not one out of the fifty students made any reference whatsoever to doing any good or charitable act. Every one basically confessed they would openly violate the second table of the Decalogue for self-gain. Digital pornography makes the same observation, given the number of Covenant members who themselves engage in pornography with the security of horizontal anonymity. Thus, why the greatest

Covenant, this Great Commission communication brings with it the rights and salvation warranted by Christ's own regal work. This regality brings with it true humanity, true goodness, and true beauty. Recognizing, refracting, and reflecting God's sovereignty across the social institutions makes our ecclesial, marital, and political relationships beautiful. It gives them and society moral meaning and color. It is good for us, and good for our neighbor, and it is capital "G" Good. The families that churches meet on the horizon of their mission are integral to continuing the generational propagation of the church's members and the state's citizens. The states that the churches meet on the horizon of their mission are integral to protecting the people by restraining *khamas* and *yetzer*, which produces a temporal peace that is a conducive environment to the church's proclamation and the family's propagation. Finally, the churches that the families and states meet on their institutional horizons communicate to them their particularity by proclaiming Christ's Kingdom and his sovereignty. The Christian fellowship refracts and reflects Christ's sovereignty in a manner that invites humanity across institutions and across societies to experience moral meaning, beauty, purpose, light, and color.

At this point, the combination of the earlier appraisals, and the introductory outline of a political theological formulation of covenantal constitutionalism, sufficiently responds to O'Donovan's twofold criticisms, and the social question, by augmenting the traditional Protestant social theory per the covenants and constitutions in Scripture and history. The theological concept on its own can merit several more chapters to explore, however, with confidence that the dissertation has been sufficiently argued, the section

---

thinkers in political theory and theology seem to share the belief that anarchy is the worst of all

shall close with an illustration of the covenantal constitutional model that symbolizes its major themes, movements, and insights.

***Covenantal Constitutionalism and the Individual: RGB Color Model of Individuals in Covenantal Constitutional Protestant Social Theory***

The model of Covenantal Constitutionalism is prismatic, and at its most macro hierarchical level is symbolized by a glass prism.<sup>94</sup> However, whereas the prism represents the community component of a constitutional network of hierarchies, the prism presupposes a prior model that illustrates the individuals in their communications. The model of the individuals in society corresponds with the RGB additive color model (see Appendix 3).<sup>95</sup> The model incorporates Luther’s doctrine of vocation and station to illustrate the pixilated movement of individuals whose contributions formulate the colored “picture” of a society. As persons move across the prism of creation’s orders in their day-to-day social communications, they pursue duties colored by their respective stations and vocations. The people in a given society collectively color the prismatic “picture” through their pixilated movements, which is what the prism model presupposes throughout for its various angles.

In digital design, each color in the color spectrum has a unique six-digit alpha-numerical identifier in an additive color model formed from the combination of red,

---

degenerations of a polity.

<sup>94</sup> See Appendix 4, “Model: Prism Model of Communications in Covenantal Constitutionalism (Model of Covenants, Constitutions, Institutions, Orders, Societies, Civilizations, and Creation).”

<sup>95</sup> See Appendix 3, “Model: RGB Color Model of Individuals in Covenantal Constitutionalism (Model of Station and Vocation).”

green, and blue light (RGB color model).<sup>96</sup> In this color model, there are 16,777,216 possible color values. As an example, the color “white” has the RGB code #FFFFFF (“all lights and all colors”), and the color black has the RGB code #000000 (“no light, no color”).<sup>97</sup> Variations of the combination of each of the three lights produce the 16,777,214 other colors between black and white.<sup>98</sup> In color televisions and video cameras from the 1990s, incoming light was separated by prisms into the various RGB colors, and in today’s digital monitor displays, virtual images are illuminated through the spacing of RGB pixels across a screen.

The RGB color model is helpful in understanding and appropriating Luther’s doctrine of the three orders, and his doctrine of stations and vocations. Within the traditional Protestant social theory, each of the three orders of creation can be considered to correspond with either red (political order), green (familial order), or blue light (ecclesial order). On their own, they are distinct and unique. Red is red, blue is blue, and green is green. Whereas the orders are represented by one of the three colors of light, each individual person in a society is represented as a pixel. Throughout an individual’s life, they will have a number of stations and vocations across the three orders and across the communicative space of exchange known as the market. At any given time, the combination of their station’s duties and their vocations contribute alpha-numerical values that make up their life’s “here-and-now” RGB responsibilities. An individual who is a father of four, is married, is a PhD candidate, pastors a Filipino church, and was

---

<sup>96</sup> See the middle illustration in Appendix 3.

<sup>97</sup> See the far-left illustration in Appendix 3.

<sup>98</sup> See the far-right illustration in Appendix 3.

elected to local government, may have the unique RGB value #7FBD42 (“bud green”). His wife may be a biblical counselor, covenant member of Glory of God Christian Fellowship, North Carolina resident, and have the RGB value #F5F2DB (“beige”).<sup>99</sup>

In short, every individual person that makes up the pixels of the picture of a society contains a unique RGB value informed by their stations and vocations. These stations and vocations contribute a certain degree of ordered reds, greens, and blues that ultimately make up their pixel’s “color.” Furthermore, over their lifetime, their RGB value will change as they receive new responsibilities related to entering and leaving stations and vocations. Taken together, all these colored pixels create an “image,” and this “image” is what we ultimately see when we look at a “society.” When you view a society, you see one “picture,” however if you were to zoom in, you would be able to see all these individual—and hopefully ordered—pixels which represent persons living out their duties in that given society. The three “orders” correlate with R or G or B, but they are not #7FBD42. The moment R tries to become B, or #7FBD42 tries to be R, it distorts and violates its constituted reality, and prevents the possibility for a whole third of color possibilities. In other words, it robs society’s color spectrum of its beauty, and it has ugly consequences.

Furthermore, these individuals may come in one of three color spectrums. The first of these spectrums is the RGB color model, which represents that wide spectrum of colors that utilize the RGB values and the source of “light” to produce a specific colored pixel. The second of these spectrums is monochromatic, which represents the event

---

<sup>99</sup> For an example, see the RGB color codes #7FBD42 and #F5F2DB in the color palette sample in

where an institution tries to confuse its particularity as universality, thus rendering its collection of pixels towards one monochromatic scale of wither R or G or B. These pictures are disordered, and ugly. The final color spectrum is more an antithesis of color. It is simply the absence of color, represented by dead pixels. These dead pixels symbolically represent lost individuals and a distorted society, who exist without luminance and color.<sup>100</sup>

### ***Covenantal Constitutionalism and the Community: Prism Model of Communications in Covenantal Constitutional Creation***

Covenantal Constitutionalism is modeled by a prism (see Appendix 4).<sup>101</sup> A prism takes white light, and refracts it across its angles into a spectrum of beautiful colors.<sup>102</sup> Although the model is not intended to be perfect, a prism seems to capture the major themes, symbols, and movements of God’s sovereignty throughout creation and human

---

#### Appendix 3.

<sup>100</sup> In creative design, the “dead pixel” can even be represented by the “opacity” and “transparency” value. Besides the six-digit alpha-numerical RGB value, colors in the RGB color model can also be identified by three sets of numbers ranging from 0 to 255. So, an example would be “rgb(255,255,255,1),” which is the color “white” (“#FFFFFF”). That fourth digit represents opacity and transparency, so if the value was written as “rgb(255,255,255,0.0),” it would be transparent (“dead pixel”). When transparency is set to one hundred percentage, the result in a website or design program is to display a greyed-out background that represents a transparent nothingness. Another possible option for the illustration to represent the lost in society who rebel against Christ’s sovereignty, would be a grayscale, although I dislike the fact that it visualizes movement towards the white. A third possible illustration of this third grouping is an old box television’s black and white “static,” given it seems to articulate a degree of chaos, disorder, and noise.

<sup>101</sup> See Appendix 4, “Model: Prism Model of Communications in Covenantal Constitutionalism (Model of Covenants, Constitutions, Institutions, Orders, Societies, Civilizations, and Creation),” for illustrations of the prism model that illuminate the various components of Covenantal Constitutionalism. Models are never intended to be perfect illustrations of ideas, which is why I almost prefer to think of it as a “symbol” instead of a “model.” One of the weaknesses of the prism model is that white light is actually a combination of various colors of light. A prism is simply expanding the combination so that their individuality is visual. However, other than obsessing over scientific details, the prism does an excellent job of emphasizing the refraction of life, which illuminates and colors human existence.

<sup>102</sup> See Appendix 4, “Angle 4.0: General Illustration of Covenantal Constitutional Prism Model with Refracted Sovereignty.”

institutions. What follows is a development of the prism model that works from its basic parts to its whole. The prism model starts with its most basic part by zooming in to the communicative act of origination. An inverted triangle symbolizes the “Vertical Universal” and the “Vertical Special” covenants that are initiated by God, in relationship with humans.<sup>103</sup> A regular triangle then symbolizes “horizontal covenants” initiated between humans, which are made viable only by presupposing—and corresponding to—God and his moral order.<sup>104</sup> These acts of origination then allow us to zoom out and examine a second triangle which illustrates a “covenantal constitution” as being comprised of a moral foundation as its base, and the constituted form and function of a relationship’s authorities and powers as its sides.<sup>105</sup> The combination of the covenant and constitution formulates a “particular institution,” and then lends itself to the next angle.

The illustration zooms out a bit further, and consists of three triangles that each represent an “order” of society.<sup>106</sup> These “orders” correspond to the threefold institutions or estates of traditional Protestant Social theory, and each order is made up of a number of originated and constitutionalized “particular institutions.” So, for example, the “Ecclesial Order” represents the universal, catholic, invisible, capital “C” “Church” that is comprised of all the visible particular Spirit-baptized “churches” that have existed across time and space.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, the “Familial Order” represents all the “particular

---

<sup>103</sup> See Appendix 4, “Angle 4.1.1: Origins: ‘Vertical Covenant.’”

<sup>104</sup> See Appendix 4, “Angle 4.1.2: Origins: ‘horizontal covenants.’”

<sup>105</sup> See Appendix 4, “Angle 4.2.1: Constitution: Covenantal Constitution.”

<sup>106</sup> See Appendix 4, “Angle 4.3.1–4.3.3.”

<sup>107</sup> See Appendix 4, “Angle 4.3.1: Orders: Church and churches.” I have a very strong Baptist ecclesiology; however, I want the model to be as flexible as possible. Thus, the “particular church” triangle of the “Roman Catholic Church” could be envisioned here as having a whole other set of triangles within its triangle that corresponds with a number of its dioceses. Each diocese triangle is then filled with a whole

families” that have existed across time and space, and the “Adams” family at the top of the triangle symbolizes the federal headship of Adam, as well as the one “Vertical Special” extended family relationship where all humanity share’s Adam’s last name of “Human.”<sup>108</sup> Finally, the “State Order” represents all the “particular states” that have wielded the sword and existed across time and space.<sup>109</sup> Regardless of whether they were originated and constitutionalized by covenant, conquest, accident, or contract, the general idea is to capture what would be called a particular “government,” “regime,” and “political institution.”<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, the broader concept of “The State” does not convey a capital “N” and capital “S” “Nation-State;” God opposed such a concept in the

---

other segment of smaller triangles representing particular parishes. At the head of its first particular triangle would be the Pope, and the heads of the diocese and parishes would be bishops and priests. An actual Roman Catholic ecclesiology would likely argue that the entire triangle for the “Ecclesial Order” would respond to its ecclesiological conviction of the Roman Catholic Church as being a visible Universal Church (“catholic”). In contrast, a baptistic ecclesiology would argue that the “particular” triangles within the larger “Ecclesial Order” triangle only consists of particular local assemblies, so instead of listing “Roman Catholic Church,” it may list only the parishes (although this depends heavily on the ecclesiology’s view on the sacraments, and whether they would even recognize these particular parishes as churches given their paedobaptism). A Baptistic ecclesiology would also probably fill a “particular church” triangle with smaller triangles that represent members of the congregation and their equal authority as a “priesthood of all believers.” It would also place its officers—deacons and pastors—as the bottom triangles of the triangle, given their role as undersherperds. The current model allows for the flexibility of further segmentation, while still acknowledging the constitutionalization of the broader Order. It is also biblically faithful, given it attributes the form and function of the entire order only to Christ and his Spirit Baptism.

<sup>108</sup> See Appendix 4, “Angle 4.3.2: Orders: Family and families.”

<sup>109</sup> See Appendix 4, “Angle 4.3.3: Orders: State and states.”

<sup>110</sup> I struggled between calling it “The State (Political Order)” or “The Kingdom (Political Order)” or even “The Civic (Political Order).” Part of the problem lies in the fact that the “Kingdom” references a refracting of Christ’s sovereignty in the “here-and-now” across the institutions, but is also ultimately culminated as *the* political order Christ establishes from his cloud and with his sword in the “not-yet.” Whereas the ecclesial and familial orders have some variation of a “Vertical Special Covenant” origin—last name “Adam,” or being part of the “Church”—the political institution is intentionally limited to moving beyond particularity until Jesus’ second coming. Furthermore, “The Kingdom” in Scripture seems to encompass more than political rule. It seems to encompass God’s sovereignty refracted across all the “here-and-now” orders. Ultimately, the three orders will become perfectly unionized into one sole institution through the power and authority of Jesus and his second coming (“perfectly ordered Order”). Thus, to express this unique “here-and-now” restraint against the political order—which have the highest tendency to exacerbate violence and capitalize on degenerate *yetzer*—I sought to use the term “State” to

“here-and-now” with his condemnation of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:6). Rather, it conveys the descriptive sense of the word “state”, which describes the “here-and-now” status/state of the political institution’s restraint of *khamas*.

The next angle zooms back even further, and organizes the three “Orders” into a single triangle that represents a “Particular Society.”<sup>111</sup> This illustration serves as Covenantal Constitutionalism’s appropriation and modification of the traditional Protestant social theory. Per the biblical appraisals, a political theological perspective of society sees it as containing three God-ordained orders. Each of the three order’s triangles are filled with any number of particular institutions. Taken collectively, the “Particular Society” triangle represents a particular society such as “American society,” or “Columbian society.” Each of the three orders have points of contact where they meet; however, their constitutions, forms, and functions are unique. When one attempts to claim the constitutional territory of another, it begins to confuse its particularization for universality. Furthermore, in between them is a fourth symbolic triangle. Some of the proponents of traditional Protestant social theory surveyed in the earlier second chapter would have argued for a fourth order called the “economy” or “market.” This current model allows for that interpretation, but the general intention of the centered inverted “Market Exchange” triangle is to represent those areas between the orders and outside of them where individuals come into communication with one another, and establish communities to commune over things they have in common. It can represent the actual

---

convey the collective civil state of order; the state (in the descriptive and not “nation-state” sense), as in the institutional status of a civil polity’s current restraint of *khamas*.

market of goods and services, or other non-commercial exchanges such as educational institutions, sports leagues, or any infinite number of man's creative communal activities.<sup>112</sup> The "market exchange" inverted triangle somewhat resembles O'Donovan's theory of the communication of space and place. The full picture and color of the "Particular Society" triangle contains, in the atomization of its colors, all the individual people who make up the given society. These individuals are in pixelated motion throughout the triangle as they live out their day-to-day lives within society and its institutions. Furthermore, the form and functions available to individuals within the three orders are limited per God's Constitution. Their respective constitutions contribute to one another, and to society overall, as well as limit the other orders from confusing their particularity as universality. Thus, the ecclesial institution contains the power of proclamation, the familial institution contains the power of propagation, and the political contains the power of protection.<sup>113</sup> Or, put another way, in the "here-and-now," churches redeem humanity by the power of the Savior, families repopulate humanity by the power of the seed, and states restrain humanity with the power of the sword.<sup>114</sup>

With the interconnectedness of covenants to constitutions, covenantal constitutions to particular institutions, particular institutions to an order, the three orders

---

<sup>111</sup> See Appendix 4, "Angle 4.4.1: Society: Particular Society (Appraised Traditional Protestant Social Theory)."

<sup>112</sup> Abraham Kuyper's sphere model would likely argue for the particularity of these "market exchange" communities as being their own separate triangles ("spheres"). However, I find the scriptural and historical survey to warrant the three-fold interpretation, with the market representing this open area of communication and exchange. Furthermore, some of his noted institutions, such as the academic sphere, seem to contain components that occur across the three institutions (churches, families, and states, all have forms and functions of educating children, and education belongs solely to neither [although it does seem to beyond initially and primarily to the family]).

<sup>113</sup> See Appendix 4, "Angle 4.4.2.1: Society: Particular Society with Separation of Powers #1."

to a society, and the constituted limits of the three powers of these orders towards ordering a society, the next angle introduces an illustration of how Christ’s “here-and-now” Sovereignty gets refracted throughout society.<sup>115</sup> It takes the whole prism, and angles it flat on its face. The utility of a prism is its ability to convey movement through rays of light. Christ’s sovereignty can be symbolized as pure white light (“I am the light of the world,” John 8:12). One of the functions of prisms is that they take a beam of pure white light, and refract it into a spectrum of colors based on blue, green, and red light. The ecclesial institution’s power and mission in the “here-and-now” is to proclaim the Gospel of Christ’s Sovereignty. Recognizing this sovereignty and Christ’s propitiatory work leads to salvation. By the power of the Spirit, the Church preaches the message of “The true light, which gives light to everyone,” and who came “into the world,” so that “all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:9, 12). The Church also lives out the implications of this message and Christ’s Sovereignty, by living truly human, colorful, and beautiful lives marked by neighbor-love (Matt 5:2–12). Preaching and living beautifully refracts and reflects the Sovereign’s Light across the world, and this illuminating refraction drives people of the earth to “see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 5:13–16). The purple ray of “Christ’s Sovereignty” represents the white “Light” that is Jesus Christ (“#FFFFFF”). Its introduction into the prism occurs within the ecclesial order. The Church, through its churches, proclaims the Gospel of Christ’s sovereignty, and recognizes this sovereignty through a life of preaching and reflective gospel-living.

---

<sup>114</sup> See Appendix 4, “Angle 4.4.2.2: Society: Particular Society with Separation of Powers #2.”

This manner of life prismatically refracts Christ’s white light into a spectrum of beautiful colors, which reflects and bounces across a society’s orders and particular institutions (Phil 2:12–15). By proclaiming Christ’s sovereignty, they also proclaim the New Covenant’s Constitution through the written Constitution that is the Spirit-spoken Bible. Through the Bible, the Spirit reveals how humans ought to live to be truly human, which through the churches’ preaching ministry helps sanctify people towards Christ-likeness. Christ models the perfect fulfillment of God’s Constitution, and living like Christ helps us live beautifully. Furthermore, the Church helps remind the families and the states of their procreative and protective powers. It helps them fulfill their intended “here-and-now” functions and forms, helps prevent them confusing another order’s function and form as its own, and from confusing its particularity as universality. When the ecclesial, familial, and political churches, families, and states hearken to the loving fulfillment of God’s Covenantal Constitution’s forms and functions, they refract Christ’s sovereignty, which produces a colorful, beautiful, good, and illuminated society. The pixelated individual’s motive for seeing an ordered and colorful society is simple but immeasurable: Love. If recognizing Christ’s sovereignty, and living a life that refracts it across society, is truly a good—if it makes the “here-and-low” truly more beautiful and colorful, and the thought of the “not-yet” infinitely more exciting—then the Church can never be without excuse for engaging the lives of those it finds on its institutional horizon.<sup>116</sup> Love commands it. Love inspired it. Living beautiful is also good for us, and

---

<sup>115</sup> See Appendix 4, “Angle 4.4.3: Society: Particular Society Refracting Sovereignty.”

<sup>116</sup> This is especially the case if the Church finds itself persecuted, ostracized, or ignored by society. The goal is authenticity and faithfulness. If it were up to us, the churches would be assured failure

our neighbor. The opposite is simply darkness. There only is the *esse* and *non esse*; Light or darkness.

The next angle of the prism model turns the prism several degrees away from its two-dimensional face, so that the full model can be seen in its third dimension.<sup>117</sup> The model illustrates that “here-and-now” creation is symbolically a prism, and each triangular slice/lens of the prism reflects a particular society. Each of the triangular slices/lenses consist of the three orders, which consists of the particular institutions.<sup>118</sup> The introduction of Christ’s Sovereignty in the illustration of light emulates the earlier image of a refracted spectrum of color; however, in society, the refraction of light also experiences a third dimension. Refracting God’s Sovereignty not only brings color and beauty across a particular triangular society, but it also brings it across the entirety of temporal prismatic creation.<sup>119</sup> This includes refracting God’s sovereignty across a segment of related societies, which taken together as a portion of the prism of creation, make up what is called a “civilization.”<sup>120</sup> These various “Origin/Covenant,” “Constitution,” “Order,” “Society,” and “Creation” illustrations are all various angles of one prism (“Creation”).<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, this model of creation is only in the “here-and-

---

and disorder—after all, count the number of branches, denominations, and “First” “Second” and “Third” church names out there. If God is the Sovereign—and he is—then “we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28). It is a very unloving, inauthentic, and selfish thing to keep goodness, beauty, and color to oneself. It also makes life rather boring. God will guarantee the results that he desires. The Church has the liberty to *love* love.

<sup>117</sup> See Appendix 4, “Angle 4.5.1: Creation: Society in Creation.”

<sup>118</sup> See Appendix 4, “Angle 4.5.2: Creation: Society in Creation with Orders and institutions.”

<sup>119</sup> See Appendix 4, “Angle 4.5.3: Creation: Society in Creation with Institutions Refracting Sovereignty (in the ‘here-and-now’).”

<sup>120</sup> See Appendix 4, “Angle 4.6.1: Creation: Particular Civilization in Creation.”

<sup>121</sup> See Appendix 4. On “Origin/Covenant,” see Angle 4.1.1–4.1.2. On “Constitution,” see Angle 4.2.1. On “Order,” see Angle 4.3.1–4.3.3. On “Society,” see Angle 4.4.1–4.4.3. On “Creation,” see Angle 4.5.1–4.6.1.

now.” The final model of creation occurs with Jesus’ Second Coming, which is when he himself will consolidate all orders into one ordered Word—himself. In this “not-yet” order, the model for creation is recreated into a prismatic pyramid where power is consolidated at its peak.<sup>122</sup> At the apex of the “not-yet” pyramid of Creation is the Lord of lords and the King of kings (Mark 13:24–27; Rev 19:15–16). His glory shines through this apex, which fills all of creation with his luminance and sovereignty. All the ecclesial, familial, and political orders—as well as the market and communications—bend the knee to the sovereignty of Christ and his consolidation of power (Phil 2:9–11). In this “not-yet,” he establishes perfect order, and his covenant people get to experience the beatific life whose colors are beyond comprehension. Those outside of Christ’s Covenant, are left in the dark (“#000000”).<sup>123</sup>

### **Appraisal of Traditional Protestant Social Theory**

Whereas the conducted scriptural and historical appraisal of the covenantal idea supports the framework of traditional Protestant social theory, and whereas a political theology of Covenantal Constitutionalism illustrates an example of the covenantal idea’s ability to appraise the traditional Protestant social theory to formulate a response to the critical social question, we may conclude that covenant as an ecclesial, marital, and political idea sufficiently responds to O’Donovan’s criticisms and the social question.

---

<sup>122</sup> See Appendix 4, “Angle 4.7.1: Creation: The Kingdom Come Creation in the ‘not-yet.’”

<sup>123</sup> “Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’” (Matt 22:13). “Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’” (John 8:12). “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his

As an addendum to the appraisal and the proposed Covenantal Constitutionalism model, perhaps 1 Tim 2:1–15 serves as a potential exegetical summary. As 1 Tim 2:1–4 explains, the political act and authorities provide a God-recognized “good.” The political institution is not here described as a necessary evil. If anything in the political institution is a necessary evil, it is man (given his degenerate nature). In fact, according to 1 Tim 2:1–4, political polity contributes indirectly to the propagation of the Gospel through restraining the externalization of the degenerate *yetzer* in the form of temporal violence.<sup>124</sup> However, this contribution is not intended in the “here-and-now” to assume the synthesized Old Testament theocracy or Medieval plenary and imperial papacy. Rather, the political institution contributes to the mission of the Church by utilizing its refracted sovereignty to restrain *khamas* and *yetzer* in a manner that produces a horizontal peaceful and orderly temporal environment. The state’s restraint of *khamas* and *yetzer* creates the space for the Church—not the state—to conduct its mission. The sword restrains, but the Word redeems.

It is quite noteworthy that the remainder of 1 Tim 2 seems to emphasize the order-inducing goodness and presence of all three of the major social institutions. Whereas 1 Tim 2:1–4 emphasizes the goodness and order-inducing function of the political institution, 1 Tim 2:5–10 emphasizes the goodness and order-inducing function of the Church. The Church’s function is represented primarily in the Gospel proclamation that

---

marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9). See also Gen 1:2; Isa 9:2; Ps 18:28; Acts 26:18; Luke 1:79; 1 Thess 5:5; Col 1:13; 1 John 1:5–6; 2:8–11; and Eph 5:8.

<sup>124</sup> Taken collectively, the degenerative nature of man, and the mention of the political institution as a good and a service, both criticize modern progressive liberalism, and modern libertarianism. With the

recognizes Christ Jesus as the intended mediator who establishes vertical peace between God and humanity (1 Tim 2:5); and horizontal peace, between human neighbors (1 Tim 2:8). The Church's function is focused on the proclamation and "testimony" of Christ Jesus giving "himself as a ransom for all," which is the New Covenant's redemptive solution to *khamas* and *yetzer* (1 Tim 2:6). Whereas the political institution was ordained by God to restrain man's *khamas* and *yetzer*, the ecclesial institution redeems him. This proclamation is an order-inducing contribution made by the Spirit-empowered Church, and its institutional mission is represented in the passage by Timothy's ecclesial claim to the apostolic, preaching, and teaching office (1 Tim 2:7). The ecclesial institution utilizes the space of temporal peace established by the political institution (1 Tim 2:2), to advance the Gospel-proclamation that establishes a vertically and horizontally ordered, truly-human, society where capital "P" Peace is evident in that "in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling" (1 Tim 2:8). Finally, the passage closes by alluding to the primary function of the familial institution (1 Tim 2:11–15). Regardless of the interpretive difficulty of the final verse, Timothy seems to address the familial institution in a manner that encourages an orderliness that contrasts with Adam and Eve's Fall-induced, serpentine, and chaotic inversion of God's intended Order. Against that backdrop, the order-inducing, God-ordained function of the family is evident in 1 Tim 2:15's mention of childbearing, fidelity, and holiness (*proles*, *fides*, and *sacramentum*). In these acts, the family contributes to an ordered creation. Whereas the political institution refracts Christ's temporal sovereignty in its mission to protect against

---

former, the passage sobers the progressive's utopianism, and with the latter, the passage sobers the

man's *khamas* and *yetzer*, and whereas the ecclesial institution refracts Christ's eternal sovereignty in its mission to proclaim Christ's New Covenant redemption of man from *khamas* and *yetzer*, the familial institution refracts Christ's creative sovereignty in its mission of propagating the protectors and proclaimers.<sup>125</sup>

---

libertarian's atomism.

<sup>125</sup> A final note should be made in interaction with the second chapter's summarized traditional Protestant social theories, and what the various theologians contributed to Covenantal Constitutionalism. First, Luther's three estates contributes one of the earliest articulations of the social theory. However, it is especially valued for developing Augustine's Two Cities doctrine by examining the internal and external dimensions of social life. This led Luther to develop his doctrine of Kingdoms, Orders, Stations, and Vocations. However, Luther lacked the type of institutional territorial clarity evident with the more Reformed traditions (which they often gained by emphasizing the law). In the Covenantal Constitutionalism model, Luther's doctrine of stations and vocations, with its orienting doctrine of neighbor-love, was appropriated to explain the individuality and collectivist character of a society's people (via the RGB color model). Second, in reference to Baxter's teachings, the covenantal constitutionalist approach is clearly reliant on the many great contributions of the Reformed Puritans. More than any other tradition, Puritans like Baxter evidenced an approach to thinking about the social institutions as a covenantal idea, and the political theological approach taken in this chapter tries to model itself after the character of their endeavors. In short, they not only theologized about covenantalism, but went out into frontiers and practiced it. Third, the Baptist contributions are obvious. I am a Baptist by conviction. However, I believe that the key contribution baptistic thought makes to the covenantal constitutionalist approach is in the ecclesiology. The baptistic ecclesiology makes the best arguments for explaining the particularity and universality of the Church and churches; especially as they relate to the two ordinances. Furthermore, Baptists have been at the heart of religious liberty, and their strong doctrine of human depravity, their notions of Gospel liberty, their commitment to Gospel proclamation as society's source of redemption (example being Billy Graham), and their overall constitutionalist politics make many contributions to establishing a political theology that pursues liberty without being utopian. The dissertation topic would have likely not come about, if I was not forced as a pastor of a Baptist church to actually experience ecclesial disorder that necessitated exploring covenantalism in practice through leading the church to write and organize its covenant and constitution. Fourth, prior to the dissertation I considered Kuyper and the Reformed tradition's political theology as perhaps the most articulate. What makes it especially impressive is that it is a system born from Kuyper's need to push against a degenerative modernism and secular revolution that sought to undermine his homeland. In addition, Kuyper's doctrine of sphere sovereignty, and the overall Reformed tradition's commitment to being theocentric, evidence their influence throughout the covenantal constitutionalist formulation. Furthermore, Kuyper's treatment on the importance of the family throughout his work is exceptional—especially his argument that the family is the primary institution of society, and not the individual. As an American Constitutionalist, Kuyper's articulation on the centrality of the family is appealing (although the importance of consolidating individualism proved itself to Kuyper and Bavinck when they were forced to acknowledge individual suffrage). Fifth, Troeltsch is perhaps the theologian furthest from my own convictions; however, he is also the figure to make the first systematic attempt of a Protestant social theory and a historical appraisal of the social institutions. I agree with the way he proposes the social question, but I disagree with his answer. However, the primary contribution Troelstch made to the formulation of this work, is that he modeled the historical appraisal of the social institutions. He was often a starting point for examining how the Church interacted with a certain institution across history. Sixth, Bonhoeffer's ethic contributed much to the

---

Christocentric spirit of the work. It is a tragedy that Bonhoeffer never completed his *Ethics*, as the material he left behind evidence that he was bound to articulate a Lutheran social theory that augmented and corrected Luther's theory with the insights of neo-orthodoxy. What Bonhoeffer contributed in particular to the covenantal constitutionalist political theology, was its Christocentricity, and its articulation of the Sovereign ("Ultimate") and refracted sovereignty ("penultimate"). Throughout his work, Bonhoeffer tries to make it undeniable that Christ is the Sovereign. In this vein, I would place him alongside Karl Barth and Cornelius Van Til, both of whom have influenced me by reminding me that theology ought to start with God and work its way down (not the other way)—theology ought to be *theological*. Finally, Henry is the figure whose theology is closest to my own (in heart and mind). His contributions to the development of Covenantal Constitutionalism are threefold: (1) Henry sought to articulate an attractive and academic systematization of evangelical thought; (2) Henry sought to articulate evangelicalism without losing the sight and heart of the *euangelion*; and (3) Henry took words, propositions, and sentences very seriously. All three of those influences are evident throughout the covenantal constitutionalist approach, which seeks to capture the evangelical spirit of Henry's address to modernity, and contextualize it to a postmodern audience, by telling a more compelling True Story.

## CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

Today, humanity finds itself in a moral and social “frontier.” On one side of the landscape, modernity’s last sunset is felt in the pangs of atomism that fracture the social utility of churches, families, states, and societies. The reverberations of modernity’s death throes corroborate Zimmerman’s dire warnings that where the familial model degenerates into atomism, society decays. Nowhere is modernity’s social degenerative *khamas* and *yetzer* more obvious than its destruction of the modern family. Whereas modernity had begun its endeavor in the name of humanism, nature, and science, it leaves behind a radioactive Frankenstein made in its image. Although nature itself attests that the most human and natural environment for a new living member of the *homo sapiens* species is a mother’s womb, modernity casts a shadow on Western civilization that perverted science into using unnatural metal vacuums and acidic concoctions to inhumanely terminate one out of every three natural American pregnancies. For those humans who escape abortion, half of them will live a life robbed by the disorder of divorce. Modernity’s legacy is not only evident in how humans treat their wombs, but how they have treated their world. Modernity and its secularist scientific utopianism gave birth to two ideology-driven world wars, tens of millions of state-induced democides, and an atomic bomb whose powers can literally atomize worldwide humanity. Shockingly, in the twentieth century, the leading cause of unnatural death was not war, but the murder of people by their own

governments.<sup>1</sup> In its wake, modernity leaves behind a violent atomism that is anti-human and anti-social.

The other side of the landscape fares no better. In place of science and the individual, postmodernism's sunrise is an ideology of schizophrenia and a collectivism of hive-totalitarianism. Whereas modernity placed its emphasis on discovering scientifically-grounded objectivity in the human and natural subject, postmodernism sways in a far opposite direction that instead embraces experience and subjectivity. For the postmodernist, all there can be is whatever subject a subject chooses to subject. Postmodernism gives up on not only the objectivity of human nature or science, but even gives up on the objectivity of logic and language. In place of modernity's "he" and "she," it speaks in the unscientific absurdities of zie/sie/ey/ve/tey/e, zim/sie/em/ver/ter/em, zir/hir/eir/vis/tem/eir, zis/hirs/eirs/vers/ters/eirs, and zieself/hirself/eirself/verself/terself/emself. However, the subjectivism does not produce an environment of expected tolerance and equality. Rather, it produces a remarkably intolerant so-called "tolerance" that only tolerates members of its subjectivist hive. The only objectivity it accepts is its subjectivity, and it embraces it religiously. Whereas the hallmark of modernity was its secularization of science and society, postmodernism goes in the opposite direction and deifies itself. In place of organized religion, it advances a totalitarian postmodern existentialist Gnosticism that says if you do not subject to its sovereign subjectivity, then you are a bigot, a racist, a sexist, a fascist, and a homophobe. Or, more simply, you are less than human. However, postmodernity does not end with rendering a judgment of

---

<sup>1</sup> R. J. Rummel, *Statistics of Democide: Genocide and Mass Murder since 1900* (Piscataway, NJ: LIT Rutgers University, 1982). Also see Stephane Courtois, *Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror,*

their enemy's inhuman guilt. Rather, postmodernity sets out to totalize the powers of society to bend the knees of its subjects to their sovereign, Zir Subjectivity. The totalitarian approach sets out to unify the orders of society under its disorder. After utilizing the form and functions of these institutions to pass judgment on the objectivists as being guilty of inhumanity, it then sets out to use the powers of its disordered orders to restrain them of their alleged heretical violence. Zir Subjectivity's ultimate goal is to utilize the powers of its deformed and dysfunctional disorders to "redeem" the inhuman subjects into its own image. On its conquest, it sends an army of nihilist, existentialist, subjectivist, and gnostic battalions to raze the traditions, customs, norms, and ethics of the secular and spiritual past.

However, modernity's sunset and postmodernity's sunrise reveal some paths forward. In place of modernism's values of systematics, logic, reason, science, and secularism, postmodernism advances its virtues of authenticity, existence, aesthetics, communication, and story. In his *City of God*, Augustine was correct to acknowledge that the point of contact where the City of God and man's cities find common ground in their earthly city, is in the pursuit of temporal peace. Although by "peace" the cities of man sought temporal peace, and the City of God sought the ultimate peace in the Prince of Peace, Augustine's realism argued that in the lower common denominator of earthly peace, the City and cities could come together into a common society. The sinner desired peace so that he could pursue his sins, and the saints desired peace so they could have an environment conducive to pointing the sinners to the Prince of Peace. With Augustine's insight in mind, perhaps the Church in this postmodern frontier can strategically

---

*Repression* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015). Their estimates of the number of state-

appropriate postmodernism's pursuit of authenticity, anti-hypocrisy, and story as a common denominator. And perhaps by appropriating this appeal to authenticity, it can create for itself a common social existence, and a necessary social space, that strategically enables the Church to communicate the most beautiful and authentic of stories. Or, in other words, it can create for itself the social space needed to proclaim to the postmodernist on the horizon the beauty of living as truly authentic subjects of the Sovereign Subject; to proclaim a story whose goodness, beauty, authenticity, and color is infinitely multiplied by the reality this story is true.

In the post-modernist frontier, how can the Church approach the subjects on its missional horizon? Perhaps the answer lies in covenants and constitutions. Perhaps the seminal covenantal idea can equip the churches' frontiersmen to beautifully, authentically, and colorfully communicate with the others it finds on its institutional horizon. What remains is summarizing the findings thus far, and providing a possible proposal for how the Church may appropriate the covenantal idea to seed its way forward.

### **Summary of the Findings**

The core purpose of the dissertation has been to respond to O'Donovan's twofold criticism of traditional Protestant social theory, and his critical social question.

O'Donovan criticized the traditional Protestant approach of the three orders of church, family, and state, as being superficially weak. In particular, O'Donovan claimed the theory was based on intuition, and lacked exegetical and doctrinal arguments. Further

---

induced democides range from eighty-five million to one hundred and seventy-four million fatalities.

still, O'Donovan argued that the theory failed to answer the critical social question, which asks how a social theory explains the particularity and universality of institutions and societies. From these criticisms, the dissertation sought to answer the question, "Is O'Donovan's criticism against traditional Protestant social theory warranted?"

Our findings conclude that O'Donovan's criticism is not warranted. The dissertation has argued the thesis that his twofold criticisms of traditional Protestant social theory is answered by appraising covenant as an ecclesial, marital, and political idea. After verifying that the traditional Protestant social theory can in fact be considered the traditional Protestant approach, the appraisal of covenant in Scripture and the Church's history revealed an opulent biblical and doctrinal idea that corroborates the Protestant theory. Furthermore, applying the idea of covenant to social life addresses the critical social question of the problem of particularity and universality. The merit for these conclusions came from an appraisal of the covenantal idea in social frontiers to explain the origination and constitution of the Church & churches, the Family & families, the State & states, and ultimately Society & societies. The results of these findings lent themselves to the development of a political theology we called "Covenantal Constitutionalism," which evidences the apologetic and metanarrative value of applying the covenantal constitutional idea to understanding the political act, the political authority, and life beyond the political act and authority.

Throughout the appraisals, several figures served as guides whose questions and insights help orient the significance of the covenantal idea. Chief among them is O'Donovan himself, whose evangelical and ecclesial orientation contextualize and initiate the endeavor. In particular, O'Donovan's work not only articulates his criticisms

and critical question, but also hints at their resolution with his passing references to the importance of covenants. At one point, O'Donovan even states that God's covenant is the point of disclosure for all political authority, and that even divine judgment presupposes the covenantal idea. O'Donovan's peers criticize him on making these types of references without treating the idea without any real depth. The dissertation sought to fill this void, and did so by first surveying covenant as an ecclesial idea. The results of that appraisal revealed that covenants in Scripture occur in two main categories, with those covenants initiated by God in relation with humans being called "Vertical Covenants," and those initiated between humans before God and his moral-order being called "horizontal covenants." The appraisal proceeded to evaluate the ecclesial usages of the covenantal idea to explain the "Vertical" and "horizontal" nature of the Church and churches. Furthermore, the appraisal sought to evidence moments in the Church's history where social frontiers, such as the Reformation and the Radical Reformers, contained episodes where churches explained their origination and constitution with covenantal ideas such as written "church covenants."

After appraising covenant as an ecclesial idea, the dissertation proceeded to appraise it as a marital and family idea. Prior to this appraisal, the early twentieth century sociologist Carle C. Zimmerman served as an unexpected guide. Zimmerman's work on familial sociology reveal that the health of society correlates to the predominance of what he calls either the trustee, domestic, or atomistic family model. In particular, Zimmerman's acknowledges that the domestic model—which is the healthiest option for a society—is deeply connected with a society's ability to give marriage religious moral meaning (*files, proles, and sacramentum*). However, Zimmerman's weakness is that he

ignores the covenantal model, and even faults the Puritans—who were the greatest champions of marriage as a covenantal idea—as being proponents of a contractualism that contributed to modernity’s rise of atomistic marriages. Akin to O’Donovan’s absent treatment, the chapter proceeded to amend Zimmerman’s otherwise stellar work, by appraising covenant as a marital and familial idea. The scriptural and historical appraisal revealed a strong case for understanding marriage as a covenantal idea, which is evidenced in being the most ecumenically embraced perspective among Christian denominations today. Further still, the appraisal revealed an increasingly recognized importance of Creation and the Adamic Covenant in understand God’s overall covenantal and constitutional objectives.

The final phase of appraising covenant within the traditional Protestant social framework came with the fifth chapter’s appraisal of covenant as a political idea. The guide chosen to introduce the appraisal contrasted greatly with O’Donovan and Zimmerman. Whereas O’Donovan’s trilogy lacked a treatment of the covenantal idea, the Jewish political theorist Daniel J. Elazar dedicates a tetralogy to exploring covenant as a political idea. While the depth and breadth of Elazar’s endeavor is remarkable, his chief contribution to orienting the chapter’s appraisal is his articulation of the question of origination and constitutionalization, and his summary of the three traditional models (conquest, organic development, and covenant). Elazar notes that throughout the history of political theory, the approaches of explaining the origination and form of a polity either emphasizes that they came about by force, accident, or choice. Elazar’s shared concern is that the seminal importance of covenant as a political idea has been sacrificed at the secular alter of modernist political science, which robs political science of fully

conducting its discipline. In contrast, Elazar's work argued for the biblical and historical importance of political covenants, and much of his arguments are rehearsed throughout the chapter's own scriptural and historical appraisals.

Combined, the three-chaptered appraisal reveal that Elazar's conclusion of the seminal utility of covenant to understanding the political institution, is also shared by its ability to explain ecclesial and familial institutions. Collectively, the appraisal articulates a scripturally and doctrinally sufficient response to O'Donovan's criticisms. The sixth chapter rehearsed the appraisal's insights, organized them into a response to O'Donovan's criticisms, and utilized them to formulate a political theology that augments the traditional Protestant social theory to possibly explain the origination, constitution, particularity, and universality of institutions and society. The formulated political theology called itself "Covenantal Constitutionalism," and sought to propose the models of the RGB color code and a prism to symbolize the communicative existence of the individual and the community in society. However, it is not sufficient to end with merely an appraisal and a propose political theological model. Arguably, the worth of a biblical theology is whether its theory inspires Gospel-minded action. What are the implications of the appraisal and its covenantal constitutional theological formulation? How can it not only explain the institutions and society, but serve them in the horizontal "here-and-now"?

### **Implications of the Study**

The content and conclusions of the study of covenant as an ecclesial, marital, political, and ultimately social idea, carry a number of implications related to individuals, institutions, societies, civilizations, and Creation. First, individuals benefit from a number

of the study's insights. The appropriation of Luther's doctrine of stations and vocations, as symbolized in the RGB color model and the notion of pixels, helps affirm the individualism of Christian Liberalism and evangelicalism, without sacrificing society to a modernist degenerative atomism. Rather, the formulation of Covenantal Constitutionalism invites individuals to consider their individuality as pixilated contributions whose intention is to communicate a larger picture. It invites the individual to understand reality, and their individuality, as Christocentric in its orientation and purpose. The Light of Christ brings luminance to their pixilated self, and drives them—in the name of loving God and neighbor—to contribute light and color to their communities. The appraisal and model helps individuals understand their particular responsibilities, through the ways the duties of their station and vocation as husband, wife, senator, judge, manager, father, pastor, and church member color their lives, and bring color into the lives of those around them. It gives the seemingly mundane vocation moral meaning. The appraisal invites individuals to reject the anti-relational and amoral notion of social contracts, and instead utilize covenants that take kinds and make them kin. The appraisal invites the individual to apply these insights to their covenantal relationships in a very practical exhortation that states, "Hearken the Covenant and your covenants with loving-kindness!" As members of the New Covenant, individuals are truly liberated to love God and love their neighbors as themselves, without worrying about meriting their own salvation. They are freed to enjoy Creation's constituted goodness, and the Good, through proclaiming and living the Gospel. The result is a social and moral motivator whose effectiveness is far greater than fear—the New Covenant produces Gospel gratitude. This Spirit-empowered gratitude enables individuals to live beautiful lives that add color to

their marriages, families, churches, and neighborhoods. Furthermore, whereas O'Donovan warned of the problem of particularity and universality, the study—and Zimmerman's contributions in specific—help us amend the problem of particularity and universality to actually be a problem of explaining and restraining atomism, particularity, and universality.

Second, institutions and societies benefit from the study's insights. O'Donovan is correct to be concerned about particular institutions confusing their particularity as individuality. The idea itself is inherently biblical. Even in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve sought to confuse their particular individuality for divinity. They sought violence against their very *imago dei*, by pursuing to “be like God” and have subjective control over “good and evil.” Upon being expelled from the Garden, Adam and Eve's descendants fared no better. Their *khamas* and degenerate *yetzer* led God to punish them with a flood, and ordain civil government as a constitution check that restrains man's *khamas* by instituting the man-at-arms. Even the Israelites, God's chosen, fared poorly. God parted seas and defeated the Egyptians, and the Israelites bowed before a bull. God gave them judges, and everyone ended up doing whatever they wanted. God gave them a lawgiver and a law, and they still ignored it. God gave them a polity, and they pursued the protection of their pagan neighbors. Extra biblical history fared no better. After a pagan empire persecuted the Early Church, the medieval plenary papalism persecuted Protestants. When Protestants became princes, they went to war against their papal persecutors, to the tune of over eight million dead in a war that lasted thirty years. However, secular history has fared even worse! The utopian secularism that gave rise to the ideologies of the twentieth century produced over eighty million dead as the result of

man's pursuit of pyramidal and secular power. In short, the biblical and historical patterns affirm exactly why God turned man away from the Garden with a flaming sword, and appointed man as a check against himself. The key implication of the covenantal study for society is that God's Constitution and our particular constitutions ought to always favor limits and liberty to anything that looks like the universalization that greatly exacerbates violence. Members of the Covenant should pursue public policies in their societies that advocate constitutional limits that check man's degenerative tendency. Even with a postmodern audience who appeals to a more optimistic anthropology, the Church on this horizon can appeal to their value of authenticity and anti-hypocrisy to advocate for an environment where limits and liberty enables their respective attempts at subject-actualization. In other words, the chief implication for the institutions and the social life, is it sobers their pursuits (which often correspond with exacerbated violence), by reminding them of their limits, restraining them to God's Constitution, and reminding society that the political institution is not the only available option to pursue social change. In contrast, society should be encouraged to try and pursue their respective actualization through other institutions and the markets. As Scripture and history can attest, it is far safer and far less violent!

Third, civilization benefits from the study. The works of O'Donovan, Elazar, Lutz, Zimmerman, Novak, Perry, and many others cited throughout the work, can be collectively summarized as an attempt to help Western Civilization understand its symbols. Whether evidenced in covenants or Creation, the study recognized the importance of symbols and communicative acts to actually make and do things. They establish morally-meaningful relationships, they aid in the explanation of self and

society, and they greatly impact how humans individually and collectively live their lives. Thus, they should merit the attention of any academic discipline whose goal is to understand any aspect of man's society. Voegelin's challenge to the study of politics was to bring attention back to the importance of symbols, which opens up an opportunity for religion to rejoin the political and social discussions. Voegelin was correct to criticize modernity's secularism as robbing the discipline of the chance to explore an aspect of human experience that is arguably the most influential on how individuals and societies actually live. Modernity's so-called scientific secularization was done in part from a fear that religion was totalitarian, and could undermine objective study. The suspicion was not without warrant—the Enlightenment and Modernity's secularism is in part the result of experiencing Catholic and Protestant princes confusing their particularity as a universality that warranted violently killing one another. However, as noted time and time again, modernism's secularist critique has lost its teeth after the actual twentieth century totalitarianisms that it largely enabled. Voegelin's challenge, and the opportunity enabled by postmodernism's virtue of authenticity, invite theology and religion to contribute to academic flourishing. This is not to be confused as attempts for undermining and imposing academic study by simply baptizing them "In the name of God and country!" Rather, theologically sensitive approaches to political philosophies and historical political episodes—such as examining the seminal direct and indirect influence of the covenantal idea on American constitutionalism—can actually make political science more political and more scientific. If the ultimate goal of a science is to understand why a thing is the way that it is, a self-imposed ignorance of political theological ideas such as covenant robs political science of its very purpose. Ultimately,

this invites political philosophers and political theologians to come together and revisit political theories, figures, and better explain polities.

Finally, Creation, creatures, and virtual creations benefit from the study. The most obvious implication is for Creation itself. If God truly exists—and he does—and if he created reality with an intentional Constitution—and it sure seems like he did—then hearkening God’s Covenant and Constitution helps humans live. Furthermore, if God constitutionalized creation with inherit blessings related to the creature’s forms and functions, hearkening to God’s Covenant and Constitution with loving kindness helps creatures live beautifully. If we are truly convinced that hearkening the insights of the study produces a good, beautiful, and colorful life, we would be insane and selfish not to want to share this goodness with others. The result is that affirming Christ’s sovereignty in our lives and our institutions refracts and reverberates beauty across time and space, by coloring our lives, our institutions, our societies, our civilizations, and thus Creation. Further still, the study’s insights pose some interesting and sobering challenges to what we—as creative creatures—can and should create. In a world where augmented realities, virtual realities, mainstream robotics, space colonization, sex reassignments, and artificial intelligence are on the horizon, the covenantal constitutionalist approach invites an introspective reflection of reality and our role in it. Contemporary virtual creations seemingly corroborate a number of the study’s observations about man’s *khamas* and *yetzer*. The most obvious example would be what happens when a perversion of man’s sexual nature meets guaranteed anonymity, such as occurs with online pornography. While the implications are still being understood, the insights from our story likely suggest that such digital endeavors may be bad and degenerative ideas that lead us to

something less than human. That perhaps even make us and society to be inhumane. Ultimately, the extension of the study's insights provides some needed sobriety and restraint to man's attempt to recreate creation through virtual and augmented "realities."

### **Closing Statements**

There is something ontologically and epistemologically meaningful about the fact that God's communication originates creation. As the earlier scriptural appraisals and theological reflections revealed, communication precedes creation in a logical non-temporal sense. God's communication brings creation into existence, gives it form, gives it function, and gives it moral meaning and authenticity. Any naturalist ethic that prioritizes creation over communication is problematic, and this was the lesson learned from modernity. Modernity's elevation of creation over communication set it up for its own destruction, and its destruction came with the unfathomable violence of the twentieth century's wars, genocides, democides, and ignorant ideologies. Furthermore, modernity's weakness led to the birth of postmodernity. What made it *postmodern*, was that it sought to prioritize communication over creation. What made it *postmodern*, was that it continued modernity's secularization of traditional religion, in favor of its own existential Gnosticism. Modernity's problem was not creation itself, but the subjects that were studying it. Postmodernity's response was to overemphasize and deify the subjects, which produced a subjectivity that prioritized noise more than actual communication.

Words matter, and words do things. Genesis evidences that God quite literally created with words. Perhaps this may seem difficult for a believer or non-believer to comprehend, but it is actually quite realistic. Creating realities with words is even objectively verifiable. The problem with the modernists is that they could not get past

their subjectivity to comprehensively understand reality as they had predicted they would in their naturalist utopian fantasies. Thus, postmodernity swooped in, swung the pendulum in the opposite direction, and challenged the very objectivity of words. Instead, the postmodernists sought to emphasize a subject's subjectivity, and ultimately sought to recreate and re-interpret reality with relativistic language. By empowering every subject to recreate reality in their own images, postmodernism sacrificed the ability of subjects to actually *be* subjects, and to actually *experience* reality.

However, the postmodernist's objection to the objectivity of words is without merit. Words do not simply describe things, they also do and make things. The entirety of this dissertation is an attempt to use words to "build" something with an act of communication. It has sought to build a response to O'Donovan's criticism by exploring the communicative act of covenant. Here, perhaps the postmodernist claims that the entire communicative act is still dependent on the reader's subjective interpretation. However, at a very direct and demonstrable level, words were used to create the possibility of writing these very words. At this very moment, I type "this word" into a keyboard. A word processing program receives my inputs, and formulates representations of the words through the illuminated pixels on my monitor. The word processing program I am using was itself created with words. A group of coders and designers literally used a number of symbols, and words, to make a program that allows for me to type "this communication." In the digital realm of virtual realities, words quite literally create entire infrastructures. While God used his word to command the constitution of the form and functions of night and day, humans use words called "commands" to create the form and functions of virtual creations. Literally, I can use words in a language called HTML to

command the creation of a virtual thing named a “square” seemingly out of nothing, by communicating, “<div id=“square” style=“width:100px;height:100px”></div>.” I can use a second language called CSS to constitute the creation’s form with “blackness” by commanding “<style>#square {background-color: #000000}</style>.” Furthermore, I can even use a third language called JS to constitute its function to disappear when I click it by communicating “<script> document.getElementById (‘square’).onclick = function(event) { document.getElementById (‘square’).className = “hidden”; } </script>.” In summary, by a single communicative act, I can originate a creation called a “square,” constitute it with a form of “squared blackness,” and a function of “disappearing when clicked,” when I say,

```

<!DOCTYPE html>
<html>
  <head>
    <style>
      #square {background-color:#000000;}
      .hidden {display: none;}
    </style>
  </head>
  <body>
    <div id=“square” style=“width:100px;height:100px;”></div>
    <script>
      document.getElementById(‘square’).onclick = function(event) {
        document.getElementById(‘square’).className = “hidden”;}
    </script>
  </body>
</html>

```

I commanded ““Let there be <div id=“square”> ... </div> with <style> ... </style>, and let it <script> ... </script>”, and it was so!” Behold, a created and constituted square.<sup>2</sup> If I, as a human, can do this objectively with words, why would it seem so

---

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 5, “Model: HTML Model of Origination and Constituted Form and Function.” It is noteworthy that the actually command in JS is called a “function.” The three noted languages stand for

unbelievable that God—in whose image we are made—could create and constitutionalize reality’s Creation, creatures, and creative humanity *ex nihilo*, using his Word? This clearly seems to be the exegetical suggestion, and in the coding illustration above, it explains why *imago dei*-bearing humans use communicative acts to create entire complex virtual realities that can be literally experienced, regardless whether the audience is a modernist, postmodernist, or Covenant member. Here again, the insights from the study seem to make great apologetic sense of reality, and give it color and moral meaning.

In closing, we should ask ourselves an important question. How do you communicate in a postmodern frontier that questions language and logic? The answer: with symbols and communicative acts. If the language spoken by the postmodernist is one of authenticity, experience, actualization, and narrative, the communicative nature of covenantal constitutions’ ability to symbolize the Gospel story may chart a path forward in the missional horizon. To the unbelieving world, there is only the subjectivity of its institutions. God’s Covenant and Constitution invites man to experience a real and operating ethical objectivity. It is the incoming and interconnectedness of God’s truth within covenantal constitutions that restores the possibility for a framework of meaningful moral behavior.

---

Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), and JavaScript (JS). HTML serves role of originating creations. CSS then gives it form, such as location, size, color, shape, layer, etc. Finally, JS gives it literal functions. On a website, HTML will organize all the things being displayed. It also contains the raw text of the copy or the files. It originates the “things” you see (and often gives these “things” names that can then be constituted with form and function with CSS and JS). CSS then gives everything form by connecting names to specified colors, shapes, locations, etc. Finally, JS is what causes the named things to actually do stuff. When you click a button, or fill out a form, or watch a video, or input payments, JS are in the background firing out scripts that cause movements and purpose. These three are the core languages of web development, however a fourth worth mentioning is Hypertext Preprocessor (PHP), which takes input information, such as your form or transaction submissions, and processes them into a server-side database.

For the brethren, their institutions are a symbol to the truth of the covenantal relationship between the transcendent and immanent in “here-and-now” reality. Their particular covenantal institutions incorporate their existence as particular subjects (“Goenaga’s family”, “Glory of God Christian Fellowship”, “The United States of America”), and testify to their participation in—and the existence of—universal and special orders (Mankind, The Church, The Kingdom of Heaven). The covenantal constitutional framework contains the explanatory power to identify the origination and constitution—and the notions of power and authority—of both the particular and universal existence of the three institutional orders. Further still, it contains the explicatory power to recognize how the objectivity of the ethical framework inherent within the universal, incarnates within the particular. Finally, it contains the missional power to witness to the “city of man” the theocentric origin and constitution of the institutions intrinsic to their most essential social behavior (family, state, and worship).

When this understanding is taken to the “other at the communicative horizon,” it communicates a great deal about the nature of origins and constitutions—of power and authority—outside of the covenantal constitutional structure. The unbelieving world is graciously given the institutions of family and state to maintain their propagation, and protection, against the worst of humanity’s unbelieving nature. Without the check of these institutions, humanity’s earthly existence would be impossible. However, the undercurrent question becomes what form should these institutions take in the unbelieving world? Organic? Conquest? Contract? The implications of the biblical appraisal seem to suggest that under the New Covenant, no particular model is the sole possible option. Rather, man’s institutions outside of moral meaning are left to their

creative agencies (although they must still adhere to their constituted function in God's Constitution).

In a subjective society, there is simply subjects subjecting subjects. The subject is left in the muck and the mire of merely existing. Regardless of their subjectivity, they could not literally exist were it not for the common grace blessings of the institutions of family and state, which prevent humanity from drowning itself *en masse*. In the secular mud pit, there is merely the slogging—the presence of power and the subjective perception of authority. Slogging is an excellent illustration of the importance of power in this environment. Power itself is a chief thing to be studied in the discipline of political science. The concept of power is greater than mere physical force. Power is whatever one utilizes to drive something somewhere. It is the ability to not only act, but to get an actor to do a certain something. Pushing is a power, but so is seduction, charisma, and custom. Man can push another through the mud, or agree to move and help others to travel in a certain direction, or simply begin following another out of custom. All are manners which empower one's wallowing, but wallowing it remains. Furthermore, what one believes influences and empowers how one acts. If someone believes another is stronger than them—even if in reality they were a twig—then he might as well be, if that belief restrains their actualization of power one way or the other. What empowers a conquest, custom, or contract is the belief that either has a power to drive an actor one way or the other. The moment one wills its nature towards a pattern of regular and continued behavior, it speaks to the will's belief that one particular way is preferred over another. The very initiation and continuation of organic behavior testifies to the underlying empowerment that one believes they should be behaving in a given direction.

In a chief irony, unbelieving postmodern society is still being driven by the foundational epistemological first-ordered principle of belief. They are simply appropriating it to empower a muddy and circular subjectivity. In short, among the three traditional models for origination and constitution, it comes down to whichever the secular subjects believe holds them in subjection. Whichever they believe aids their wallowing best will be deemed authoritative and empowered. In a very real sense, it may help them get from muddy point A to muddy point B more easily—for example, one big strong and scary man forcing four others to carry him around on their shoulders sure seems less exhausting for him than actually walking, or three men agreeing to take turns with a duo carrying the third—but at the end of the day it is still merely mud-covered movement. It is still subjectivity. It is still a form of faith empowered perception that believes one way is more powerful than the other.

To both the dying modernist and the growing postmodernist, there is simply power, preference, and perception that are imposed upon an impassioned polity. Belief and faith forms the nucleus of its origination and constitution, rightly or wrongly. Is this any surprise, given we are created in the image of God to believe in God? Man will either believe in the LORD, or believe in himself—but man always believes. However, only right belief invites objectivity, meaning, truth, and color. It is the belief that truth and reality are theocentric and not anthropocentric—especially in our social institutions—that extends a hand from a neighboring grassy knoll that expands into an eternal meadow of fresh fruit and fragrant flowers. Faith in the Lord God, and his Sovereignty in our particular and universal institutions, is inherent to the uniqueness of the covenantal constitutional model. It gives relationships and society moral meaning. The Church in the

“here-and-now” stands with a boot in the mud, and another on the knoll, gesturing with one inviting hand for secular and postmodern man to take hold. With a foot anchored in the Triune God of Creation, he gestures with his second hand to the sweet fruitfulness of the sounds, scents, sights, tastes, and feels of a beautiful meadow that flourishes into infinity. On the “not-yet” horizon of this meadow, *khamas* and *yetzer* are ultimately defeated, and humanity is restored to their place as regal subjects of a perfectly ordered, covenanted, and constituted reality ruled by the one true Sovereign.

Until then, the Church at the shore of the muddy knoll is given a mission to proclaim the sovereignty of the Lord of lords and the King of kings. It is a mission that is not only good for man, but good for Creation. It is also a mission that calls the Church to get mud on its boot. Until the “not-yet,” the Church is given a great commission to proclaim Christ’s Lordship by refracting his sovereignty in the “here-and-now.” In the postmodernist horizon that rejects the reliability of words, the Church must also proclaim its message in symbols. It must show and tell, through refracting God’s luminance in the multiple colors of their ecclesial, marital, and political lives. It must use their individual and instituted lives as symbols of the beauty, color, light, salt, and purpose of actualized reality under God’s Covenant and Constitution. It must tell the Gospel story with such color that their lives communicate an authentic love of God and neighbor. This narrative must be so compelling, that man’s mud pies seem gross in comparison to the Bread of Life. In short, covenant as an ecclesial, marital, and political idea provides a wonderful opportunity for the Church to hearken to their “Vertical” and “horizontal” covenants with such loving kindness that these covenant members symbolize to the postmodern horizon

the goodness and beauty of living life under God's Covenant and Constitution.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps this starts by inviting the Covenant community to enter into a covenant with one another to lovingly hearken their Covenant and covenants.

---

<sup>3</sup> "He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand" (Ps 40:2).

TABLE 1  
MODEL: CONQUEST, ORGANIC, AND COVENANT MODELS

Models of conquest, organic, and covenant origination and constitution.<sup>1</sup>

	<b>Conquest</b>	<b>Organic</b>	<b>Covenant</b>
<b>Founding:</b>	Force	Accident	Reflection and Choice
<b>Model:</b>	Pyramid	Concentric Circles	Matrix
<b>Structure of Authority:</b>	Hierarchy	Center-Periphery	Frame and cells
<b>Mechanisms of Governance (in rank order):</b>	Administration-top-down bureaucracy  Politics-court  Constitution-charter	Politics-club-oligarchy  Administration-center outward  Constitution-tradition	Constitution-written  Politics-open with factions  Administration-divided
<b>Apotheosis:</b>	Army	Westminster system	Federal system
<b>Excess:</b>	Totalitarian	Jacobin state dictatorship	Anarchy

---

<sup>1</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 2, “Models of Foundings/Regimes.”

TABLE 2  
MODEL: VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL COVENANT PASSAGES

		COVENANT	PASSAGE	INSTITUTION				
				ECCLESIAL	MARITAL	POLITICAL		
VERTICAL	UNIVERSAL	Adamic / Creation	Gen 1-2; Jer 33:20, 25?	*X	X	*X		
		Noahic	Gen 9:9-17; Isa 54:9-10;	*X	*X	X		
		New	Heb 9:15; Jer 31:31; Heb 8:6-12; Rom 9:25-26; Gal 3:13; Eph 5:23; 2 Cor 3:6; Phil 2:9-11	X	X	X		
	SPECIAL		Abrahamic	Gen 15:9-18; Gen 17:2-21; Exod 2:24; 6:4; Lev 26:42	*X		*X	
			Mosaic	Exod 19:5-8; 24:7-8; 31:16; 34:10-28; Deut 4:13; 9:9			X	
			Davidic	*2 Sam 7:1-17; *1 Chr 17:11-14; *2 Chr 6:16; Ps 89:3-4			X	
			Priestly (Priesthood, Phineas, Levi)	Num 25:12-13; Mal 2:1-9; Neh 13:29	X			
		SPECIAL (RENEWAL)		Moabic (Mosaic Renewal)	Deut 29:1-16			X
				Joshua & People (Renewal, Constitution)	Josh 24:25			X
				Jehoida & People (Renewal, Constitution)	2 Kgs 11:17; 2 Chr 23:3			X
			Hezekiah & People (Renewal, Constitution)	2 Chr 29:10	X			
			Josiah & People (Renewal, Constitution)	2 Kgs 23:3			X	
			Ezra & People (Renewal, Constitution)	Ezra 10:3-5			X	
Prophetic (Renewal, New Covenant & Constitution)			Jer 31:31-33; Isa 42:6; Ezek 16:59-63; Mal 3:1	X		X		

	COVENANT	PASSAGE	INSTITUTION			
			ECCLESIAL	MARITAL	POLITICAL	
HORIZONTAL	PARTICULAR	Abraham & Amorites (Treaty)	Gen 14:13			X
		Abraham & Abimelech (Treaty)	Gen 21:27–32			X
		Edom & Allies (Treaty)	Obad 1:7			X
		Isaac & Abimelech (Treaty)	Gen 26:28–31			X
		Jacob & Laban (Treaty)	Gen 31:44			X
		Joshua & Gibeonites (Treaty)	Josh 9:6, 7, 11, 15–20			X
		Israel & Canaanites (Do <i>Not</i> Treaty)	Exod 23:32			X
		David, Abner, & People (Constitution)	2 Sam 3:12, 13, 21			X
		David & Elders of Israel (Constitution)	2 Sam 5:3; 1 Chr 11:3			X
		Zedekiah & People (Constitution)	Jer 34:8–18			X
		Hostile Prince & Israelites (Constitution)	Dan 9:27			X
		Jehoiada & Captains (Constitution, Pledge)	2 Kgs 11:4; 2 Chr 23:1–3			X
		Man & Man (Pledge, General, To Serve God)	Hos 10:4; Gal 3:15; 2 Chr 15:12–15; Neh 10:28–32 Ps 50:5	X		X
		David & Jonathan (Friendship Alliance)	1 Sam 18:3–4			*X
		Religious	2 Chr 15:12–15	*X		
		Marriage	Gen 2:22–25; Prov 2:16–17; Mal 2:14–15; *Hos 2:18–22; *Ezek 16:8; *Eph 5:21–33	*X	X	
		Church's Baptism & Lord's Supper	*Rom 6:4; *Gal 3:27; *1 Tim 6:12; *1 Pet 3:21; *Matt 26:28; *Mark 14:24	*X		
		Church's Discipline & Authority	*Matt 18:15–19 *Matt 18:20	*X		

\*Covenant or institution inferred in analogy, context, cross reference, or implication.

TABLE 3  
 SYMBOL: FOUNDING FATHER’S FREQUENCY OF CITATION BY TYPE (1760–1805)

Two professors, Donald S. Lutz and Charles S. Hyneman, have reviewed an estimated 15,000 items, and closely read 2,200 books, pamphlets, newspaper articles, and monographs with explicitly political content printed between 1760 and 1805. They reduced this to 916 items, about one-third of all public political writings longer than 2,000 words. From these items, Lutz and Hyneman identified 3,154 references to other sources. The Bible accounted for over a third of all citations.<sup>1</sup>

<b>Table 1: Citations by Decade</b>						
	<b>1760s</b>	<b>1770s</b>	<b>1780s</b>	<b>1790s</b>	<b>1800–05</b>	<b>Percent of Total Number</b>
<b>Bible</b>	24	44	34	29	38	<b>34</b>
<b>Enlightenment</b>	32	18	24	21	18	22
<b>Whig</b>	10	20	19	17	15	18
<b>Common Law</b>	12	4	9	14	20	11
<b>Classical</b>	8	11	10	11	2	9
<b>Peers</b>	6	2	3	6	5	4
<b>Others</b>	8	1	1	2	2	2
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>N</b>	216	544	1306	674	414	3154

<sup>1</sup> Donald S. Lutz, *A Preface to American Political Theory* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 135. Also see Donald S. Lutz, “The Relative Importance of European Writers on Late Eighteenth Century American Political Thought,” *American Political Science Review* (1984): 189–197; John Eidsmoe, *Christianity and the Constitution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987), 52. As Alexis de Tocqueville famously put it regarding the influence of religion in early America in *Democracy in America* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2012), I:475, “So religion, which among the Americans never directly takes part in the government of society, must be considered as the first of their political institutions; for if it does not give them the taste for liberty, it singularly facilitates their use of it. It is also from this point of view that the inhabitants of the United States themselves consider religious beliefs. I do not know if all Americans have faith in their religion, for who can read the recesses of the heart? But I am sure that they believe it necessary for maintaining republican institutions. This opinion does not belong to one class of citizens or to one party, but to the whole nation; you find it among all ranks.”

TABLE 4  
 SYMBOL: FOUNDING FATHER’S FREQUENCY OF CITATION BY THINKERS  
 (1760–1805)

In the study of American political theory, the impact of religious sources on the American Independence is tragically absent. As John Eidsmoe notes, “The most cited thinkers were not deists and philosophies, but conservative legal and political thinkers who often were also Christians.”<sup>1</sup>

<b>Table 2: Frequency of Citations by Thinkers, 1760–1805</b>					
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	St. Paul (Biblical)	9.00%	20	Shakespeare	0.80%
2	Montesquieu (Enlightenment)	8.30%	21	Livy (Classical)	0.80%
3	Sir William Blackstone (Common Law)	7.90%	22	Alexander Pope (Enlight.)	0.70%
4	John Locke (Whig)	2.90%	23	John Milton (Puritan)	0.70%
5	David Hume (Enlightenment)	2.70%	24	Tactitus (Classical)	0.60%
6	Plutarch (Classical)	1.50%	25	Coxe (Whig)	0.60%
7	Cesar Beccaria (Enlightenment)	1.50%	26	Plato (Classical)	0.50%
8	Trenchard & Gordon (Whig)	1.40%	27	Abbe Raynal (Enlight.)	0.50%
9	De Lolme (Enlightenment)	1.40%	28	Mably (Enlight.)	0.50%
10	Baron Pufendorf (17th Century Protestant Political Theorist)	1.30%	29	Machiavelli	0.50%
11	Sir Edward Coke (Puritan/Common Law)	1.30%	30	Vattel (Enlightenment)	0.50%
12	Cicero (Classical)	1.20%	31	Petyt	0.50%
13	Thomas Hobbes (17th Century Political Theorist)	1.00%	32	Voltaire (Enlightenment)	0.50%
14	Robertson (Enlightenment)	0.90%	33	Robinson	0.50%
15	Hugo Grotius (17th Century Protestant Political Theorist)	0.90%	34	Algernon Sydney (Whig)	0.50%
16	Rousseau (Enlightenment)	0.90%	35	Somers (Whig)	0.50%
17	Bolingbroke (Whig)	0.90%	36	Harrington (Whig)	0.50%
18	Francis Bacon (Puritan)	0.80%	37	Rapin (Whig)	0.50%
19	Price (Whig)	0.80%			

<sup>1</sup> John Eidsmoe, *Christianity and the Constitution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987), 52. See Donald S. Lutz, “The Relative Importance of European Writers on Late Eighteenth Century American Political Thought,” *American Political Science Review* (1984): 189–197.

TABLE 5  
 SYMBOL: FOUNDING FATHER’S RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

Part of the purpose of providing these various tables is to help recover the importance of religious symbols and influences in giving birth to America’s polity and its constitutionalism (of which covenant plays a part). Colonial and early America were religious societies. In an era before radios, televisions, and the internet, the pulpit and reproduced sermons were essential pieces of political literature. As Donald J. Lutz notes, “at least 80 percent of the political pamphlets during the 1770s and 1780s were written by ministers. Even excluding the majority of sermons that had no references to secular thinkers ... Deuteronomy is the most frequently cited book.”<sup>1</sup> Often, secular political scientists exaggerates the “deism” of the Founding Fathers. Below is a table that helps symbolize the religious affiliations of the Founding Fathers.<sup>2</sup>

<b>Religious Affiliation of U.S. Founding Fathers</b>	<b># of Founding Fathers</b>	<b>% of Founding Fathers</b>
Episcopalian/Anglican	88	54.7%
Presbyterian	30	18.6%
Congregationalist	27	16.8%
Quaker	7	4.3%
Dutch Reformed/German Reformed	6	3.7%
Lutheran	5	3.1%
Catholic	3	1.9%
Huguenot	3	1.9%
Unitarian	3	1.9%
Methodist	2	1.2%
Calvinist	1	0.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Donald S. Lutz, *A Preface to American Political Theory* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 136.

<sup>2</sup> Robert G. Ferris, *Signers of the Constitution: Historic Places Commemorating the Signing of the Constitution* (Washington DC: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1976), 138.

TABLE 6  
 SYMBOL: AMERICA’S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE (1776), THE  
 MAYFLOWER COMPACT (1620), AND THEIR BIBLICAL SYMBOLS

	Scripture	Declaration of Independence (1776)	The Mayflower Compact (1620)
<b>On Government</b>	Governmental Authority (Gen 9:5–6)  Authority (Deut 17:14–20)  Authority and Subjection (Rom 13:1–7)  Authority and Subjection (1 Pet 2:13–14)  Anarchy as Evil (Judg 21:18–25)  Executing Justice and Protecting the Weak (Ps 82:2–4)  Executing Swift Punishment as a Deterrent to Crime (Eccl 8:11)  Disobedience (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego Dan 3:13–27; Pharaoh and Egyptian Midwives Exod 1:17, 21; Daniel and Prayer Dan 6:10; Wise men Matt 2:8, 12)	On Right of Rebellion: “That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government,”  On Consent and Covenant: “That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”	On Consent and Covenant: “combine ourselves together into a civil body politic ... for the general good of the colony”
<b>On the Good of the People</b>	Government as a Servant to the Common Good (Rom 13:4)  Samuel’s Demonstration of this Principle (1 Sam 12:3–4)  Samuel’s Warnings Regarding this Principle (1 Sam 8:11–17)	On the Common Good: “laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”	On the Common Good: “for our better ordering, and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid”

	<p>Condemnation of Self Enriching Rulers (Deut 16:19; Ps 26:10; Prov 15:27; 17:23; Isa. 33:15; Ezek. 22:12; Amos 5:12; Hab 1:2-4)</p>		
<b>On Liberty</b>	<p>Man Created in Freedom (Gen 2:16-17)</p> <p>Slavery and Oppression Portrayed Negatively (Exod 20:2; Deut 28:28-29, 33; Judg 2:16-23)</p> <p>Individual Liberty Prized and the Jubilee Year (Lev 25:10)</p> <p>Freedom of Individual Choice Portrayed Positively (Deut 30:19; Josh 24:15; Matt 11:28)</p>	<p>On Rights and Liberty: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”</p>	
<b>On Unchecked Power</b>	<p>OT Examples of Unchecked Kings and Abuse (David, 2 Sam 11; Solomon, 1 Kgs 11:3-4, Deut 17:17; Divided Monarchy, 1-2 Kgs; 1-2 Chr)</p> <p>Plurality of Apostles and Elders (Matt 10:1-4; Titus 1:5; Jams 5:14)</p>		
<b>On the Rule of Law</b>	<p>Law Above the Ruler (Deut 17:18-20)</p> <p>Nathan Rebuking King David for Disobeying God’s Laws (2 Sam 12)</p>	<p>On The Rule of Law: “He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them. He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.</p>	<p>On The Rule of Law: “by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.”</p>

		<p>He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures. He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people. He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within. He has endeavored to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands. He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers. He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries. He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance.”</p>	
<p><b>On Consent &amp; Equality</b></p>	<p>Equality of all people in the Image of God (Gen 1:27; 9:6; Jas 3:9)</p> <p>Community Exists to Serve the People (Rom 13:4)</p>	<p>On Equality:  “the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them.... We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”</p>	

	<p>Government Works Best by Consent (Consent by the Congregation Acts 6:3; Rehoboam and the people 1 Kgs 12:15–16; Others who rule without consent portrayed negatively: Pharaoh Exod 3:9–10; Philistines Judg. 14:4; Nebuchadnezzar 2 Kgs 25:1–21; and the Romans, Matt 2:16–17; Luke 13:1; Acts 12:1–2)</p>	<p>On Consent: “deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,”</p>	<p>On Consent: “in the presence of God, and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic”</p>
--	---	---	---

TABLE 7  
 SYMBOL: AMERICA’S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE (1776) AND ITS  
 BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

The crossover of biblical symbols from the Bible to the culture that gave us the Declaration of Independence was largely the doing of 18<sup>th</sup> century political sermons. With a need to produce theological responses to the political issues of their day, they sought out the biblical principles contained below to articulate the political theologies that influenced the American masses. Below is a comparison of various symbolic passages from the Declaration that match a number of biblical principles.

<b>A. Providence of God<sup>1</sup></b>	
<b>Declaration of Independence</b>	<b>Biblical Principle</b>
1. “A firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence.”	“Providence, divine care and superintendence; prudence, frugality, foresight.” <sup>2</sup>  Here is stressed God’s active involvement in the “affairs of men.” The idea provides a visible contrast to the role of Deist influence, given the deistic God was one whose hand was not continually active in the affairs of men.  Providence played a substantial role in the religious thought of Colonial American and the Revolution. As an example, see the description of the First Prayer of Congress in Appendix 12.
<b>B. The Law of God</b>	
<b>Declaration of Independence</b>	<b>Biblical Principle</b>
1. “The Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God”	“This phrase, from the Declaration, which both Blackstone and Locke used previously, reflects the universal belief in some form of higher law to which man’s law should conform and by which man’s law will be judged.” <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Eidsmoe, *Christianity and the Constitution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: An Anthology* (London: Penguin, 2006), 150.

<sup>3</sup> Eidsmoe, *Christianity and the Constitution*, 363.

	<p>Here is seen a clear distinction to the natural law of Hobbes and others, as implied by the objective nature of the Law's author: God.</p> <p>According to Rom 2:14–15, this higher law is revealed to men in Scripture, nature, and human conscience:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them. (Rom 2:14–15)</p>
2. "That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it."	<p>Thus, man and his laws must conform to a higher law, God's law. When these laws no longer conform, the Declaration thus justifies the right to alter and abolish.<sup>4</sup></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Blessed are those whose way is blameless,  who walk in the law of the LORD!  Blessed are those who keep his testimonies,  who seek him with their whole heart,  who also do no wrong,  but walk in his ways! (Ps 119:1–3)</p>
<b>C. The Equality of Man</b>	
<b>Declaration of Independence</b>	<b>Biblical Principle</b>
<p>1. "Self-evident" that "all men are created equal."</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Note: Man is "created" equal. There is no evolutionary element to allow the argument of superiority. He is equal on the basis of his created status. Based on his created constitution (<i>imago dei</i>).</p>	<p>"So Peter opened his mouth and said: 'Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,'" (Acts 10:34)</p> <p>"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:28)</p>
<b>D. God-Given Human Rights</b>	
<b>Declaration of Independence</b>	<b>Biblical Principle</b>
1. "All men are endowed by their Creator with	It is made in the image of God that warrant's

<sup>4</sup> Moses Mather, "Connecticut Election Sermon, 1781," as quoted in, Franklin P. Cole, *They Preached Liberty: An Anthology of Timely Quotations from New England Ministers of the American Revolution on the Subject of Liberty, Its Source, Nature, Obligations, Types, and Blessings* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Press, 1977), 81, Mather proclaims, "If laws, when made, exist only on paper and ink, what benefit can a people derive from them? The divine law is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword; ad surely his ministers ought to make the laws, which they execute, bear some resemblance to his."

<p>certain unalienable rights, and among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”</p> <p>“That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men.”</p> <p>Note: The rights of man are endowed from the source of the Creator, God. They are not the product of a humaneness majority agreement for the sake of convenience. They are directly gifts from God. As such, one understands the temper of preaching on the subject of liberty, given they extend beyond a government authority (in this case English Parliament and the King), and instead become an issue of divine significance: God given liberty versus the idolatry of man-imposed rule.</p> <p>Jefferson's words as engraved on the Jefferson Memorial: “God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed their only sure basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that those liberties are the gift of God?”<sup>5</sup></p>	<p>one special status and dignity among God’s created order:</p> <p>“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Gen 1:26–27)</p> <p>Being made in God’s image produces a unique dignity which then comes with specific unalienable rights:</p> <p>“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.” (Gen 9:6)</p> <p>“God also confers certain positive rights through the negative commands of Scripture. The commandment, ‘Thou shalt not kill’ (Exod 20:13), confers a right to life. The command not to kidnap or enslave confers a right to liberty (Exod 21:16; Deut 24:7). The command, ‘Thou shalt not steal’ (Exod 20:15) confers a right to property. These three rights of life, liberty, and property mentioned by Locke come from the Bible.”<sup>6</sup></p>
<p>2. “Life”</p>	<p>The Right to life: “You shall not murder.” (Exod 20:13)</p> <p>Also seen in Gen 9:6</p>
<p>3. “Liberty”</p>	<p>The Right to Liberty: “Whoever steals a man and sells him, and anyone found in possession of him, shall be put to death.” (Exod 21:16)</p> <p>“If a man is found stealing one of his brothers of the people of Israel, and if he treats him as a slave or sells him, then that thief shall die. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.” (Deut 24:7)</p>
<p>4. “Pursuit of happiness,” or as Locke originally</p>	<p>The Right to Property: “You shall not steal.”</p>

<sup>5</sup> Jefferson as quoted in Eidsmoe, *Christianity and the Constitution*, 367.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<p>termed it, “property”.</p> <p>Note: This is not to be mistaken as a right to live hedonistically. Originally in Locke’s word—in which Jefferson is quoting—the word originally stressed the right to own property.</p>	<p>(Exod 20:15)</p>
<p><b>E. Government by Consent of the Governed</b></p>	
<p><b>Declaration of Independence</b></p>	<p><b>Biblical Principle</b></p>
<p>1. “Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”</p>	<p>“The concept of ‘consent of the governed’ has its roots in John Locke’s social compact, which is in turn rooted in the Calvinist concept of the covenant, by which men, in the presence of God, join themselves together into a body politic.”<sup>7</sup></p> <p>Biblical examples of governments by the consent of the governed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The people plead for a King, and God grants their desire (1 Sam 8, Deut 17:14–20).</li> <li>• “The men of Israel said to Gideon, Rule thou over us.” (Judg 8:22)</li> <li>• “The men of Shechem... made Abimelech king.” (Judg 9:6)</li> <li>• “Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay; but whom the Lord, and this people, and all the men of Israel choose, his will I be, and with him will I side.” (2 Sam 16:18)</li> <li>• “The people ... took Azariah ... and made him king.” (2 Kgs 14:21)</li> </ul> <p>This is also seen with the direction of the Israelites to choose judges and local leaders. Note how the Israelites are to appoint their leaders:</p> <p>“You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.” (Deut 16:18)</p>

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

TABLE 8  
 SYMBOL: AMERICA’S CONSTITUTION (1787) AND ITS BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

In addition to a number of biblical political symbols being reflected in the Declaration, the Constitution also exhibits several of these principles. Constitutions were a major topic in a number of popular election sermons of the day. As Ebenezer Bridge states in such an election sermon, “A good constitution of government, such as one that secures the mutual dependence of the sovereign or ruling powers, and the people on each other, and which secures the rights of each, and the good of the whole society, is a great blessing to a people.”<sup>1</sup>

<b>A. The Law of Nations<sup>2</sup></b>	
<b>Constitution of the United States</b>	<b>Biblical Principle</b>
1. Article I, Section 8, Clause 10: “To define and punish Piracies and Felonies committed on the high Seas, and Offences, against the Law of Nations.”	<p>The idea of the “Law of Nations” is borrow from Grotius, Pufendorf and Vattel, which was developed from an extension of the earlier mentioned natural God-given law.</p> <p>Here is implied a law in which all nations are subjected to. Who then, contained an authority and power higher than men?</p> <p>“The fact a law exists which supersedes the legislative enactments of various nations, implies a power and authority higher than man. The United States established war tribunals to bring foreign officials to trial for atrocities committed in violation of the Law of Nations.”<sup>3</sup></p>

<sup>1</sup> Ebenezer Bridge, of Chelmsford; “Massachusetts Election Sermon, 1767” in Franklin P. Cole, *They Preached Liberty: An Anthology of Timely Quotations from New England Ministers of the American Revolution on the Subject of Liberty, Its Source, Nature, Obligations, Types, and Blessings* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Press, 1977), 71.

<sup>2</sup> John Eidsmoe, *Christianity and the Constitution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<b>B. The Equality of Man</b>	
<b>Constitution of the United States</b>	<b>Biblical Principle</b>
1. Article I, Section 9, Paragraph 8: “No Title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States,”	<p>“So Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,’” (Acts 10:34)</p> <p>“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal 3:28)</p>
2. Fourteenth Amendment: “equal protection of the law”	“You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit.” (Exod 23:6)
<b>C. God-Given Human Rights</b>	
<b>Constitution of the United States</b>	<b>Biblical Principle</b>
<p>1. Article I, Section 9: “Protects human rights by prohibiting Congress from doing certain things. It protects the right to petition for writ of habeas corpus and the right not to be prosecuted <i>ex post facto</i>.”<sup>4</sup></p> <p>Note: Government exists not to establish and legitimize, but to secure rights. This is seen in the preamble, where it states, that the purpose of government is to “secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.”</p>	<p>These human rights are established in Scripture. Earlier references to Gen 1:26–27; 9:6; Exod 20:13, 15; 21:16; and Deut 24:7 are such examples.</p> <p><i>See the earlier Declaration section for additional details.</i></p>
<b>D. Government by Consent of the People</b>	
<b>Constitution of the United States</b>	<b>Biblical Principle</b>
1. Preamble: “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union,”	<i>See the Table 7, 9, for details</i>
<b>E. The Sinful Nature of Man</b>	
<b>Constitution of the United States</b>	<b>Biblical Principle</b>
<p>1. Through the Constitution, various limitations are set upon mob majorities, branches of government, and various powers. We term this the ‘Checks and Balances,’ which has been a major contribution by America to political theory. This finds its fruition in the form of a written document, containing laws in which the government and its people are subjected to (termed ‘Higher Law’). This also, has been a major contribution by America to political theory (as evident in the number of current Constitutional Republics).</p> <p>“But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary.... In framing a government which is to be administered by men over</p>	<p>“None is righteous, no, not one.” (Rom 3:10)</p> <p>“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom 3:23)</p> <p>“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” (Eph 2:1–3)</p>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 366.

<p>men, the greatest difficulty lies in this: You must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place, oblige it to control itself.”<sup>5</sup></p> <p>Every political theory and government begins on the assumption of a worldview. Perhaps this is why we see such a great difference in the French and American Revolution. One begins with a utopian theory presuming the goodness of man (socialism and communism). The other begins with a view of man’s depravity and corruption by power (products of the earlier argued Calvinist and Puritan concepts of Total Depravity and Fear of Power, as well as the wedded Republican ideas).<sup>6</sup> Both produced radical alternative histories.</p> <p>Given the argument of this paper, it is clear to see that, given the profound number and impact Calvinist had upon America in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Founders were working with a worldview assuming the sinful nature of man. Thus both government and the people were checked against one another (as seen in the choice of a Republic, which checks the people, over a Democracy, which can lead to mob rule).</p> <p>Clearly, the entire American concept of a checks and balances implies a view of human nature inline with that presented in scripture by Calvin and the Puritans.</p>	
<b>F. Limited, Delegated Powers</b>	
Constitution of the United States	Biblical Principle
<p>1. Tenth Amendment: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”</p> <p>Powers were both delegated and limited to the Federal government by the Constitution. This was the primary principle of limited government, which was essential to the Founder’s political philosophy. Although the Tenth Amendment is ignored by our growing government, “its principle is the cornerstone of limited government ... the federal government has no powers other than those which the people have delegated to it, expressed or</p>	<p>Several events in scripture express the danger of a tyrannical and abusive struggle between the ruler and the ruled. Surely, these were found popular within the Pulpit surrounding the Revolution.</p> <p>Conflict between abusive rulers and the governed can be observed in 1 Kgs 12:16–19 (Confrontation between Rehoboam and the elders of Judah):</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“And when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, "What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your</p>

<sup>5</sup> James Madison, “The Federalist No. 51,” in Hamilton, Alexander, John Jay, and James Madison. *The Federalist*, eds. George W. Carey and James McClellan (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> “All power tends to corrupt, Absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Lord Acton, quoted in R. J. Rummel, “Freedom, Democide, War,” *Freedom, Democracy, Peace; Power, Democide, and War*, February 27, 2018, <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/>.

<p>implied, in the Constitution. If this limitation is ignored, a basic barrier to tyranny is removed.”<sup>7</sup></p>	<p>own house, David." So Israel went to their tents. But Rehoboam reigned over the people of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah. Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was taskmaster over the forced labor, and all Israel stoned him to death with stones. And King Rehoboam hurried to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem. So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.”</p> <p>A limit of governing authority is implied in such passages as Deut 17:14–20:</p> <p>“When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’<sup>15</sup> you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose ... that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.”</p>
<p><b>G. Rights of Criminal Defendants</b></p>	
<p><b>Constitution of the United States</b></p>	<p><b>Biblical Principle</b></p>
<p>1. Amendment VIII: “Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishment inflicted.”</p> <p>Further rights of the accused are granted in Amendments V, VI, VII and IX.</p> <p>“The founding fathers knew that punishment is necessary to deter crime. But they also recognized that an orderly process of justice is necessary to distinguish between the guilty and innocent. And in a free society which values human dignity, a defendant is presumed innocent until proved guilty. For this reason the Constitution provides numerous protections for the rights of accused persons.”<sup>8</sup></p>	<p>“In giving rights to the accused, the Jewish system of justice was one of the most advanced in the world.”</p> <p>Observations regarding the topic are made by Eidsmoe, which in turn no doubt influenced the Puritan and Common Law traditions that later influenced the Founders (as factually evident in the frequent citation of Deuteronomy by the Founders).<sup>9</sup></p> <p>“Extra biblical Jewish law went further than our current legal system in protecting the rights of the accused. The reason was the emphasis on man being created in the image of God, and that human life and dignity were to be greatly valued.”<sup>10</sup></p> <p>Moses even functioned as a Supreme Court (Exod 18:13–16; Deut 1:16–17; 19:15–21).</p>

<sup>7</sup> Eidsmoe, *Christianity and the Constitution*, 373.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> The heavy citations from Deuteronomy among the Founders can be found in the work of Lutz and Hyneman, as depicted in Table 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 374.

2. Amendment VI: “In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury.”	Judges are commanded to show honesty, refuse bribery, and reject favoritism (Exod 23:1–8).
3. Amendment V: “nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.”	Implied in Deut 17:6 is the concept of “innocent until proven guilty,” as evident in the necessity of multiple witnesses:  “On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.” (Deut 17:6)
<b>H. Property Rights</b>	
<b>Constitution of the United States</b>	<b>Biblical Principle</b>
1. Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments: “life liberty and property,” “nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation.”	“You shall not steal.” (Exod 20:15)  “You shall not covet.” (Exod 20:17)  Both imply rights of property, with a moral component attached against coveting the objects and persons of a neighbor (stressing ownership).
<b>I. The Sanctity of Contract</b>	
<b>Constitution of the United States</b>	<b>Biblical Principle</b>
1. Article I, Section 10: States are forbidden to pass “Law impairing the Obligation of Contracts.”	Covenant Theology clearly has much to say about this subject, however we have discussed it in depth. The sacredness of an oath can be seen in Ps 15:1, 4:  “O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill?... in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; who swears to his own hurt and does not change;” (Ps 15:1, 4)
<b>J. Two Witnesses</b>	
<b>Constitution of the United States</b>	<b>Biblical Principle</b>
1. Article III, Section 3, Paragraph 1: “No Person shall be convicted of Treason unless on the Testimony of two Witnesses to the same overt Act, or on Confession in open Court.”	“On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.” (Deut 17:6)  "If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses. But no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness." (Num 35:50)
2. Amendment V: “nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself.”	“Jewish law not only did not require a person to incriminate himself, it also did not <i>allow</i> him to do

	so because self-incrimination was to participate in one's own destruction which was suicide." <sup>11</sup>
<b>K. Corruption of Blood</b>	
<b>Constitution of the United States</b>	<b>Biblical Principle</b>
1. Article III, Section 3, Paragraph 2: "no Attainder of Treason shall work Corruption of blood, or Forfeiture except during the Life of the Person attained."	<p>"Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin." (Deut 24:16)</p> <p>"If a parent was convicted of treason, this did not affect the civil rights of his children. This is unlike the practice in many pagan nations of executing the convicted criminal and also his entire family (see Dan 6:24)."<sup>12</sup></p>
<b>L. Sundays Excepted</b>	
<b>Constitution of the United States</b>	<b>Biblical Principle</b>
1. Article I, Section 7, Paragraph 2: Regarding presidential veto power. "If any bills shall not be returned by the President within ten days (Sundays excepted) after it shall have been presented to him, the Same shall be a Law, in like Manner as if he had signed it."	"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates." (Exo. 20:8–10)
<b>M. Separation of Church and State</b>	
<b>Constitution of the United States</b>	<b>Biblical Principle</b>
1. Amendment I: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."	<p>"King Saul was severely punished when he tried to usurp the function of the priesthood by offering sacrifices himself—his line was cut off from the kingship of Israel forever (1 Sam 13). When King Uzziah tried to burn incense on the holy altar, God smote him with leprosy, and he remained a leper the rest of his life (2 Chr 26:16–21). God seemed to be telling the civil rulers in these passages, keep your hands off the church."<sup>13</sup></p> <p>"He said to them, 'Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'" (Luke 20:25)</p>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 375

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 376

TABLE 9  
 SYMBOL: AMERICA’S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, AND MAYHEW’S  
 “A DISCOURSE CONCERNING UNLIMITED SUBMISSION AND NON-  
 RESISTANCE TO THE HIGHER POWERS”

A number of election sermons were especially popular and noteworthy. Jonathan Mayhew’s “A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers,” is an example. As Franklin P. Cole notes regarding the Mayhew’s important, “The sermon was widely read and quoted throughout the colonies and in Great Britain. It doubtless won for him his degree of Doctor of Divinity from the University of Aberdeen in 1751.”<sup>1</sup> In particular, observe the shared political symbols between Jefferson’s Declaration the Mayhew’s sermon. Mayhew’s sermon was not only published over a decade before the Declaration was written, but was also heavily circulated by then.

<b>Thomas Jefferson, The Declaration of Independence</b>	<b>Jonathan Mayhew, “A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers”</b>
“That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the governed.”	“The only reason for the institution of civil government, and the only rational ground for submission to it, is the common safety and utility.”
“Prudence, indeed will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light or transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.”	“Now, as all men are fallible, it cannot be supposed that the public affairs of any state should be always administered in the best manner possible, even by persons of the greatest wisdom and integrity. Nor is it sufficient to legitimate disobedience to the higher powers that they are not so administered, or that they are in some instances very ill-managed; for upon this principle it is scarcely supposable that any government at all could be supported.”

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, “A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers,” in Franklin P. Cole, *They Preached Liberty: An Anthology of Timely Quotations from New England Ministers of the American Revolution on the Subject of Liberty, Its Source, Nature, Obligations, Types, and Blessings* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Press, 1977), 28–33.

<p>“But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such a government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.”</p>	<p>“Those in authority may abuse their trust and power to such a degree that neither the law of reason nor of religion requires that any obedience or submission be paid to them; but on the contrary that they should be totally discarded and the authority which they were before vested with transferred to others, who may exercise more to those good purposes for which it is given.”</p>
<p>“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are <i>Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.</i>”</p>	<p>“Nothing can well be imagined more directly contrary to common sense than to suppose that millions of people should be subjected to the arbitrary, <i>precarious pleasure of a single man</i> ... so that their <i>estates</i> and everything that is valuable in <i>life</i>, and even their lives also, shall be absolutely at his disposal, if he happens to be wanton and capricious enough to demand them.”</p> <p>What is important to note here is that the Declaration’s most iconic symbol of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” was already being propagated from the pulpit a decade before Jefferson wrote his draft. Mayhew’s sermon 26 years earlier was already popularizing the symbols, and all three can be evidenced in the above quote. The fact that political sermons like these are not even mentioned in works on American political theory is self-imposed ignorance, and unneeded and unhelpful secularization of American political history.</p>

APPENDIX 1  
OUTLINE: CHIASTIC ARGUMENTATIVE STRUCTURE

- A:** Introduction (Ch. 1)
- B:** Protestant Social Theory and Political Theology (Ch. 2)
  - B1:** Survey of Traditional Protestant Social Theory (Ch. 2)
  - B2:** Luther and O'Donovan's Political Theologies: Political Act, Political Authority, Life Beyond Political Act and Authority (Ch. 2)
    - C:** The Problem of Particularity and Universality (Ch. 2)
      - C1:** O'Donovan's Twofold Criticisms of Traditional Protestant Social Theory & the Critical Social Question (Ch. 2)
        - D1:** An Appraisal of Covenant as an Ecclesial Idea (Ch. 3)
        - D2:** An Appraisal of Covenant as a Marital Idea (Ch. 4)
        - D3:** An Appraisal of Covenant as a Political Idea (Ch. 5)
      - C':** Covenant and Constitution as an Answer to the Problem of Particularity and Universality (Ch. 6)
        - CI':** Response to O'Donovan's Twofold Criticisms of Traditional Protestant Social Theory (Ch. 6)
    - B':** Covenantal Constitutionalism, Political Theology, and the Critical Social Question (Ch. 6)
      - B2':** Covenantal Constitutional Political Theology: Political Act, Political Authority, Life Beyond Political Act and Authority (Ch. 6)
      - BI':** Appraisal of Traditional Protestant Social Theory (Ch. 6)
- A':** Conclusion (Ch. 7)

APPENDIX 2  
OUTLINE: COVENANTAL APPRAISAL ANSWER OUTLINE TO O'DONOVAN'S  
CRITICISMS OF TRADITIONAL PROTESTANT SOCIAL THEORY

Covenantal appraisal outlining response to O'Donovan's criticisms without examples:

**1. First Major Contribution: Vertical Covenants and Horizontal Covenants**

1.1. Vertical Covenants

1.1.1. Vertical Universal Covenants

1.1.2. Vertical Special Covenants

1.1.2.1. Vertical Special Covenants

1.1.2.2. Vertical Special Covenantal Renewals

1.2. Horizontal covenants

**2. Second Major Contribution: Appraisal of Covenant in Scripture**

2.1. Ecclesial Scriptural Covenants

2.1.1. Ecclesial Vertical Covenants

2.1.1.1. Ecclesial Vertical Universal Covenants

2.1.1.2. Ecclesial Vertical Special Covenants

2.1.1.2.1. Ecclesial Vertical Special Covenants

2.1.1.2.2. Ecclesial Vertical Special Covenantal Renewals

2.1.2. Ecclesial horizontal covenants

2.2. Marital Scriptural Covenants

2.2.1. Marital Vertical Covenants

2.2.1.1. Marital Vertical Universal Covenants

2.2.1.2. Marital Vertical Special Covenants

2.2.1.2.1. Marital Vertical Special Covenants

2.2.1.2.2. Marital Vertical Special Covenantal Renewals

2.2.2. Marital horizontal covenants

2.3. Political Scriptural Covenants

2.3.1. Political Vertical Covenants

2.3.1.1. Political Vertical Universal Covenants

2.3.1.2. Political Vertical Special Covenants

2.3.1.2.1. Political Vertical Special Covenants

2.3.1.2.2. Political Vertical Special Covenantal Renewals

2.3.2. Political horizontal covenants

**3. Third Major Contribution: Appraisal of Covenant in History**

3.1. Ecclesial Historical Covenants

3.2. Marital Historical Covenants

3.3. Political Historical Covenants

#### 4. Addendum: Social Institutions In 1 Tim 2:1–15

- 4.1. Political Social Institution
- 4.2. Ecclesial Social Institution
- 4.3. Marital Social Institution

Covenantal appraisal answer outline to O'Donovan's criticisms *with examples*:

#### 1. First Major Contribution: Vertical Covenants and Horizontal Covenants

##### 1.1. Vertical Covenants

###### 1.1.1. Vertical Universal Covenants

- 1.1.1.1. *Abrahamic Covenant of Covenant (Gen 1–2; Jer 33:20)*
- 1.1.1.2. *Noahic Covenant (Gen 9:9–17; Isa 54:9–10)*
- 1.1.1.3. *New Covenant (Heb 9:15; 8:6–12; Jer 31:31; Rom 9:25–26; Gal 3:13; Eph 5:23; 2 Cor 3:6; Phil 2:9–11)*

###### 1.1.2. Vertical Special Covenants

###### 1.1.2.1. Vertical Special Covenants

- 1.1.2.1.1. *Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 15:9–18; 17:2–21; Exod 2:24; 6:4; Lev 26:42)*
  - 1.1.2.1.2. *Mosaic Covenant (Exod 19:5–8; 24:7–8; 31:16; 34:10–28; Deut 4:13; 9:9)*
  - 1.1.2.1.3. *Davidic Covenant (Ps 89:3–4; 2 Sam 7:1–17; 1 Chr 17:11–14; 2 Chr 6:16)*
  - 1.1.2.1.4. *Priestly Covenant (Num 25:12–13; Mal 2:1–9; Neh 13:29)*
- ###### 1.1.2.2. Vertical Special Covenantal Renewals
- 1.1.2.2.1. *Joshua and the people (Josh 24:25)*
  - 1.1.2.2.2. *Jehoida and the people (2 Kgs 11:17; 2 Chr 23:3)*
  - 1.1.2.2.3. *Hezekiah and the people (2 Chr 29:10)*
  - 1.1.2.2.4. *Josiah and the people (2 Kgs 23:3)*
  - 1.1.2.2.5. *Ezra and the people (Ezra 10:3–5)*
  - 1.1.2.2.6. *Prophetic New Covenant Renewal (Jer 31:31–33; Isa 42:6; Ezek 16:59–63; Mal 3:1)*

##### 1.2. Horizontal covenants

- 1.2.1. *Abraham and the Amorites (Gen 14:13)*
- 1.2.2. *Abraham and Abimelech (Gen 21:27–32; Prov 2:17)*
- 1.2.3. *Edom and allies (Obad 1:7)*
- 1.2.4. *Isaac and Abimelech (Gen 26:28–31)*
- 1.2.5. *Jacob and Laban (Gen 31:44)*
- 1.2.6. *Joshua and the Gibeonites (Josh 9:6–20)*
- 1.2.7. *David, Abner, and the people (2 Sam 3:12–21)*
- 1.2.8. *David and the elders of Israel (2 Sam 5:3; 1 Chr 11:3)*
- 1.2.9. *Zedekiah and the people (Jer 34:8–18)*
- 1.2.10. *Jehoida and the captains (2 Kgs 11:4; 2 Chr 23:1–3)*
- 1.2.11. *David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18:3–4)*
- 1.2.12. *Husband and wife (Gen 1–2; Prov 2:16–17; Mal 2:14–15)*

1.2.13. *Men in general (Hos 10:4; Gal 3:15; 2 Chr 15:12–15; Neh 10:28–32; Ps 50:5).*

## **2. Second Major Contribution: Appraisal of Covenant in Scripture**

### **2.1. Ecclesial Scriptural Covenants**

#### **2.1.1. Ecclesial Vertical Covenants**

##### **2.1.1.1. Ecclesial Vertical Universal Covenants**

2.1.1.1.1. *Adamic Covenant of Creation (Gen 1–2; Jer 33:20–26)*

2.1.1.1.2. *Prophesized New Covenant (Jer 31:31–33; Isa 42:6; Ezek 16:59–63; Mal 3:1)*

2.1.1.1.3. *New Covenant (Heb 8:6–12)*

##### **2.1.1.2. Ecclesial Vertical Special Covenants**

###### **2.1.1.2.1. Ecclesial Vertical Special Covenants**

2.1.1.2.1.1. *Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 15:9–18)*

2.1.1.2.1.2. *Priestly/Levitic Covenant (Num 25:12–13; Mal 2:1–9; Neh 13:29)*

2.1.1.2.1.3. *Prophesized New Covenant (Jer 31:31–33; Isa 42:6; Ezek 16:59–63; Mal 3:1)*

2.1.1.2.1.4. *New Covenant, Universal Church, & Spirit Baptism (Acts 1:8; 2:38)*

###### **2.1.1.2.2. Ecclesial Vertical Special Covenantal Renewals**

#### **2.1.2. Ecclesial horizontal covenants**

2.1.2.1. *Congregational worship covenant (2 Chr 15:12–15)*

2.1.2.2. *New Covenant, local churches, believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper (Rom 6:4; Gal 3:27; 1 Pet 3:21; Matt 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25)*

### **2.2. Marital Scriptural Covenants**

#### **2.2.1. Marital Vertical Covenants**

##### **2.2.1.1. Marital Vertical Universal Covenants**

2.2.1.1.1. *Adamic Covenant of Creation (Gen 1:26–28)*

2.2.1.1.2. *Christ and the Church as A Marriage Covenant (Eph 5:21–33)*

##### **2.2.1.2. Marital Vertical Special Covenants**

###### **2.2.1.2.1. Marital Vertical Special Covenants**

2.2.1.2.1.1. *Adamic Covenant of Creation (Gen 1–2)*

2.2.1.2.1.2. *Christ and the Church as A Marriage Covenant (Eph 5:21–33)*

###### **2.2.1.2.2. Marital Vertical Special Covenantal Renewals**

#### **2.2.2. Marital horizontal covenants**

2.2.2.1. *Adam and Eve Marriage Covenant (Gen 2:23)*

2.2.2.2. *Marriage covenants (Hos 2:18–22; Ezek 16:8; Prov 2:16–17; Mal 2:14–16; Matt 19:1–10).*

### **2.3. Political Scriptural Covenants**

#### **2.3.1. Political Vertical Covenants**

##### **2.3.1.1. Political Vertical Universal Covenants**

2.3.1.1.1. *Noahic Covenant (Gen 9:6)*

- 2.3.1.1.2. *Second Coming (Mark 13:24–27; Rev 19:15–16; Phil 2:9–11)*
- 2.3.1.2. Political Vertical Special Covenants
  - 2.3.1.2.1. Political Vertical Special Covenants
    - 2.3.1.2.1.1. *Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 15:9–18)*
    - 2.3.1.2.1.2. *Mosaic Covenant (Exod 19:8–24:8)*
    - 2.3.1.2.1.3. *Second Coming (Mark 13:24–27; Rev 19:15–16; Phil 2:9–11)*
  - 2.3.1.2.2. Political Vertical Special Covenantal Renewals
    - 2.3.1.2.2.1. *Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:1–17)*
- 2.3.2. Political horizontal covenants
  - 2.3.2.1. *Covenantal Treatises (Obad 1:7)*
  - 2.3.2.2. *Covenantal Constitutions (Jer 34:8–18)*
  - 2.3.2.3. *Covenantal Pledges (2 Kgs 11:4)*
  - 2.3.2.4. *Covenantal fraternitas (1 Sam 18:3–4)*

### **3. Third Major Contribution: Appraisal of Covenant in History**

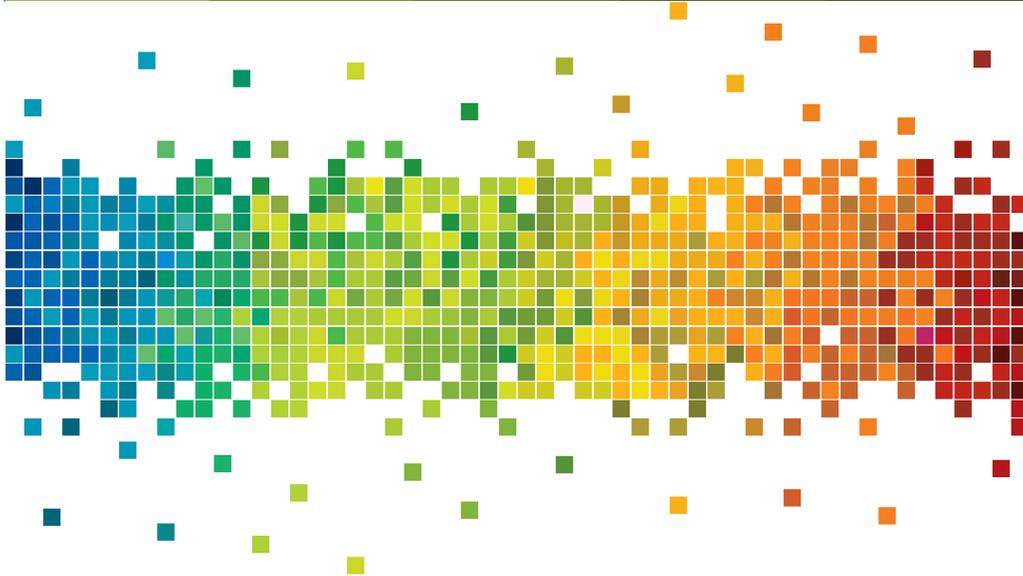
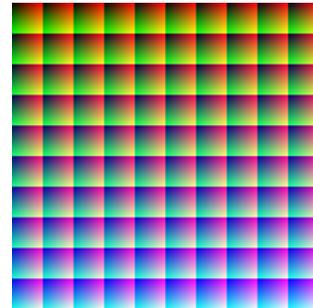
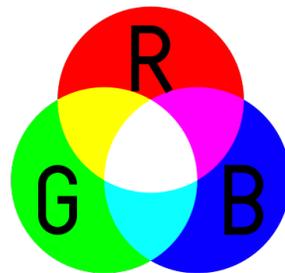
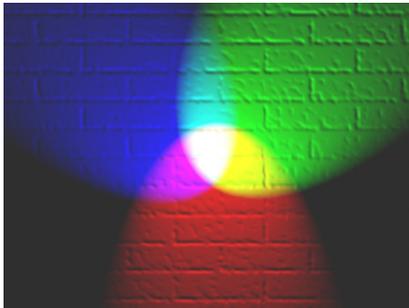
- 3.1. Ecclesial Historical Covenants
  - 3.1.1. Confessional Evidence
    - 3.1.1.1. *“London Baptist Confession” (1644)*
    - 3.1.1.2. *“Savoy Declaration” (1658)*
    - 3.1.1.3. *“Baptist Faith and Message” (2000)*
  - 3.1.2. Church horizontal covenants
    - 3.1.2.1. *See Charles W. Deweese, Baptist Church Covenants (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1990)*
    - 3.1.2.2. *See Appendix 6, “Praxis: Ecclesial Covenant & Constitution”*
- 3.2. Marital Historical Covenants
  - 3.2.1. Confessional Evidence
    - 3.2.1.1. *“Baptist Faith and Message (2000)”*
    - 3.2.1.2. *Roman Catholic Catechism, see Joseph Ratzinger et al., Catechism of the Catholic Church (Liguori Publications, 1994), 400;*
    - 3.2.1.3. *“Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World—Gaudium et Spes,”*
  - 3.2.2. Marital horizontal covenants
    - 3.2.2.1. *Episcopalians, Presbyterians, United Methodists, Liturgy and Ceremonies, see Perry H. Biddle, A Marriage Manual (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994)*
    - 3.2.2.2. *See Appendix 7, “Praxis: Marital Covenant & Constitution”*
- 3.3. Political Historical Covenants
  - 3.3.1. Confessional Evidence
    - 3.3.1.1. *John Davenport and John Cotton’s sermons, see Leland Ryken, Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were, (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1986).*
    - 3.3.1.2. *Election Sermons, see Ellis Sandoz, Political Sermons of the American Founding Era: 1730–1805, 2 vols (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1998).*

- 3.3.1.3. *John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity”*
- 3.3.2. Political horizontal covenants
  - 3.3.2.1. *“The Mayflower Covenant”*
  - 3.3.2.2. *“The Dedham Covenant”*
  - 3.3.2.3. *“Guildford Covenant”*
  - 3.3.2.4. *See Appendix 8, “Praxis: Political Covenant & Constitution”*
  - 3.3.2.5. *See Appendix 10, “Symbol: America’s Declaration of Independence And Its Covenantal Structure”*

**4. Addendum: Social Institutions in 1 Tim 2:1–15**

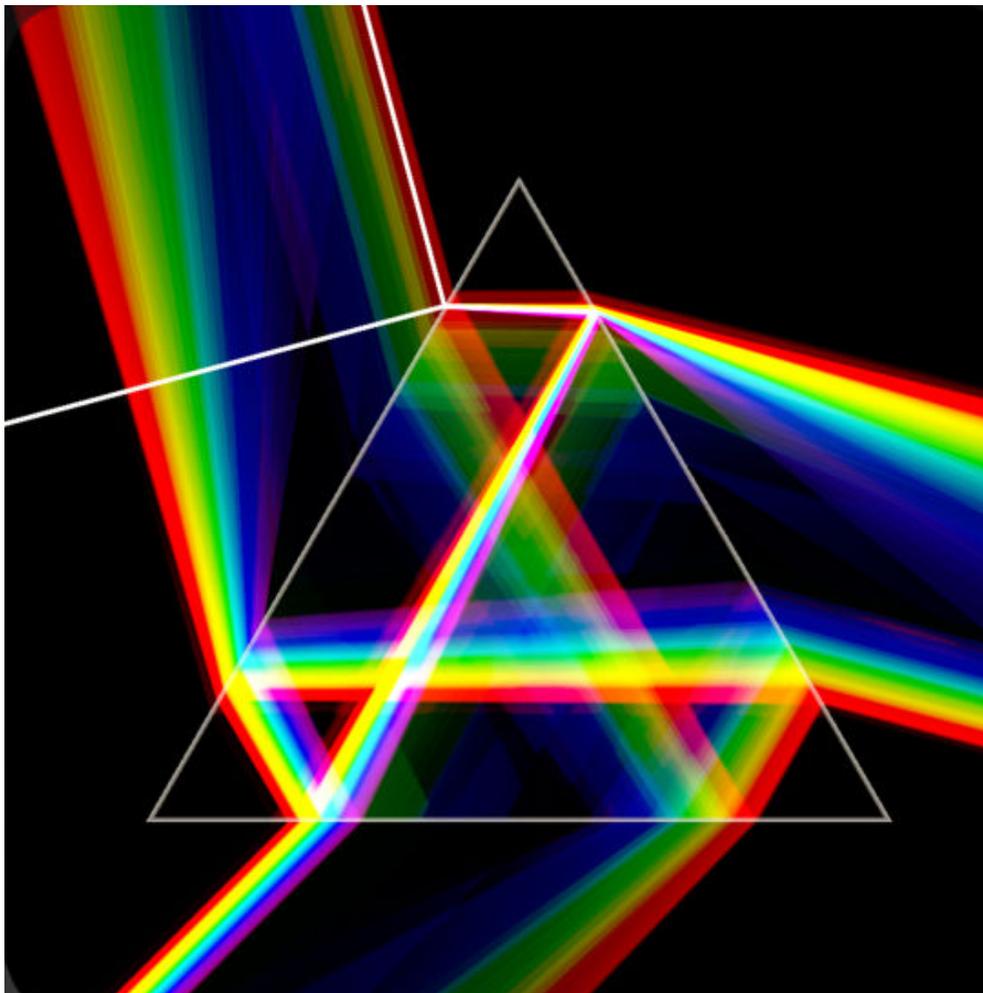
- 4.1. Political Institution
  - 4.1.1. *Goodness and order-inducing function of the political institution (1 Tim 2:1–4)*
- 4.2. Ecclesial Institution
  - 4.2.1. *Goodness and order-inducing function of the ecclesial institution (1 Tim 2:5–10)*
- 4.3. Marital Institution
  - 4.3.1. *Goodness and order-inducing function of the marital institution (1 Tim 2:11–15)*

APPENDIX 3  
MODEL: RGB COLOR MODEL OF INDIVIDUALS IN COVENANTAL  
CONSTITUTIONALISM (MODEL OF STATION AND VOCATION)

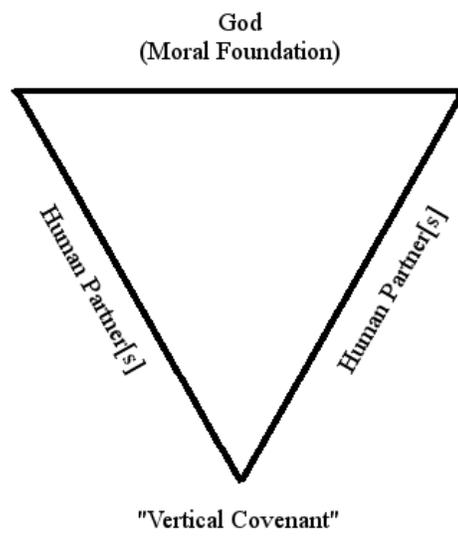


APPENDIX 4  
MODEL: PRISM MODEL OF COMMUNICATIONS IN COVENANTAL  
CONSTITUTIONALISM (MODEL OF COVENANTS, CONSTITUTIONS,  
INSTITUTIONS, ORDERS, SOCIETIES, CIVILIZATIONS, AND CREATION)

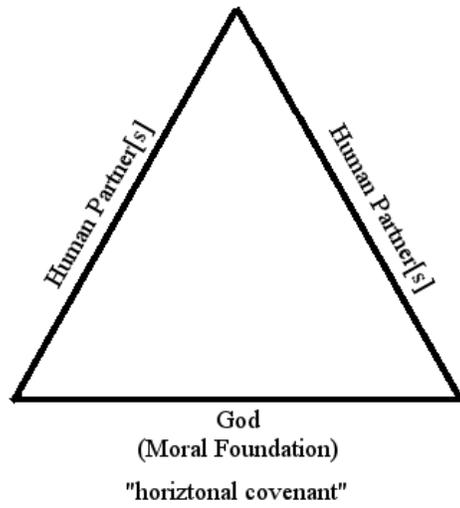
Angle 4.0: General Illustration of Covenantal Constitutional Prism Model with Refracted Sovereignty



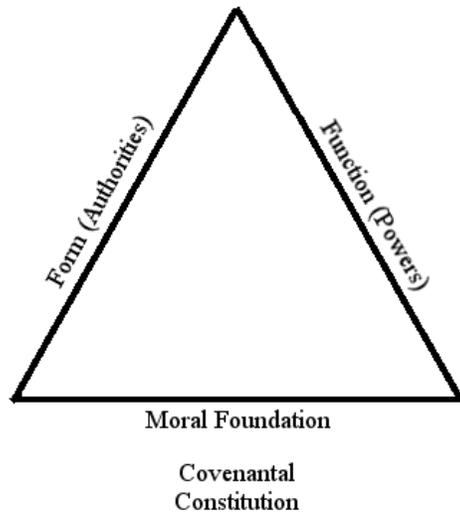
Angle 4.1.1: Origins: "Vertical Covenant"



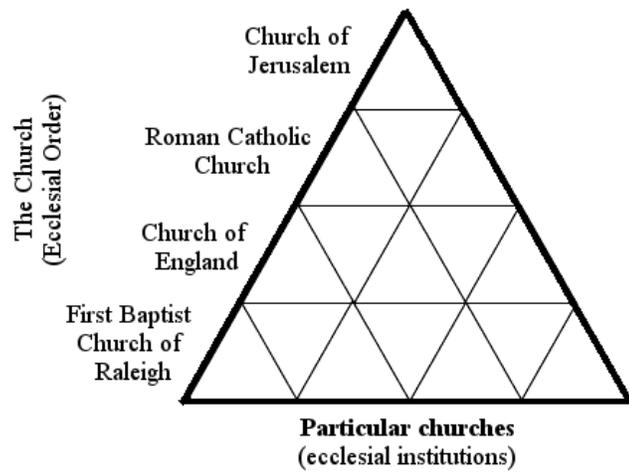
Angle 4.1.2: Origins: "horizontal covenants"



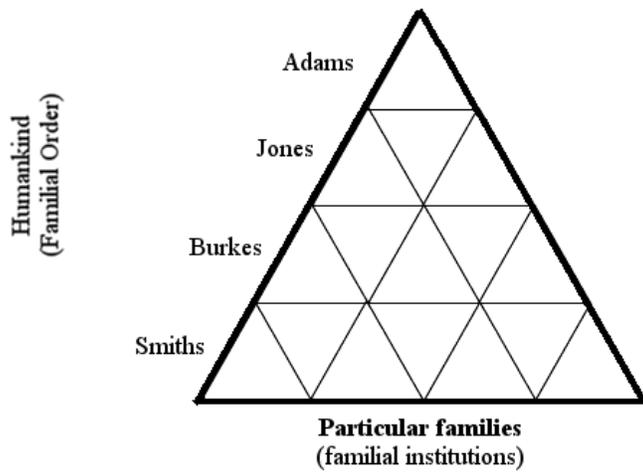
Angle 4.2.1: Constitution: Covenantal Constitution



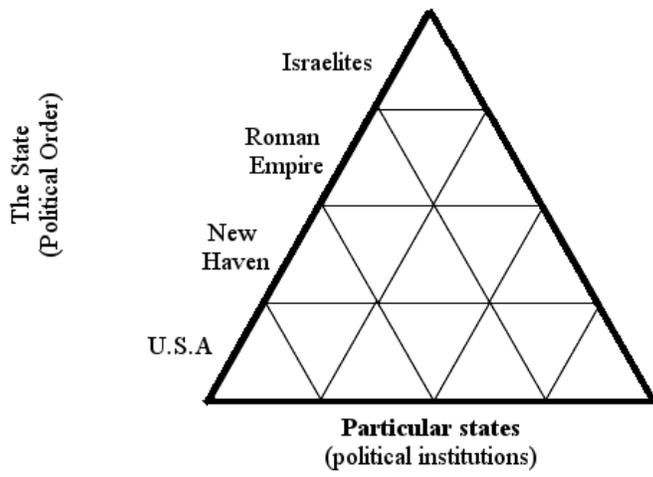
Angle 4.3.1: Orders: Church and churches



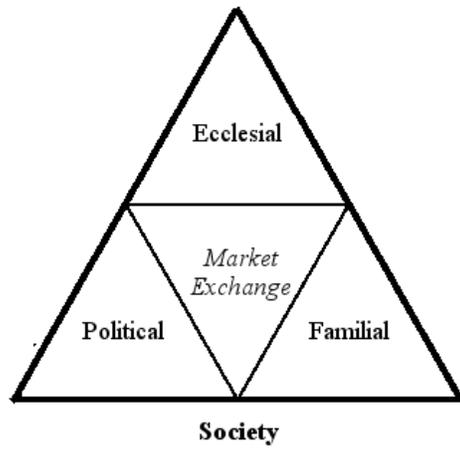
Angle 4.3.2: Orders: Family and families



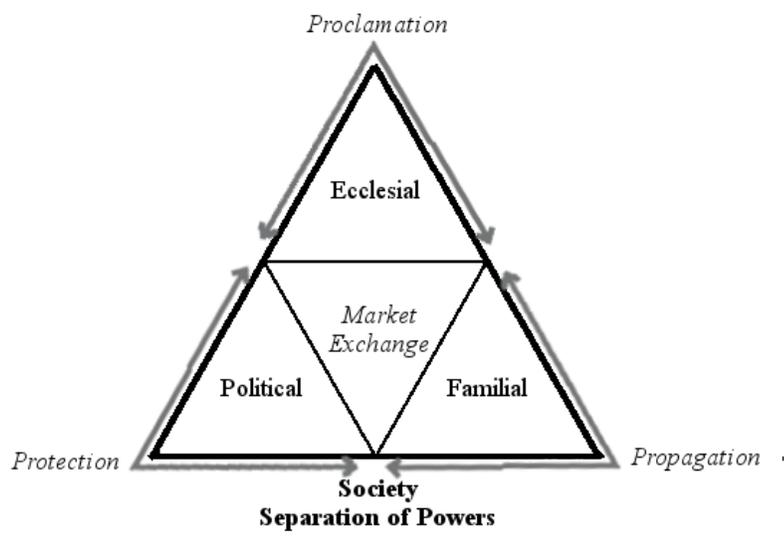
Angle 4.3.3: Orders: State and states



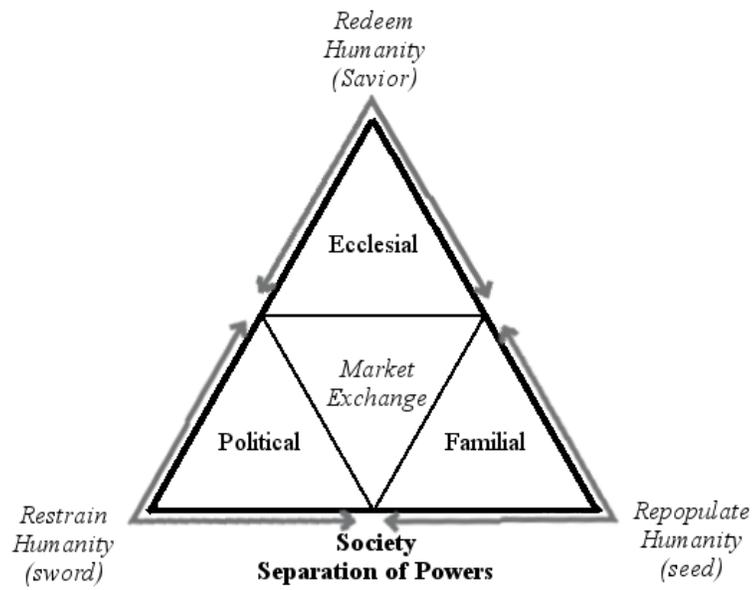
Angle 4.4.1: Society: Particular Society (Appraised Traditional Protestant Social Theory)



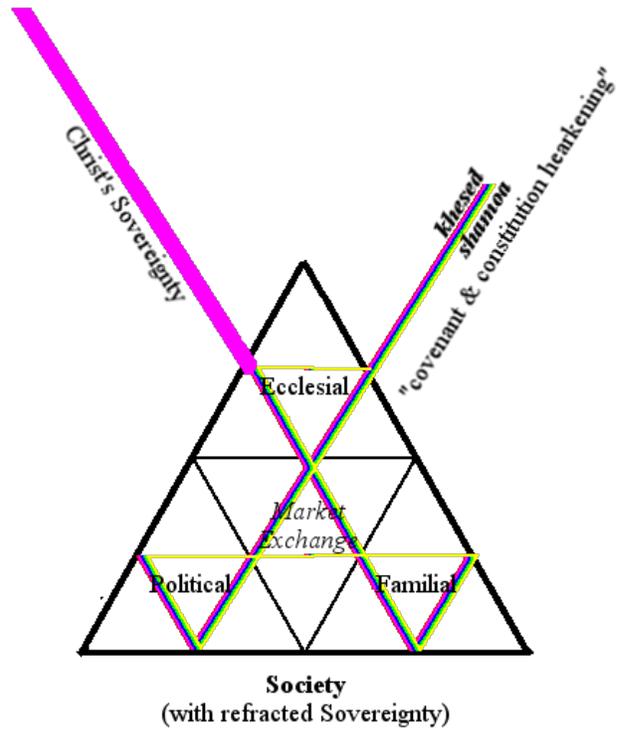
Angle 4.4.2.1: Society: Particular Society with Separation of Powers #1



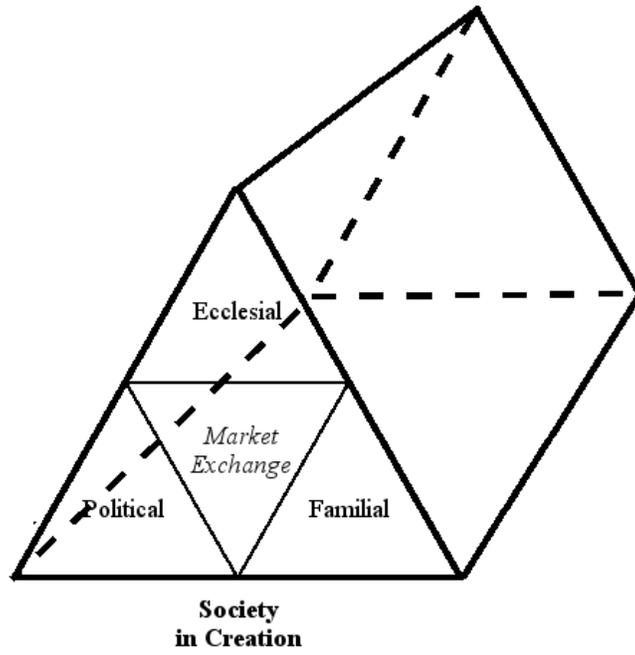
Angle 4.4.2.2: Society: Particular Society with Separation of Powers #2



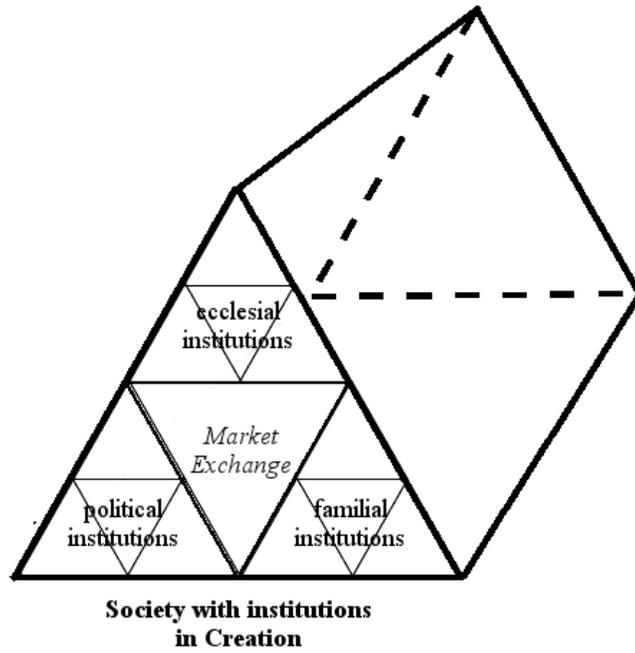
Angle 4.4.3: Society: Particular Society Refracting Sovereignty



Angle 4.5.1: Creation: Society in Creation

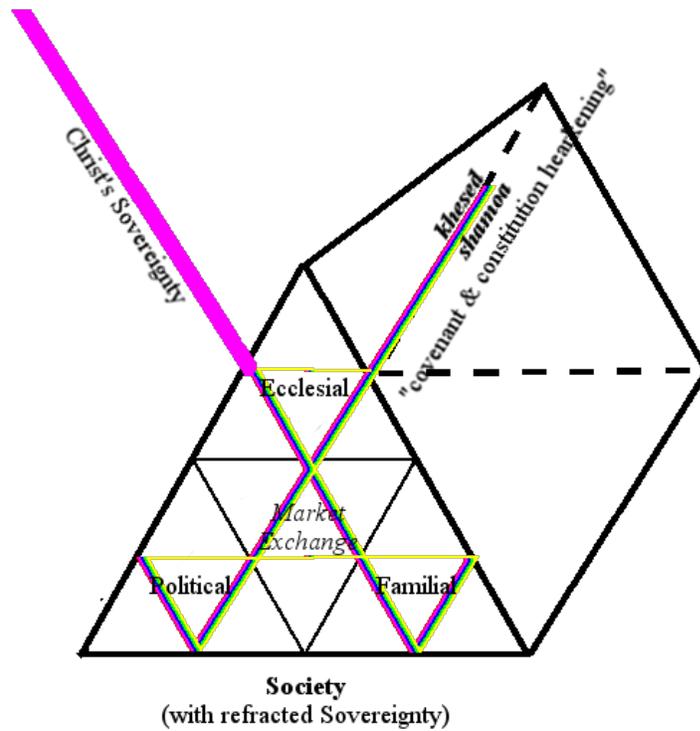


Angle 4.5.2: Creation: Society in Creation with Orders and institutions



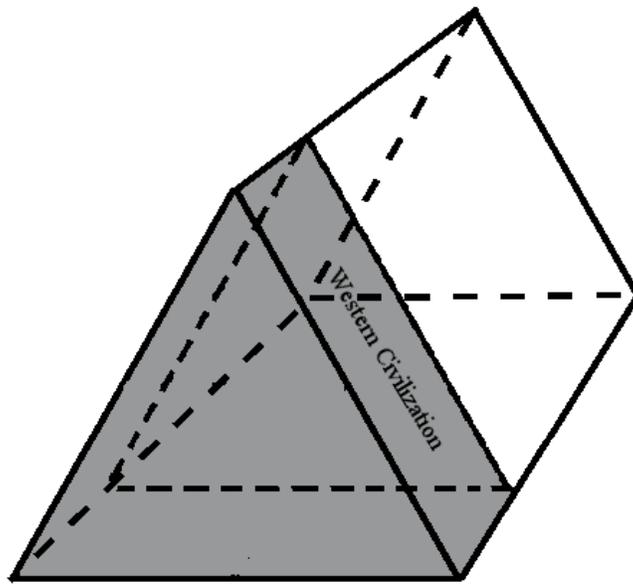
Angle 4.5.3: Creation: Society in Creation with Institutions Refracting Sovereignty (in the “here-and-now”)

“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col 1:16–17).



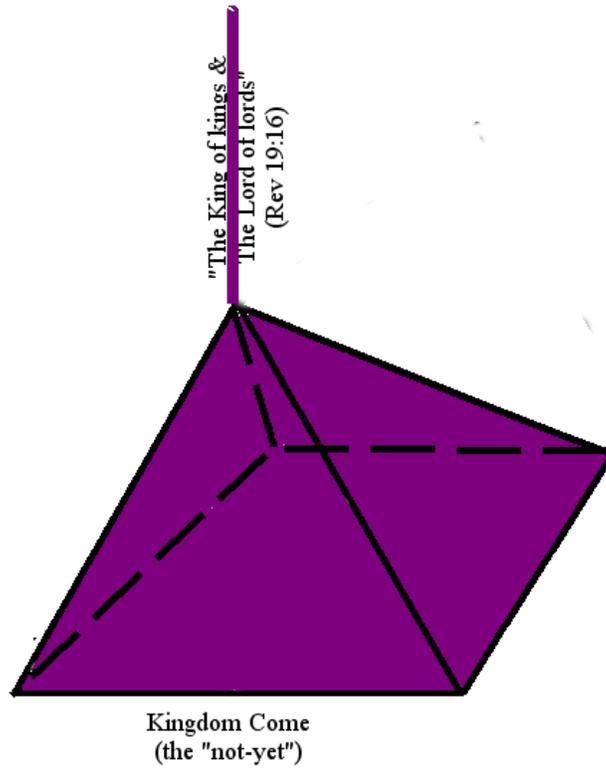
Angle 4.6.1: Creation: Particular Civilization in Creation

A civilization represents a segment of the prism that consists of a number of historically related societies.



**Particular Civilization  
in Creation**

Angle 4.7.1: Creation: The Kingdom Come Creation in the “not-yet”



## APPENDIX 5 MODEL: HTML MODEL OF ORIGATION AND CONSTITUTED FORM AND FUNCTION

To experience creation and constitution through a communicative act, visit the link below and click the green “RUN>>” button. It contains some code I wrote using HTML, CSS, and JS to illustrate the illustration. Click the black square to initiate the function that causes it to disappear. Click the hyperlink below to edit the word “black” or the “width” and “height” to change the creature’s form and function with your own communicative act: <https://www.w3schools.com/code/tryit.asp?filename=FOVFTKEJG5K8>



```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html>
<head>
<style>
#square {background-color:black;}
.hidden {display: none;}
</style>
</head>
<body>

<div id="square" style="width:100px;height:100px;">
</div>

<script>
document.getElementById('square').onclick =
function(event) {
  document.getElementById('square').className =
  "hidden";
}
</script>
</body>
</html>
```

Result Size: 479 x 516

APPENDIX 6  
PRAXIS: ECCLESIAL COVENANT & CONSTITUTION

Below is an example of an ecclesial covenantal constitution that I wrote for a Southern Baptist church I pastored in downtown Raleigh, NC (2009–2015). It was a wonderful experience, and it really forced me to theologize covenantalism in an actual local church polity and practice (with wonderful results). The church consisted primarily of Filipinos, and was called Glory of God Christian Fellowship. When I arrived, I discovered that the church was suffering from problems related to disorder and an overall lack of polity. I worked with the church for about a year to help guide the development of a Constitution and Bylaws committee that drafted the GGCF Covenant, Constitution, and Bylaws.

Below is a copy of the GGCF Constitution, which includes a section on their Church Covenant. The bylaws were a much longer document that can be made available upon request (it covered all the doctrinal and practical matters). The church business meetings where we reviewed and amended the proposed GGCF Covenant, Constitution, and Bylaws lasted for several months, and afterwards, the church took their ecclesial polity very seriously. One of the remarkable things about serving this church was that none of the Pastors were staff. The church was member-led, and attendance at the monthly church business meetings was often eighty percent. It was the complete opposite experience from the Miami church that served as an illustration of ecclesial disorder in the dissertation's third chapter.

## **GGCF Church Constitution (2011):**

### **I. Article I: Preamble**

- a. We, the members of Glory of God Christian Fellowship (GGCF) of Raleigh, North Carolina, place our complete trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation, and believe the Holy Bible to be the authoritative Word of God. Together, we band ourselves as a body of Christian believers and hereby adopt this Constitution as our method of labor for the Lord.

### **II. Article II: Name, Location, & Nature**

#### **a. Section 2.01: Name and Location**

- i. The name of this church is GLORY OF GOD CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP (GGCF) and is organized as a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the State of North Carolina. It holds Sunday worship services at the 209 Oberlin Road, Raleigh NC 27605.

#### **b. Section 2.02: Nature**

- i. This nonprofit corporation is organized for religious purposes, including for such purpose, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under Sections 501 (c) (3) and 170 (c) (2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provisions of any future United States Internal Revenue Code). This church is a local non-denominational body of believers under the headship of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- ii. This church is not subject to the control of any other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation of other Christian churches and organizations by maintaining an official affiliation with MidAtlantic Converge, and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

### **III. Article III: Mission and Purpose**

#### **a. Section 3.01: Mission**

- i. The mission of GGCF is to know Christ and make Him known.

#### **b. Section 3.02: Purpose**

- i. The purpose of this church is to glorify God individually and collectively (1 Cor 10:31) and to be obedient to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20); such activities and programs are under the concept of Good “News” ministries, that may include but are not limited to:

1. *Nature. Provide a church environment where members can participate to acquire and gain biblical truths that shall become relevant in their relationship with God, the church and the world.*

2. **Evangelism.** *Witnessing for the Lord Jesus Christ in our community and to the fullest possible extent throughout the whole world.*
3. **Worship.** *Conduct and sponsor corporate worship services that include the partaking of the Lord's Supper and the celebration of life in baptism.*
4. **Service.** *Equip the believers to put into faithful service their God-given skills, talents, leadership, time and resources into His ministry.*

**IV. Article IV: Statement of Basic Beliefs**

- a. We affirm the Holy Bible as the inspired word of God and the basis for our beliefs. We voluntarily band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ personally committed to sharing the good news of salvation to lost mankind. The ordinances of the church are believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper (*See Article I of the Bylaws*).

**V. Article V: Church Covenant**

- a. Having been led as we believe by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and, on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God and this assembly most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.
- b. We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, doctrines, and discipline; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.
- c. We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from drunkenness and the sale and use of illegal drugs; to use our influence to combat the abuse of drugs and the spread of pornography; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.
- d. We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.
- e. We moreover engage that when we move from this place we will as soon as possible unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

**VI. Article VI: Church Government**

- a. The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. Persons duly received by the members shall constitute the membership (*See Article II of the Bylaws*). All internal groups created and empowered by the church shall report to and be accountable only to the church, unless otherwise specified by church action. This church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation common among Baptist churches.

**VII. Article VII: Dissolution of the Church**

- a. Upon dissolution of the corporation, its assets remaining after payment of all debts and liabilities, shall be distributed to a non-profit fund, foundation, or corporation that is organized and operated for charitable, education, ecclesiastical, religious, or sacerdotal purposes and that has established its tax-exempt status under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
- b. In such an event, all assets of the church remaining thereafter shall be transmitted by the church Council with an even distribution to both the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), and the MidAtlantic Converge or its successor. The majority vote of the congregation present during the business meeting at which the issue of dissolution is discussed and decided upon is required.

**VIII. Article VIII: Constitutional Amendment Procedure**

- a. A member may recommend changes to the Constitution by submitting his/her proposal in writing to the Council prior to a Church Meeting. The proposed amendment/s shall become effective only upon ratification by a 3/4ths majority vote of the voting church members present in a duly constituted meeting.

APPENDIX 7  
PRAXIS: MARITAL COVENANT & CONSTITUTION

Below is an example of a wedding ceremony I wrote and conducted in Miami (2012). The wedding ceremony evidences an intentional approach to appraising covenant as a marital idea. In particular, an emphasis was placed on narrating the various covenantal symbols performed throughout an average American wedding. It is also worth noting that the content of the vows double as the constituted form and function of the marriage's initial constitution (although usually a marriage's constitution remains unwritten).

**Covenant Wedding Ceremony (2012):**

- I. Processional**
  - a. Enter Minister
  
- II. Wedding March**
  - a. Minister: "All rise for the Bride"
  
- III. The Opening Prayer**
  
- IV. The Assembly Is Seated**
  - a. Minister: "You may now be seated."
  
- V. The Opening Remarks—Call to Worship**
  - a. Minister: "Everyone loves a good story."
    - i. Minister: "One thing I learned while moving away to NC is that Cubans are natural born storytellers and story makers. I don't want to brag, but my Father is the king of stories. My brother, sister and I were raised by our father's stories. Some were real, and some were fake. Some were funny, and some were sad. There are few things as compelling and ensnaring as an excellent narrative. For some of us, we prefer action. If I know one thing about my future brother in law, he's that type. Whether scouring the coast for a

good wave, or preparing for a triathlon, he seems the type to enjoy a good action story. Now I know there are many women here who would prefer a different type of story. Instead of the dangers of waves, they prefer the risks of falling in love. Instead of the conditioning of the body for trial, they prefer the preparation of the heart for sacrifice. By this I mean what we call a romance. What makes a good romance is that there are great risks and great rewards. Key to any romance is the element of sacrifice. Judging by the tear-glistened cheeks of some of your faces, I know you're this type. That's one of the reasons that you love a good wedding. It's the pinnacle of romance. It's the apex of human emotion. But it would be wrong to simply assume a wedding is just a good romance. It's so much more."

- b. Minister: "With every good story, there is sacrifice."
  - i. Minister: "Today, we are here to participate in the greatest story of {Groom} and {Bride}'s life. Nothing on earth can rival the crescendo we are participating in."
- c. Minister: "With every good story, there are symbols."
  - i. Minister: "Weddings are rich in both sacrifice and symbols. Today, we will participate and observe five symbols joining {Bride} and {Groom} in the greatest and most rewarding sacrifice of their lives."

## **VI. Marriage Covenant Symbol 1: The Characters**

- a. Minister: "Our 1st Symbol are your guests."
  - i. Minister: "With every good story, there are characters. {Bride}, {Groom}, turn towards your guests. Note that you would not be here standing as you are, were it not for the roles they have played in your lives. At times, some of them were the heroes, and at others they may have been the villain. But one thing is sure: they have all made sacrifices to mold you into the person you are today."
  - ii. Minister: "In the Old Testament, when individuals would make a covenant, they would divide an animal in half and walk through it. This division was holy ground and represented the sacrifice of both covenantal participants. That is why families and friends who have sacrificed much to raise and influence you are seated on two sides, and why you walk down the aisle."
- b. Minister: "And some of our family members have made greater sacrifices than others, which leads us to our next symbol."

## **VII. Marriage Covenant Symbol 2: The Giving Away of The Bride**

- a. Minister: "Our 2nd Symbol is the Giving Away of the Bride."
  - i. Minister: "This is symbolic of when God presented Eve to Adam in the Garden."

1. “And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man” (Gen 2:22).
- b. Minister: “May the parents of the bride and groom please stand.”
  - i. Minister: “It was the fruit of the institution of marriage that brought {Bride} and {Groom} into this world. It was then your labor and love which crafted them into the two individuals standing before us. Just as God the Father presented Eve to her groom, so now we ask the father of the bride with the support of the parents to present {Bride} to {Groom}.”
- c. Minister: “{Father}, do you bring {Bride} before us in approval us her future husband and in preparation for marriage?”
  - i. Father: “I do.”

### **VIII. Marriage Covenant Symbol 3: The Wedding Vows**

- a. Minister: “Our 3rd Symbol is the Wedding Vows.”
  - i. Minister: “In the Garden of Eden, after God had presented Eve to Adam, Adam said”
    1. ““This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man”” (Gen 2:23).
  - ii. Minister: “On their wedding day, Adam gave these vows, speaking of the promise of oneness. Vows are also symbolic in the Old Testament of making a covenant. Two individuals entering into a covenant would join their right hands, and then say out loud their covenantal vows. Will you please join your right hands?”
- b. Minister to Groom: “{Groom}, this woman whom you hold by the hand is to be your wife. Your wedding marks a crowning achievement where your two stories become one. You will play many roles: You will be her side-kick. Her companion. Her lover. Her source of laughter. Her joy. Her anxiety. Her splendor. Her protector. Her hero. But most of all, you will be her husband.”
  - i. Minister: “Do you vow here, as you have promised {Bride} that you will make her your greatest concern? That you will remain true and loyal, patient in sickness, comforting in sorrow, and forsaking all others, keeping yourself only unto her for so long as you both shall live?”
  - ii. Groom: “I will.”
- c. Minister to Bride: “{Bride}, this man whom you hold by the right hand is to be your husband. You too will play many roles: You will be his greatest distraction. His source of comfort. His child-bearer. His best friend. His fellow explorer. His damsel. But most of all, you will be his wife.”
  - i. Minister: “Do you vow here, as you have promised {Groom}, that you will make him your greatest concern? That you will be loyal in adversity, loving to him in affliction, comforting him in sorrow,

and forsaking all others, keeping yourself only to him for so long as you both shall live?"

ii. Bride: "I will."

**IX. Marriage Covenant Symbol 4: The Exchanging of Rings**

a. Minister: "Our 4th Symbol is the Exchanging of Rings."

i. Minister: "The wedding ring is a symbol of eternity. It is an outward sign of an inward and spiritual bond, which unites two hearts in endless love."

b. Minister: "And now as a token of your love and of your deep desire to be forever united in heart and soul, {Groom}, you may place a ring on the finger of your bride."

i. Minister to Groom: "Please repeat after me."

ii. Minister and Groom: "{Bride}, I give you this ring as a symbol of my love and faithfulness to you."

c. Minister to Bride: "By the same token {Bride}, you may place a ring on the finger of your groom."

i. Minister to Bride: "Please repeat after me."

ii. Minister and Bride: "{Groom}, I give you this ring as a symbol of my love and faithfulness to you."

**X. Marriage Covenant Symbol 5: The Pronouncement**

a. Minister: "Our 5th and final Symbol is the taking of your Husband's Last Name."

i. "Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:16).

b. Minister: "As a minister of the gospel, and by the authority invested in me by the State of {State}, I pronounce you to be to each other, husband and wife. Whom therefore God has joined together, let no man put apart."

**XI. The Kiss**

a. Minister: "{Husband}, you may now kiss your {Wife}."

**XII. The Presentation**

a. Minister: "It is now my privilege to introduce to you for the first time, Mr. and Mrs. {Husband's Last Name}."

**XIII. Recessional**

## APPENDIX 8 PRAXIS: POLITICAL COVENANT & CONSTITUTION

Below are some samples of political covenants and covenantal constitutions used throughout early Colonial America. These documents helped constitute actual political institutions when colonial communities found themselves in frontiers that lacked political authorities. What is remarkable about some of these examples is that they actualized in practice what social contract theorists hypothesized decades later. Some of the covenants are more ecclesial in nature than others, however in early Colonial America, these also served as the political foundation for their polities. The political covenants are presented either in their entirety, or in segments relevant to evidencing their covenantalism. Italics added for emphasis.

### **Colonial Covenants (1620–1639):**

#### **I. “Mayflower Covenant” (1620)**

- a. “In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign Lord King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland king, defender of the faith, etc. Having undertaken for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith, and the honour of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia; do by these presents solemnly and mutually, *in the presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic*, for our better ordering and preservation, and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, offices from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony: unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names, Cape Cod, 11<sup>th</sup> of November, in the year

of the reign of our sovereign Lord King James of England, France, and Ireland 18<sup>th</sup>, and of Scotland 54<sup>th</sup>, *Anno Domini* 1620.”<sup>1</sup>

## II. “A Model of Christian Charity” (1630)

- a. “It is of the nature and essence of every society *to be knit together by some covenant*, either expressed or implied.... For the work we have in mind, it is by *mutual consent*, through a special over-ruling providence and a more than ordinary approbation of the churches of Christ, to seek out a place of cohabitation and consortship, under a due form of government both civil and ecclesiastical.... Therefore we must not content ourselves with usual ordinary means. Whatsoever we did or ought to have done when we lived in England, the same we must do, and more also where we go.... Neither must we think that the Lord will bear such failings at our hands as He doth from those among whom we have lived.... Thus stands the cause between God and us: *we are entered into a covenant with Him for this work; we have taken out a commission, the Lord hath given us leave to draw our own articles*.... We shall find that the God of Israel is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies, when he shall make us a praise and glory, that men of succeeding plantations shall say, ‘The Lord make it like that of New England.’ For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us; so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world, we shall open the mouths of enemies to speak evil of the ways of God and all professors for God’s sake; we shall shame the faces of many of God’s worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into curses upon us till we be consumed out of the good land whether we are going.”<sup>2</sup>

## III. “The Salem Covenant” (Massachusetts, 1629)

- a. “*We Covenant* with the Lord and one with another; and do bind ourselves in the presence of God, to walk together in all His ways, according as he is pleased to reveal himself unto us in his Blessed word of truth.”<sup>3</sup>

## IV. “Agreement of the Settlers at Exeter in New Hampshire” (New Hampshire, 1639)

- a. “[T]hat we should not live without wholesome laws & government

---

<sup>1</sup> *Mayflower Covenant*, in *Cape Cod Journal of the Pilgrim Fathers: Reprinted from Mourt’s Relation*, ed. Sharman, Lyon (New York, NY: The Roycrofters, 1920).

<sup>2</sup> John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity,” pp. 195–199 in *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings*, eds. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1938).

<sup>3</sup> Donald Lutz, *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution: A Documentary History* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2007), 35.

amongst us, of which we are altogether destitute; do in the name of Christ & in the sight of God combine ourselves together, to erect & set up amongst us such government as shall be to our best discerning, agreeable to the will of God, professing ourselves subjects to our Sovereign Lord King Charles, according to the liberties of our English Colony of the Massachusetts & binding ourselves solemnly by the grace & help of Christ & in his name & fear to submit ourselves to such godly & Christian laws as are established in the realm of England to our best knowledge, & to all other such laws which shall upon good grounds, be made & enacted amongst us according to God, that we may live quietly & peaceably together, in all godliness and honesty.”<sup>4</sup>

**V. “Dedham Covenant” (Massachusetts, 1636)**

- a. “One: We whose names are here unto subscribed do, in the fear and reverence of our Almighty God, mutually and severally promise amongst ourselves and each other to profess and practice one truth according to that most perfect rule, the foundation whereof is everlasting love.... That if at any time differences shall rise between parties of our said town, that then such party or parties shall presently refer all such differences unto some one, two, or three others of our said society to be fully accorded and determined without any further delay, if it possibly may be.”<sup>5</sup>

**VI. “Government of Pocasset” (Rhode Island, 1638)**

- a. “We whose names are underwritten do here solemnly in the presence of Jehovah incorporate ourselves into a Body Politic and as He shall help, will submit our persons, lives and estates unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and the Lord of lords and to all those perfect and most absolute laws of His given us in His holy word of truth, to be guided and judged thereby (Exod 24:3–4; 2 Chr 11:3; 2 Kgs 11:17).”<sup>6</sup>

**VII. “Guilford Covenant” (Connecticut, 1639)**

- a. “Individuals who, the next September, purchase Menunkatuck, afterwards Guilford, enter into the following *covenant*: We whose names are hereunder written, intending by God’s gracious permission to plant ourselves in New England, and, if it may be, in the southerly part about Quinnipiack, we do faithfully promise each to each, for ourselves and our families, and those that belong to us, that we will, the Lord assisting us, sit down and join ourselves together in one entire plantation, and to be helpful each to the other in any common work, according to every man’s

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 163.

ability, and as need shall require.”<sup>7</sup>

## **Colonial Covenantal Constitutions (1636–1780):**

### **I. “Pilgrim Code of Law” (Massachusetts, 1636)**

- a. “You shall also submit to and obey such good and wholesome laws, ordinances, and officers as are or shall be established within the several limits thereof. So help you God, who is the God of truth and punisher of falsehood.”<sup>8</sup>

### **II. “The Massachusetts Body of Liberties” (Massachusetts, 1641)**

- a. “We do therefore this day religiously and unanimously decree and confirm these following Rites, liberties, and privileges concerning our Churches, and Civil State to be respectively impartial and inviolably enjoyed and observed throughout our Jurisdiction forever.”<sup>9</sup>

### **III. “Fundamental Orders of Connecticut” (Connecticut, 1639)**

- a. “Forasmuch as it hath pleased the Almighty God by the wise disposition of his divine prudence so to Order and dispose of things that we the Inhabitants and Residents of Windsor, Harteford and Wethersfield are now cohabiting and dwelling in and upon the River of Connecticut and the Lands thereunto adjoining; and Well knowing where a people are gathered together the word of God requires that to maintain the peace and union of such a people there should be an orderly and decent Government established according to God, or order and dispose of the affairs of the people at all seasons as occasion shall require; do therefore associate and conjoin ourselves to be one Public State or Commonwealth; and do, for ourselves and our Successors and such as shall be adjoined to us at any time hereafter, enter into *Combination* and Confederation together, to maintain and pursue the liberty and purity of the gospel of our Lord Jesus which we now profess, as also the discipline of the Churches, which according to the truth of the said gospel is now practiced amongst us; As also in our Civil Affairs to be guided and governed according to such Laws, Rules, Orders and decrees as shall be made, ordered & decreed, as follows.”<sup>10</sup>

### **IV. “Charter of Liberties and Frame of Government of the Province of Pennsylvania in America” (Pennsylvania, 1682)**

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 211.

- a. “This settles the divine right of government beyond exception, and that for two ends: first, to terrify evil doers: secondly, to cherish those that do well; which gives government a life beyond corruption, and makes it as durable in the world, as good men shall be. So that government seems to me a part of religion itself, a thing sacred in its institution and end.... Thirdly. I know what is said by the several admirers of *monarchy*, *aristocracy* and *democracy*, which are the *rule of one, a few, and many*, and are the three common ideas of government, when men discourse on the subject. But I choose to solve the controversy with this small distinction, and it belongs to all three: *Any government is free to the people under it* (whatever be the frame) *where the laws rule, and the people are a party to those laws*, and more than this is tyranny, oligarchy, or confusion.... Wherefore governments rather depend upon men, than men upon governments. Let men be good, and the government cannot be bad; if it be ill, they will cure it. But, if men be bad, let the government be never so good, they will endeavor to warp and spoil it to their turn.... *To support power in reverence with the people, and to secure the people from the abuse of power*, that they may be free by their just obedience, and the magistrates honorable, for their just administration: for liberty, without obedience is confusion, and obedience without liberty is slavery.... I humbly pray and hope *God* will please to make the lot of this Pennsylvania. Amen.”<sup>11</sup>

#### V. “The Massachusetts Constitution” (Massachusetts, 1780)

- a. “The body-politic is formed by a voluntary association of individuals: It is a social compact, by which the whole people *covenants* with each citizen, and each citizen with the whole people, that all shall be governed by certain laws for the common good. It is the duty of the people, therefore, *in framing a Constitution of Government*, to provide for the equitable mode of making laws, as well as for impartial interpretation, and a faithful execution of them; that every man may, at all times, find his security in them.”<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 272–275.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant & Constitutionalism: The Great Frontier and the Matrix of Federal Democracy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 75.

APPENDIX 9  
SYMBOL: AMERICA’S JEFFERSON DRAFT OF THE DECLARATION OF  
INDEPENDENCE WITH CONGRESS’ EDITORIAL CHANGES

After Thomas Jefferson submitted his draft of the Declaration of Independence, Congress made three edits that are worth mentioning, and which seem to support the overall covenantal tone of the document suggested by Elazar.<sup>1</sup> These changes can be observed in Appendix C in Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1998), 235–241. The Declaration undeniably begins with a theocentric dependency to establish the validity of its grievances. Congress made no changes to Jefferson’s original first paragraph, where it affirms its theocentric assumption by stating,

“to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them.”

The first noteworthy change comes in the second paragraph, which originally read:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with inherent and inalienable rights.”

Congress instead edited it to strikeout “~~inherent and~~,” and insert in its place the word “certain.” Thus, it read in its final form as

“We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with ~~inherent and~~ <sup>certain</sup> inalienable rights.”

---

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 10, “Symbol: America’s Declaration of Independence and its Covenantal Structure.”

It seems as if Congress sought to de-emphasize the anthropocentricity of the word “inherent,” in favor of a more theocentric sense of being “certain inalienable rights” endowed and derived by God.

The second editorial change is even more interesting, and provides even stronger evidence of the direct or indirect influence of the covenantal tradition on the Declaration of Independence. In his submitted original, Jefferson only mentioned God in the first two paragraphs. Congress’ edits sought to remedy this by making sure theocentric references formed an *inclusio* at the beginning and the end of the document. The noteworthy second change occurs in the first sentence of the final paragraph, which originally read as

“We therefore the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled, do, in the name and by authority of the good people.”

Congress instead sought to reaffirm the introduction’s theocentric dependency by editing it to insert the phrase “appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions,” so that the final version read as

“We therefore the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled, <sup>appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions,</sup> do, in the name and by authority of the good people”

The final editorial change worth referencing is also the most covenantal, and occurs in the Declaration’s last sentence. Jefferson’s draft originally read as

“And for the support of this declaration, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.”

Perhaps this seemed too secular and anthropocentric to the Founding Fathers, for they instead sought to insert the phrase “with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence,” so that the final version of the Declaration ended with

“And for the support of this declaration, <sup>with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence,</sup> we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.”

APPENDIX 10  
SYMBOL: AMERICA'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND ITS  
COVENANTAL STRUCTURE

As the earlier tables and appendices evidence, the Declaration contained a number of sources that influenced its political theological symbolism. These included the puritan influence on John Locke, the important role of ministers quoting Locke in their circulated election sermons and Locke's important influence on the Declaration, the correlation of biblical political symbols in the Declaration and the Constitution, the heavy citation from the Bible in political treatise by the Founding Fathers, and the similarities between Jefferson's Declaration and Mayhew's election sermon (which preceded it by over two decades). One final parallel worth mentioning is undertaken by Daniel J. Elazar, who demonstrates how even the structure of the Declaration of independence seemingly parallels that of the Near Eastern Covenantal Formulate.<sup>1</sup>

- I. Near Eastern Covenantal Formulate (52–53)**
  - a. A preamble indicating the parties to the covenant;
  - b. A prologue, historical or ideological, establishing the setting or grounding of the covenant;
  - c. The operative section of the covenant, as stipulations, or what is agreed;
  - d. Provisions for public reading (proclamation) and deposit of the text for safekeeping;
  - e. The divine witness to the covenant; and
  - f. The advantages of performance (blessings) and sanctions for nonperformance (curses).

---

<sup>1</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant & Constitutionalism, The Great Frontier and the Matrix of Federal Democracy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 53–71. Also see Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1969).

## II. **Covenantal Structure of The Declaration of Independence**

- a. A preamble indicating the parties to the covenant;
  - i. “In congress, July 4, 1776, by the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled.”
- b. A prologue, historical or ideological, establishing the setting or grounding of the covenant;
  - i. “When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them.”
  - ii. “a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.”
- c. The operative section of the covenant, as stipulations, or what is agreed;
  - i. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they were endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”
  - ii. “that to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,”
  - iii. “That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its power in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”
  - iv. “Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.”
  - v. “But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.”
  - vi. “In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.”
  - vii. “Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and

magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.”

- d. Provisions for public reading (proclamation) and deposit of the text for safekeeping;
  - i. “We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled,”
- e. The divine witness to the covenant;
  - i. “appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved;”
- f. The advantages of performance (blessings) and sanctions for nonperformance (curses).
  - i. “and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

APPENDIX 11  
SYMBOL: AMERICA'S EARLY POLITICAL SERMONS

Included are several selections from Franklin P. Cole's wider collection. The various quotations of New England ministers give insight into what type of political theological symbols were preached to the public regarding several major political issues of their time. Within their sermons can be noted the Covenantal and Christian Liberal influences. Also noticeable is a major focus on the issue of human depravity, checks and limits, and civil and religious liberty, in which played a major role in influencing the development of American Constitutionalism and the Declaration.<sup>1</sup>

**I. Divine Source of Liberty**

- a. "All power is originally from God, and civil government his institution, and is designed to advance the happiness of his creatures. Civil power ought therefore ever to be employed agreeable to the nature and will of the supreme Sovereign and Guardian of all our rights."<sup>2</sup>
- b. "Life, liberty, and property are the gifts of the Creator."<sup>3</sup>
- c. "Next to the gospel of peace, civil government bespeaks the great goodwill of the Most High, to the children of men."<sup>4</sup>
- d. "The Scriptures cannot be rightfully expounded without explaining them in a manner friendly to the cause of freedom."<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Franklin P. Cole, *They Preached Liberty: An Anthology of Timely Quotations from New England Ministers of the American Revolution on the Subject of Liberty, Its Source, Nature, Obligations, Types, and Blessings* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Press, 1977). Election sermons quotes are cited from Cole's work. For more important political sermons during the Colonial and Early America periods, see Donald S. Lutz and Charles S. Hyneman, *American Political Writing during the Founding Era, 1760–1805*, 2 vols (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1983); and Ellis Sandoz, *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730–1805*, 2 vols (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Stevens, A.M., of Kittery, Mass. Election Sermon, 1761.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Shute, A.M., of Hingham, Mass. Election Sermon, 1768.

<sup>4</sup> Eliphalet Williams, M.A., of Hartford, Conn. Election Sermon, 1769.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Turner, A.M., of Duxbury, Mass. Election Sermon, 1773.

- e. “Unlimited submission and obedience is due to none but God alone. He has an absolute right to command; he alone has an uncontrollable sovereignty over us, because he alone is unchangeably good.... And to suppose that he has given to any particular set of men a power to require obedience to that which is unreasonable, cruel, and unjust, is robbing the Deity of his justice and goodness.”<sup>6</sup>
- f. “But, depend upon it, *no government is God’s ordinance but that which is for the good of mankind.*”<sup>7</sup>

## II. Heritage and Nature of Liberty

- a. “No man denies but that *originally* all were equally free. Men did not purchase their freedom, nor was it the grant of kinds, no from charter, covenant, or compact, nor in any proper sense from man: But from God. They were born free.”<sup>8</sup>
- b. “Where the magistrates and people are generally virtuous, the people may be tolerably happy under almost any constitution, or indeed without any. Yet as the world is, a *good constitution* is by no means to be disregarded; but is the first foundation to be laid for the happiness of the people; and of great importance.”<sup>9</sup>

## III. Balance of Power and Constitution

- a. “A good constitution of government, such as one that secures the mutual dependence of the sovereign or ruling powers, and the people on each other, and which secures the rights of each, and the good of the whole society, is a great blessing to a people.”<sup>10</sup>
- b. “Happy are those whose political plan allows such prerogative as is sufficient to the vigor, uniformity, and dispatch of public measures, but at the same time with such restrictions, that the liberties of the subject are safe.... The balance of power in a mixed government is no empty theory. The destruction of it is terrible.”<sup>11</sup>
- c. “But the British legislature, consisting of three branches; *to check, moderate, and temper each other*; it is imagined is preferable to any other we have the knowledge of.”<sup>12</sup>
- d. “If laws, when made, exist only on paper and ink, what benefit can a people derive from them? The divine law is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword; and surely his ministers ought to make the laws, which they execute, bear some resemblance to his.”<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Samuel West, A.M., of Dartmouth, Mass. Election Sermon, 1776.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel Webster, A.M., of Salisbury, Mass. Election Sermon, 1777.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Ebenezer Bridge, A.M., of Chelmsford, Mass. Election Sermon, 1767.

<sup>11</sup> Edward Barnard, A.M., of Haverhill, Mass. Election Sermon, 1776.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Lockwood, A.M., of Andover, Conn. Election Sermon, 1774.

<sup>13</sup> Moses Mather, Conn. Election Sermon, 1781.

#### IV. Tyranny and Human Nature

- a. “Arrogant pretenses to infallibility in matters of state or religion, represent human nature in the most contemptible light.”<sup>14</sup>
- b. “If we look over the prophets [of the Old Testament], we shall find that the rulers are peculiarly guilty: the princes were become mighty oppressors: and when foreign enemies attacked them, unnaturally joined and conspired their ruin! This was a crime of the highest nature. For nothing can be more aggravated than for the *shepherds to mislead* and *butcher* the flock they were set to *defend* and *feed*! And the *guardians* of the public interests, to turn *traitors* and *assassins* to them that raised them to their high places!”<sup>15</sup>

#### V. Obligations of Liberty

- a. “‘Tis certain that the gospel, above all other religions, instructs mankind in the duties they owe unto their lawful rulers.”<sup>16</sup>
- b. “Is Christianity inconsistent with patriotism? God forbid that any should imagine such a thing. The true Christian is the best qualified to act the part of the patriot, if he hath other qualifications also which are requisite.”<sup>17</sup>
- c. “Let us act as *free*! Let us stand for our just rights; but consider ourselves at the same time as servants of God, and submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake. Let us never use our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness.”<sup>18</sup>

#### VI. Civil Liberty

- a. “Persecution and intolerance are not only unjust and criminal in the sight of God, but they also cramp, enfeeble, and diminish the state.”<sup>19</sup>
- b. “If the repeal of this [Stamp] Act should be the means of continuing our religious as well as civil liberties, and of transmitting pure and undefiled religion to future ages: Oh! What a resource will it be of perpetual and everlasting praises!”<sup>20</sup>
- c. “Civil government among mankind is not a resignation of their natural privileges, but that method of securing them.”<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Samuel Cook, A.M., of Cambridge, Mass. Election Sermon, 1770.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Webster, A.M., of Salisbury, Mass. Election Sermon, 1777.

<sup>16</sup> Edward Dorr, A.M., of Hartford, Conn. Election Sermon, 1765.

<sup>17</sup> Ebenezer Bridge, A.M., of Chelmsford, Mass. Election Sermon, 1767.

<sup>18</sup> John Tucker, A.M., of Newbury, Mass. Election Sermon, 1771.

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, D.D., of Boston, Mass. Election Sermon, 1754.

<sup>20</sup> Nathaniel Appleton, M.A., of Cambridge, Thanksgiving Sermon, 1766.

<sup>21</sup> Daniel Shute, A.M., of Hingham, Mass. Election Sermon, 1768.

## VII. Religious Liberty

- a. "On the free exercise of their natural religious rights the present as well as future happiness of mankind greatly depends."<sup>22</sup>
- b. "Religious liberty is so blended with civil, that if one falls it is not to be expected that the other will continue."<sup>23</sup>
- c. "Whereas in ecclesiastical affairs we are most solemnly warned not to be subject to ordinances, after the doctrines and commandments of men. Col 2:20, 22. And it is evident that he who is the only worthy object of worship, has always claimed it as his sole prerogative, to determine by express laws, what his worship shall be, who shall minister in it, and how they shall be supported."<sup>24</sup>
- d. "All acts of executive power in the civil state, are to be performed in the name of the king or state they belong to; while all our religious acts are to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus; and so are to be performed heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men."<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Shute, A.M., of Hingham, Mass. Election Sermon, 1768.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Turner, A.M., of Duxbury, Mass. Election Sermon, 1773.

<sup>24</sup> Isaac Backus, Middleborough, Mass. *An Appeal to the Public*, 1773.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

APPENDIX 12  
SYMBOL: AMERICA'S FIRST PRAYER OF CONGRESS (1774)

One of the best ways to discover relevant political symbols that help interpret a polity is to see what symbols they appeal to in moments of crisis and praxis. In addition to Congress editing the Declaration of Independence to emphasize God's providence and authority, during a moment of crisis, Congress called its first official prayer. John Adams describes the moment as providential. This helps exhibit how the Founding Fathers, during the crisis of the Revolution and British bombardment, appealed to symbols in praxis that help show how they interpreted themselves. Below is a letter John Adams sent to his friend describing the event, as well as a copy of the prayer.<sup>1</sup> Frost provides a letter Adams wrote to a friend describing the general *ethos* of relying on God's providence:

The subjoined extract of a characteristic letter from John Adams describing a scene in the first Congress in Philadelphia in 1774 shows very clearly on what Power the mighty men of old rested their cause Mr Adams thus wrote to a friend at the time When Congress met:

“Mr Gushing made a motion that it should be opened with prayer It was opposed by Mr Jay of New York and Mr Rutledge of South Carolina because we were so divided in religious sentiments some Episcopalians some Quakers some Anabaptists some Presbyterians and some Congregationalists that we could not join in the same act of worship. Mr Samuel Adams rose and said that he was no bigot and could hear a prayer from any good man of piety and virtue who was at the same time a friend to his country He was a stranger in Philadelphia but had heard that Mr Duche Dushay they pronounced it deserved that character and therefore he moved that Mr Duche an Episcopal clergyman might be desired to read prayers to the Congress tomorrow morning This motion was seconded and passed in the affirmative Mr Randolph our President waited on Mr Duche and received for answer that if his health would permit he certainly would

---

<sup>1</sup> John Frost, *Stories of the American Revolution: Comprising a Complete Anecdotic History of That Great National Event* (Philadelphia, PA: E. Ferrett & Company, 1845), 145.

Accordingly next morning lie appeared with his clerk in his pontificals and read several prayers in the established form and he then read the collect for the seventh day of September which was the thirty fifth Psalm You must remember this was the next morning after we had heard the rumour of the horrible cannonade of Boston It seemed as if Heaven had ordained that Psalm to be read on that morning After this Mr Duche unexpectedly to everybody struck out into an extemporary prayer which filled the bosom of every man present I must confess I never heard a better prayer or one so well pronounced Episcopalian as he is Dr Cooper himself never prayed with such fervour such ardour such correctness and pathos and in language so elegant and sublime for America for Congress for the province of the Massachusetts Bay especially the town of Boston It has had an excellent effect upon everybody here I must beg you to read that Psalm If there is any faith in the sortes Virgilianae or sortes Homericae or *especially the sortes Biblicae it would be thought providential* Here was a scene worthy of the painter's art It was in Carpenter's Hall Carpenter's Court between Third and Fourth streets Philadelphia a building which still survives in its original condition though now converted into an auction mart the forty four individuals met to whom this service was read Washington was kneeling there and Henry and Randolph and Rutledge and Lee and Jay and by their side there stood bowed down in reverence the *Puritan Patriots* of New England who at that moment had reason to believe that an armed soldiery was wasting their humble households It was believed that Boston had been bombarded and destroyed They prayed fervently for America for the Congress for the province of Massachusetts Bay and especially for the town of Boston and who can realize the emotions with which they turned imploringly to heaven for divine interposition and aid It was enough says Mr Adams to melt a heart of stone I saw the tears gush into the eyes of the old grave pacific Quakers of Philadelphia.”<sup>2</sup>

According to James Thatcher, the First Prayer of Congress went as follows (italics added for emphasis):

O Lord Our Heavenly Father high and mighty *King of Kings and Lord of Lords* Who dost from *Thy throne* behold all the dwellers of the earth and *reignest with power supreme and uncontrollable over the kingdoms empires and governments look down in mercy we beseech Thee* on these American States who have fled to Thee from the rod of the oppressor and thrown themselves on Thy gracious protection desiring to be henceforth only dependent on Thee to Thee have they appealed for the righteousness of their cause to Thee do they now look up for that countenance and support which Thou alone canst give Take them therefore Heavenly Father under Thy nurturing care give them wisdom in council and valor in the field Defeat the malicious designs of our adversaries convince them of the unrighteousness of their cause and if they still persist in their sanguinary purpose Oh let the Voice of Thy unerring justice sounding in their hearts constrain them to

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

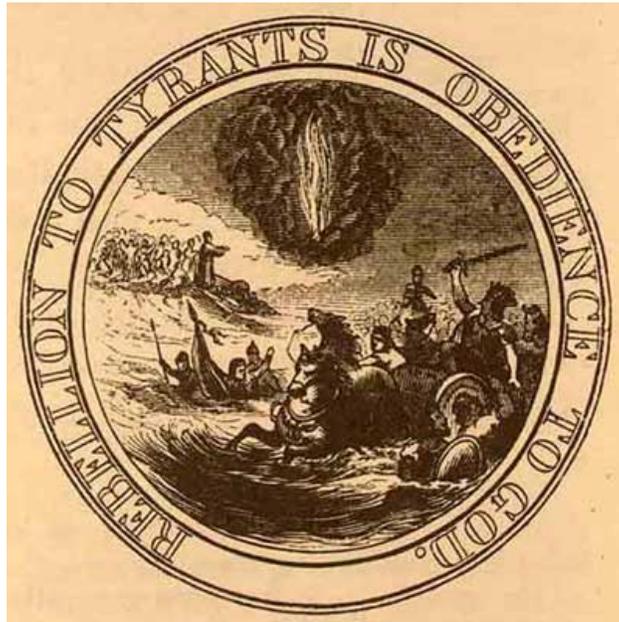
drop the weapons of war in their unnerved hands in the day of battle Be thou present O God of wisdom and direct the councils of this honorable assembly enable them to settle things on the best and surest foundation that the scene of blood may be speedily closed that order harmony and peace may be restored and truth and justice religion and piety prevail and flourish among the people Preserve the health of their bodies and the vigor of their minds shower down on them and the millions they here represent such temporal blessings as Thou seest expedient for them in this world and crown them with everlasting glory in the world to come All this we ask in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ Thy Son our Saviour amen.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> James Thatcher, "Military Journal," in *A Magazine of Record and Review*, Vol XXVIII (New York, NY: Current Literature Publishing, 1900), 79–82.

APPENDIX 13  
SYMBOL: AMERICA’S SEAL AND DIVINE PROVIDENCE  
(AMERICA’S SYMBOL OF POLITICAL *CHUPPAH*)

One of the most interesting places to find symbols to help interpret Early American political theory is to look at the actual symbols they made for themselves. Whether it was Benjamin Franklin, or the rest of the Great Seal Committee, the seal the Founding Fathers proposed for themselves was deeply theocentric in nature. Akin to the edits of the Declaration, the Committee was intentional to add an “all-seeing” eye at the top of the official seal, which symbolized God’s providence (“chuppah”).<sup>1</sup>



---

<sup>1</sup> “Designing the Great Seal of the United States –1776 to 1782,” n.d., <http://www.greatseal.com/committees/index.html>.

Benjamin Franklin's first committee design included biblical images. He explained the design as follows:

Pharaoh sitting in an open Chariot, a Crown on his head and a Sword in his hand, passing through the divided Waters of the Red Sea in Pursuit of the Israelites: Rays from a Pillar of Fire in the Cloud, expressive of the divine Presence and Command, beaming on Moses who stands on the shore and extending his hand over the Sea causes it to overwhelm Pharaoh. Motto: Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God.<sup>2</sup>

The all-seeing eye is often associated today with freemasonry. Although Benjamin Franklin was the only member of the design committees who was a mason, his proposals were rejected. Franklin's freemasonry actually makes his own proposal for the seal that much more interesting, given its usage of exodus imagery.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

The all-seeing eye in a triangle was a Renaissance European Christian symbol for divine providence and the Trinity. Examples of its Christian usage include Jacopo Pontormo's 1525 painting, which used the all-seeing eye of providence as a symbol of the Christian Trinity; the symbol on a chapel ceiling in the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption in Lviv Ukraine; the symbol on the gate of the Roman Catholic Aachen Cathedral in Aachen, Germany; and the symbol on a stained glass window in a church in Fifield, Wisconsin.



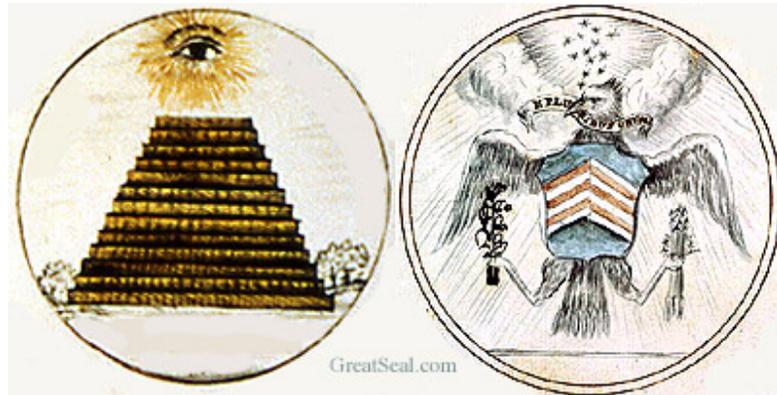


The Eye of Providence was adopted as part of the Great Seal of the United States in 1782.

The suggestion came from the first design committee in 1776 through the artistic consultant Pierre Eugene du Simitiere. He had originally designed a shield which contains smaller shields representing each of the original 13 states of the Union. He also suggested the adoption of the U.S. motto *E pluribus unum* (“Out of Many, One”).



The modern version of the seal is most recognizable on U.S. currency. It contains an unfinished pyramid with thirteen steps that represent the original thirteen states of the union. The pyramid is intentionally unfinished, representing future states. It is explained with the slogan *Annuet Cœptis*, which means “[Providence] approves (or has approved) [our] undertakings.”



*signifies vigilance perseverance & justice. The Olive branch  
and arrows denote the power of peace & war which is originally  
vested in Congress. The Constellation denotes a new State*

### Official Description:

Continental Congress – June 20, 1782

#### Blazon of the Great Seal of the United States

The Secretary of the United States in Congress assembled to whom were referred the several reports of committees on the device for a great seal, to take order, reports that the Device for an Armorial Achievement & Reverse of the great seal of the United States in Congress assembled is as follows. Arms Paleways of thirteen pieces Argent and Gules: a Chief, Azure. The Escutcheon on the breast of the American bald Eagle displayed, proper, holding in his dexter talon an Olive branch, and in his sinister a bundle of thirteen arrows, all proper, & in his beak a scroll, inscribed with this Motto. "*E pluribus unum*". For the Crest Over the head of the Eagle which appears above the *Escutcheon*, A Glory, Or, breaking through a cloud, proper, & surrounding thirteen stars forming a Constellation, Argent, on an Azure field.

#### Reverse

A Pyramid unfinished. In the Zenith an Eye in a triangle surrounded with a glory proper. Over the Eye these words "*Annuit Coeptis*". On the base of the pyramid the numerical letters MDCCLXXVI & underneath the following motto. "*novus ordo seclorum*" "denote the power of peace and war"<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbott, Andrew. "Of Time and Space: The Contemporary Relevance of the Chicago School." *Social Forces*, no. 4 (1997): 1149.
- Adams, John Quincy. *The Writings of John Quincy Adams, 1767–1848*. New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1968.
- Allen, Leslie C. *Ezekiel 1–19*. Edited by David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker. Vol. 28. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994.
- Allison, Gregg R., and John S. Feinberg. *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Althaus, Paul. *The Ethics of Martin Luther*. Edited by Robert C Schultz. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.
- Althusius, Johannes. *Politica*. Edited by Frederick Smith Carney and Daniel Judah Elazar. Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1995.
- Ambrose. *Letters*. Vol. 26 of *Fathers of the Church*. Translated by Mary Melchior Beyenka. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001.
- Ambrosiaster. *A Study of Ambrosiaster*. Vol. 7 of *Texts and Studies; Contributions to Biblical and Patristic Literature*. Edited by Alexander Souter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905.
- Anderson, Bernard W. "Covenant." Pages 138–139 in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*. Edited by Bruce M. Metzger and Michael David Coogan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Anderson, Virginia. *New England's Generation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *Aquinas: Political Writings*. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Edited by R. W. Dyson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- . *On Law, Morality, and Politics*. Edited by William P. Baumgarth and Richard J. Regan. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988.

- Archer Jr., G. L. "Covenant." Pages 299–301 in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Edited by Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids: Carlisle, Cumbria: Baker Book House Co., 2001.
- Aristotle. *Politics*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Revised ed. edition. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2000.
- Augustine. *Augustine: Political Writings*. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Edited by E. M. Atkins and Robert Dodaro. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- . *De Bono Conjugali*. Vol. 1 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*. Translated by Ray Kearney. Edited by John E. Rotelle. 24 vols. Brooklyn: New City Press, 1998.
- . *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia*. Vol. 1 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*. Translated by Roland J. Teske. Edited by John E. Rotelle. 24 vols. Brooklyn: New City Press, 1998.
- . *De Sancta Virginitate*. Vol. 1 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*. Translated by Ray Kearney. Edited by John E. Rotelle. 24 vols. Brooklyn: New City Press, 1998.
- . *The City of God*. Garden City: Image Books, 1958.
- Bailey, Derrick Sherwin. *The Man-Woman Relation in Christian Thought*. London: Longmans, 1959.
- Bainton, Roland H. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950.
- Baker, D. L. *Two Testaments, One Bible: The Theological Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010.
- Baker, J. Wayne. "Heinrich Bullinger, the Covenant, and the Reformed Tradition in Retrospect." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 29, no. 2 (1998): 359.
- Baltzer, Klaus. *The Covenant Formulary: In Old Testament, Jewish, and Early Christian Writings*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971.
- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. Translated by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936.
- . *Community, State, and Church; Three Essays*. Edited by Will Herberg. Garden City: Doubleday, 1960.

- . *Eine Schweizer Stimme, 1938-1945*. Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1945.
- . *Ethics*. Translated by Dietrich Braun. New York: Seabury Press, 1981.
- . *The Doctrine of Reconciliation: Church Dogmatics*. Translated by G. W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance. London: Continuum, 2004.
- Bartholomew, Craig G., ed. *A Royal Priesthood?: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically: A Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan*. Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster Press; Zondervan, 2002.
- . "A Time for War and a Time for Peace: Old Testament Wisdom, Creation and O'Donovan's Theological Ethics." Pages 91–112 in *A Royal Priesthood?: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically: A Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan*. Edited by Craig G. Bartholomew. Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press; Zondervan, 2002.
- Bartlett, J. R. *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, in New England. Printed by Order of the General Assembly*. Vol. 1. Providence, RI: A. Crawford Greene and Brother, State Printers, 1856.  
<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112104867553>.
- Baxter, Richard. *A Christian Directory (Part 1 of 4) Christian Ethics*. Project Gutenberg, 2012. <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/41633>.
- . *A Christian Directory (Part 2 of 4) Christian Economics*. Project Gutenberg, 2013. <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/43800>.
- . *A Christian Directory (Part 3 of 4) Christian Ecclesiastics*. Project Gutenberg, 2014. <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/44655>.
- . *A Christian Directory (Part 4 of 4) Christian Politics*. Project Gutenberg, 2013. <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/43967>.
- . *A Holy Commonwealth*. Edited by William Lamont. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- . *Chapters from A Christian Directory: Or, A Sum of Practical Theology and Cases of Conscience*. Edited by Jeannette Tawney. London: G. Bell, 1925.
- . *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter: With a Preface, Giving Some Account of the Author, and of This Edition of His Practical Works: An Essay on His Genius, Works and Times: And a Portrait*. London: George Virtue, 1845.

- Bavinck, Herman. *The Christian Family*. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian's Library Press, 2012.
- Bayer, Oswald. "Nature and Institution: Luther's Doctrine of the Three Orders." *Lutheran Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (1998): 125–159.
- . *Schöpfung als Anrede: zu einer Hermeneutik der Schöpfung*. Tübingen: Mohr, 1990.
- Beach, Waldo, and H. Richard Niebuhr. *Christian Ethics; Sources of the Living Tradition*. New York: Ronald Press Co., 1973.
- Bell, Cedric D. *Land: The Law of Real Property*. London: Old Bailey, 2005.
- Ben-Sasson, Haim Hillel, Samuel Ettinger, and Ben Zion Dinur. "Jewish History—Its Uniqueness and Continuity." *Jewish Society through the Ages*. New York: Schocken Books, 1972.
- Berman, Harold J. "Religious Foundations of Law in the West: An Historical Perspective." *Journal of Law and Religion* 1, no. 1 (1983): 3–43.
- Berry, Ricker. "Covenant, in the Old Testament." Pages 727–729 in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.
- Beutel, Albrecht. "Schöpfung Als Anrede: Zu Einer Hermeneutik Der Schöpfung." *Theologische Rundschau* 57, no. 1 (1992): 109–110.
- Biddle, Perry H. *A Marriage Manual*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994.
- Biggar, Nigel. "On Defining Political Authority as an Act of Judgment: A Discussion of Oliver O'Donovan's The Ways of Judgment (Part I)." *Political Theology* 9, no. 3 (2008): 273–293.
- Black, Henry Campbell. "Constitution." Page 253 in *A Dictionary of Law: Containing Definitions of the Terms and Phrases of American and English Jurisprudence, Ancient and Modern*. New York: Lawbook Exchange, 1991.
- . "Covenant." Pages 293–294 in *A Dictionary of Law: Containing Definitions of the Terms and Phrases of American and English Jurisprudence, Ancient and Modern*. New York: Lawbook Exchange, 1991.
- Blidstein, Gerald J. "In the Shadow of the Mountain: Consent and Coercion at Sinai." *Jewish Political Studies Review* 4, no. 1 (1992): 41–53.
- Blount, Douglas K., and Joseph D. Wooddell. *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000: Critical Issues in America's Largest Protestant Denomination*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007.

- Bodin, Jean, and Kenneth Douglas McRae. *The Six Bookes of a Commonweale: A Facsimile Reprint of the English Translation of 1606. Corrected and Supplemented in the Light of a New Comparison with the French and Latin Texts*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962.  
<https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674733169>.
- Boettner, Loraine. *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1932.
- Bolingbroke, Henry St. John. *The Works of Lord Bolingbroke*. Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1841.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Ethics*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009.
- . *Life Together*. New York: Harper & Row, 1954.
- Bossuet, Jacques Bénigne, and Patrick Riley. *Politics Drawn from the Very Words of Holy Scripture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Braaten, Carl E. “God in Public Life: Rehabilitating the ‘Orders of Creation.’” *First Things*, 1990. <https://www.firstthings.com/article/1990/12/god-in-public-life-rehabilitating-the-orders-of-creation>.
- . *Principles of Lutheran Theology*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.
- Bradford, M. E. “The Heresy of Equality: Bradford Replies to Jaffa,” *Modern Age* Winter (1976): 62–77.
- Bradford, William, and William T Davis. *Bradford’s History of Plymouth Plantation, 1606–1646*. New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc, 1964.
- Bretherton, Luke. “Introduction: Oliver O’Donovan’s Political Theology and the Liberal Imperative.” *Political Theology* 9, no. 3 (2008): 265–271.
- Brinig, Margaret F. *Family, Law, and Community: Supporting the Covenant*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- . *From Contract to Covenant: Beyond the Law and Economics of the Family*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Brinig, Margaret F., and Steve Nock. “Covenant and Contract.” *Regent University Law Review* 12, no. Spring (1990): 9–26.
- Brown, Francis, S. R Driver, Charles A Briggs, Edward Robinson, James Strong, and Wilhelm Gesenius. *The Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic Coded with the Numbering*

- System from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2015.
- Brunner, Emil. *Man in Revolt, a Christian Anthropology*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947.
- . *The Mediator, a Study of the Central Doctrine of the Christian Faith*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947.
- Buber, Martin. *Kingship of God*. Translated by Richard Scheimann. New York: Harper & Row, 1967.
- Bullinger, Heinrich. "A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God." *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition*. Translated by Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991.
- Bunker, Nick. *Making Haste from Babylon: The "Mayflower" Pilgrims and Their World*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010.
- Burrage, Champlin. *The Church Covenant Idea: Its Origin and Its Development*. Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1904.
- Butler, Trent C. "Covenant–Holman Bible Dictionary–Bible Dictionary." *StudyLight.org*, n.d. <http://www.studylight.org/dictionaries/hbd/c/covenant.html>.
- Cahill, Lisa Sowle. *Between the Sexes: Foundations for a Christian Ethics of Sexuality*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press; Paulist Press, 1985.
- Calhoun, John C, and Ross M. Lence. "Speech on the Oregon Bill." *Union and Liberty: The Political Philosophy of John C. Calhoun*. Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1992.
- Calvin, Jean. *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses, Called Genesis*. Translated by John King. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948.
- . *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*. Translated by John Owen. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950.
- . *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Vol. 20 in *Library of Christian Classics*. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960.
- . *John Calvin's Sermons on the Ten Commandments*. Translated by Benjamin Wirt Farley. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980.

- . *On Civil Government*. Pages 47–86 in *Luther and Calvin on Secular Authority*. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Edited by Harro Höpfl. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- . “The Thirty Ninth Sermon, Which Is the Seventh on the Fifth Chapter [Ephesians],” n.d. [https://the-highway.com/Calvin\\_39Eph5.html](https://the-highway.com/Calvin_39Eph5.html).
- Camp, Claudia V. *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*. Bible and Literature Series 11. Decatur, GA: Almond Press, 1985.
- Carty, A. “The Moral Theologian, Oliver O’Donovan and International Law.” *Political Theology* 9, no. 3 (2008): 339–362.
- Cavanaugh, William T, Jeffrey W Bailey, and Craig Hovey. *An Eerdmans Reader in Contemporary Political Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.
- Chaplin, Jonathan. “Political Eschatology and Responsible Government: Oliver O’Donovan’s ‘Christian Liberalism.’” Pages 265–308 in *A Royal Priesthood?: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically: A Dialogue with Oliver O’Donovan*. Edited by Craig G. Bartholomew. Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press; Zondervan, 2002.
- . “Representing a People: Oliver O’Donovan on Democracy and Tradition.” *Political Theology* 9, no. 3 (2008): 295–307.
- Childs, Brevard S. *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.
- Chrysostom, John. “Homily on 1 Corinthians.” Pages 89–103 in *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100–1625*. Edited by Oliver O’Donovan and Joan Lockwood O’Donovan. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Clement, and John Ferguson. *Stromateis*. Vol. 85 of *Fathers of the Church*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1991.
- Cohen, A. *Proverbs; Hebrew Text and English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary*. Soncino Books of the Bible. Hindhead, Surrey: The Soncino Press, 1945.
- Cole, Franklin P. *They Preached Liberty: An Anthology of Timely Quotations from New England Ministers of the American Revolution on the Subject of Liberty, Its Source, Nature, Obligations, Types, and Blessings*. Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1977.

- Collin, P. H. "Constitution." *Dictionary of Law*. London: Bloomsbury, 2004.  
<http://www.dawsonera.com/depp/reader/protected/external/AbstractView/S9781408102114>.
- "Constitution, Definition of Constitution in English by Oxford Dictionaries." *Oxford Dictionaries, English*, n.d.  
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/constitution>.
- Courtois, Stephane. *Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015.
- Danielou, Jean. *Bible And the Liturgy*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2005.
- Davies, W. D. *The Gospel and the Land; Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.
- De Jong, Peter Y. *The Covenant Idea in New England Theology, 1620–1847*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1945.
- Deweese, Charles W. *Baptist Church Covenants*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990.
- DeYoung, Kevin, and Greg Gilbert. *What Is the Mission of the Church?: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2011.
- Douglass, R. Bruce, and Joshua Mitchell. *A Nation under God: Essays on the Future of Religion in American Public Life*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000.
- Duesing, Jason. "Marriage and the Family in the Baptist Tradition." *ERLC*, January 29, 2016. <http://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/marriage-and-the-family-in-the-baptist-tradition>.
- Eidsmoe, John. *Christianity and the Constitution*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987.
- Elazar, Daniel Judah. *Cities of the Prairie; the Metropolitan Frontier and American Politics*. New York: Basic Books, 1970.
- . *Covenant & Constitutionalism: The Great Frontier and the Matrix of Federal Democracy*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998.
- . *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel: Biblical Foundations & Jewish Expressions*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995.
- . *Covenant and Civil Society: The Constitutional Matrix of Modern Democracy*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1998.

- . *Covenant and Commonwealth: From Christian Separation through the Protestant Reformation*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996.
- . *Covenant and Freedom in the Jewish Political Tradition*. Philadelphia: Gratz College, 1981.
- . “Covenant as the Basis of the Jewish Political Tradition.” *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, no. 20 (1978): 5–37.
- . *Kinship and Consent: The Jewish Political Tradition and Its Contemporary Uses*. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1983.
- . *The American Constitutional Tradition*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988.
- Elazar, Daniel Judah, and Stuart Cohen. *The Jewish Polity: Jewish Political Organization from Biblical Times to the Present*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- Elazar, Daniel Judah, and John Kincaid. *Covenant, Polity, and Constitutionalism*. Lanham: University Press of America; Center for the Study of Federalism, 1983.
- Erasmus, Desiderius. *Erasmus: The Education of a Christian Prince*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Estep, William Roscoe. *The Anabaptist Story*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975.
- Eusebius. *Church History; Life of Constantine the Great; and Oration in Praise of Constantine*. Vol. 1 of *Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Edited by Arthur Cushman MacGiffert. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976.
- Everett, William Johnson. *God’s Federal Republic: Reconstructing Our Governing Symbol*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988.
- Fénelon, François, T. Smollett, Leslie A. Chilton, and O. M. Brack. *The Adventures of Telemachus, the Son of Ulysses*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997.
- Ferris, Robert G. *Signers of the Constitution: Historic Places Commemorating the Signing of the Constitution*. Washington, DC: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1976.
- Findley, William. “William Findley’s Speech on December 1, 1787.” *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*. Edited by Merrill Jensen. Stevens Point, WI: Worzalla Publishing Company, 1997.
- Flew, R. Newton. *Jesus and His Church; A Study of the Idea of the Ecclesia in the New Testament*. New York: The Abingdon Press, 1938.

- Foster, Herbert D. *International Calvinism through Locke and the Revolution of 1688*. New York, NY: Macmillan, 1927.
- Frazer, James George, and Robert Fraser. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Friedrich, Carl J. *Trends of Federalism in Theory and Practice*. New York: Praeger, 1968.
- Frohnen, Bruce. *The American Republic: Primary Sources*. Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2008. <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10614205>.
- Frost, John. *Stories of the American Revolution: Comprising a Complete Anecdotic History of That Great National Event*. Philadelphia, PA: E. Ferrett & Company, 1845.
- Fuchs, Eric. *Sexual Desire and Love: Origins and History of the Christian Ethic of Sexuality and Marriage*. Cambridge; New York: J. Clarke; Seabury Press, 1983.
- Fuller, Daniel P. *The Unity of the Bible: Unfolding God's Plan for Humanity*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.
- Gaede, Erwin A. *Politics and Ethics: Machiavelli to Niebuhr*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983.
- Garrett, James Leo. *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Gataker, Thomas. *Marriage Duties Briefely Couched Together: Out of Colossians, 3. 18, 19*. London: Printed by William Iones, for William Bladen, 1620.
- . *A Good Wife Gods Gift, And, A Wife Indeed: Two Marriage Sermons*. London: Printed by Iohn Haviland, 1624.
- Geisler, Norman L. *Ethics: Alternatives & Issues*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1971.
- Gelasius I. "Epistula Ad Anastasium Imperatorem." *Publizistische Sammlungen*. Paris: Garnier, 1963.
- Gentry, Peter John. "Speaking Truth in Love (Eph 4:15): Life in the New Covenant Community." *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, no. 10/2 (2006): 70–72.
- Gentry, Peter John, and Stephen J. Wellum. *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012.

- Gierke, Otto von. *The Development of Political Theory*. New York: H. Fertig, 1966.
- Glueck, Nelson. *Hesed in the Bible*. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967.
- Goenaga, Leonard O. "John Locke." Edited by David Head. Pages 372–375 in *Encyclopedia of the Atlantic World, 1400–1900: Europe, Africa, and the Americas in an Age of Exploration, Trade, and Empires*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2018.
- . "The Mayflower Compact." Edited by David Head. Pages 399–403 in *Encyclopedia of the Atlantic World, 1400–1900: Europe, Africa, and the Americas in an Age of Exploration, Trade, and Empires*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2018.
- Gordis, Robert. *Democratic Origins in Ancient Israel: The Biblical Edah*. New York: New York Public Library, 1950.
- Goudge, Henry Leighton. *The Church of England and Reunion*. London: Macmillan Co., 1938.
- Gouge, William. *Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treatises*. London: Printed by Iohn Haviland, 1622.
- Gregory of Nyssa. "On Virginity." Pages 343–371 in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Translated by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Vol. 5. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956.
- Gregory VII. "Dictatus Papae." Pages 240–249 in *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100–1625*. Edited by Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- . "Letter 8.21." Pages 240–249 in *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100–1625*. Edited by Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *Theology for the Community of God*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Politics According to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000.
- Hahn, Scott. *A Father Who Keeps His Promises: God's Covenant Love in Scripture*. Ann Arbor, MI: Charis, 1998.
- Hamilton, Alexander, John Jay, and James Madison. *The Federalist*. Edited by George W. Carey and James McClellan. Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2001.

- Hammett, John S. *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2005.
- Heimbach, Daniel R. *True Sexual Morality Recovering Biblical Standards for a Culture in Crisis*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004.
- Henry, Carl F. H. *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.
- . *Christian Personal Ethics*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1979.
- . *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Hillers, Delbert R. *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Edited by Richard Tuck. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Hogan, Richard M, and John M LeVoir. *Covenant of Love: Pope John Paul II on Sexuality, Marriage, and Family in the Modern World, with a Commentary on Familiaris Consortio*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992.
- Holifield, E. Brooks. *The Covenant Sealed: The Development of Puritan Sacramental Theology in Old and New England, 1570–1720*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.
- Hollinger, Dennis P. *Individualism and Social Ethics: An Evangelical Syncretism*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983.
- Hooker, Richard. *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Edited by R. W. Church. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905.
- Horton, Michael Scott. *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- . *God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006.
- Hubmaier, Balthasar. “Concerning Heretics and Those Who Burn Them.” Pages 84–88 in *Balthasar Hübmaier, the Leader of the Anabaptists*. Edited by Henry C. Vedder. New York; London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1905.
- . “On The Sword.” Pages 181–209 in *The Radical Reformation*. Edited by Michael G Baylor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

- . “The Christian Baptism of Believers.” Pages 98–99 in *The Writings of Balthasar Hubmaier*. Translated by George Diuguid Davidson. Liberty, MO: William Jewell College, 1939.
- Hudson, Winthrop S. “Locke: Heir of Puritan Political Theorists.” *Calvinism and the Political Order*,. Edited by George L. Hunt and John T. McNeill. Washington, D.C.: Westminster Press, 1965.
- Hugenberger, Gordon Paul. *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998.
- . “Malachi.” *The ESV Study Bible*. Edited by Lane T. Dennis et al. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.
- Hughes, Kent, and Barbara Hughes. *Disciplines of a Godly Family*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004.
- Hunter, David G. *Marriage in the Early Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.
- Irenaeus. “Against Heresies.” Pages 15–22 in *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100–1625*. Edited by Oliver O’Donovan and Joan Lockwood O’Donovan. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Jaffa, Henry. “Equality as a Conservative Principle.” *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review*, no. VIII (1975): 471–505.
- Jefferson, Thomas. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*. Edited by Julian P. Boyd. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950.
- Jefferson, Thomas. “Thomas Jefferson to John Trumbull.” Library of Congress, n.d. <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/jefferson/18.html>.
- . *Writings of Thomas Jefferson*. Edited by Merrill Peterson. New York, NY: Literary Classics of the United States, 1984.
- Jewish Theological Seminary of America. *Alexander Marx; Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*. New York, 1950.
- Johnson, Samuel. *A Dictionary of the English Language: An Anthology*. London; New York: Penguin, 2006.
- Johnston, George. *The Doctrine of the Church in the New Testament*. Cambridge: The University Press, 1943.
- Kaiser, Walter C. *Toward an Old Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1978.

- King Jr., Neil. “Evangelical Leader Preaches Pullback From Politics, Culture Wars.” *Wall Street Journal*, October 22, 2013, sec. US. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324755104579072722223166570>.
- Kittel, Gerhard, G. W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich. “Meaning of Koinonia.” Page 789 in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964.
- Kline, Meredith G. *By Oath Consigned; a Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968.
- Kuyper, Abraham. *Common Grace: God’s Gifts for a Fallen World*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press: Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, 2016.
- . *Lectures on Calvinism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931.
- . *Our Program: A Christian Political Manifesto*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015.
- Lawler, Ronald David, Donald W Wuerl, Thomas Cornford Lawler, and Kris D Stubna. *The Teaching of Christ: A Catholic Catechism for Adults*. Huntingdon, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Pub. Division, 2005.
- Leeman, Jonathan. *Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christ’s Rule*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016.
- Lefever, Ernest W. *Ethics and World Politics; Four Perspectives*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972.
- Lincoln, Abraham. *Speeches and Letters of Abraham Lincoln, 1832–1865*. Edited by Merwin Roe. Gutenberg.org, 2005. <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/14721>.
- Locke, John. “A Letter Concerning Toleration.” Pages 1–58 in *The Works of John Locke*. Vol. 6. 10 vols. London: Printed for T. Tegg, 1823. <http://archive.org/details/worksjohnlocke08lockgoog>.
- . “A Paraphrase and Notes on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians.” Pages 387–449 in *The Works of John Locke*. Vol. 8. 10 vols. London: Printed for T. Tegg, 1823. <http://archive.org/details/worksjohnlocke11lockgoog>.
- . “A Paraphrase and Notes on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans.” Pages 245–386 in *The Works of John Locke*. Vol. 8. 10 vols. London: Printed for T. Tegg, 1823. <http://archive.org/details/worksjohnlocke11lockgoog>.
- . *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Galatians, I & II Corinthians, Romans, Ephesians. To Which Is Prefix’d, an Essay for the*

- Understanding of St. Paul's Epistles, by Consulting St. Paul Himself.* London: Printed by J.H. for Awnsham and John Churchill, at the Black Swan in Pater-noster-Row, 1707. <http://archive.org/details/aparaphrasenotes00lockuoft>.
- . “A Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity.” Pages 191–424 in *The Works of John Locke*. Vol. 7. 10 vols. London: Printed for T. Tegg, 1823. <http://archive.org/details/worksjohnlocke09lockgoog>.
- . “A Third Letter for Toleration.” Pages 139–546 in *The Works of John Locke*. Vol. 6. 10 vols. London: Printed for T. Tegg, 1823. <http://archive.org/details/worksjohnlocke08lockgoog>.
- . “A Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity, from Mr. Edwards’s Reflections.” Pages 159–190 in *The Works of John Locke*. Vol. 7. 10 vols. London: Printed for T. Tegg, 1823. <http://archive.org/details/worksjohnlocke09lockgoog>.
- . “Postscript to a Letter to the Right Rev. Edward Lord Bishop of Worcester.” Pages 1–97 in *The Works of John Locke*. Vol. 4. 10 vols. London: Printed for T. Tegg, 1823. <http://archive.org/details/worksjohnlockev02lockgoog>.
- . “The Reasonableness of Christianity, As Delivered in the Scriptures.” Pages 1–158 in *The Works of John Locke*. Vol. 7. 10 vols. London: Printed for T. Tegg, 1823. <http://archive.org/details/worksjohnlocke09lockgoog>.
- . “Two Treatises of Government.” Pages 207–485 in *The Works of John Locke*. Vol. 5. 10 vols. London: Printed for T. Tegg, 1823. <http://archive.org/details/worksjohnlockev01unkngoog>.
- Loewenich, Walther von. *Lutheartor's Theology of the Cross*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1976.
- Lubac, Henri de. *Medieval Exegesis 1*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.
- . *Medieval Exegesis 2*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000.
- Luck, William F. *Divorce and Remarriage: Recovering the Biblical View*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987.
- Lumpkin, William Latane. “Schleithem Confession.” Page 25 in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*. Chicago: Judson Press, 1959.
- Luther, Martin. *A Treatise on Good Works*. Champaign: Project Gutenberg, 1520. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/418/418-h/418-h.htm>.

- . “Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper, Part III.” Pages 26-32 in *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*. Edited by Timothy F. Lull and William R. Russell. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012.
- . *Luther’s Works*. Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1955.
- . *D. Martin Luthers Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe; (Weimarer Ausgabe) [Abt. 1] Bd. 30, Abt. 3, Revisionsnachtr. [Abt. 1] Bd. 30, Abt. 3, Revisionsnachtr.* Weimar: Böhlau, 1970.
- . *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Tischreden [1531-46]. Begleith. Begleitheft zu den Tischreden*. Weimar: Böhlau, 2000.
- . “The Sermon on the Mount.” Pages 581–608 in *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100–1625*. Edited by Oliver O’Donovan and Joan Lockwood O’Donovan. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- . *Works of Martin Luther: With Introductions and Notes*. Edited by Henry Eyster Jacobs and Adolph Spaeth. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1943.
- Lutz, Donald S. *A Preface to American Political Theory*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992.
- . *Documents of Political Foundation Written by Colonial Americans: From Covenant to Constitution*. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1986.
- . *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution: A Documentary History*. Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2007.
- . *The Origins of American Constitutionalism*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988.
- . “The Relative Importance of European Writers on Late Eighteenth Century American Political Thought.” *American Political Science Review* (1984): 189–197.
- Lutz, Donald S., and Charles S. Hyneman. *American Political Writing during the Founding Era, 1760–1805*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1983.
- . *American Political Writing during the Founding Era, 1760–1805*. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1983.
- Lutz, Donald S., Jack D. Warren, and John Carter Brown Library. *A Covenanted People: The Religious Tradition and the Origins of American Constitutionalism*. Providence: John Carter Brown Library, 1987.

- Machiavelli, Niccolò. "Piero Soderini." Page 114 in *The Living Thoughts of Machiavelli*. Edited by Carlo Sforza, Doris E. Troutman, and Arthur Livingston. New York; Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1940.
- . *The Prince*. Translated by Quentin Skinner. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994.
- Maimonides, Moses, and Eliyahu Touger. *Mishneh Torah*. New York, NY: Moznaim, 1987.
- Maier, Pauline. *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1998.
- Markus, R.A. "Political Order as Response to the Church's Mission." *Political Theology* 9, no. 3 (2008): 319–326.
- Marsilius of Padua. *The Defensor Pacis*. Edited by Alan Gewirth. New York: Harper & Row, 1967.
- Martos, Joseph. "Marriage." Pages 30–68 in *Perspectives on Marriage: A Reader*. Edited by Kieran Scott and Michael Warren. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Marty, Martin E. *The One and the Many: America's Struggle for the Common Good*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- McComiskey, T. E. "Names of God." Pages 504–508 in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Edited by Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Co., 2001.
- McConville, J. Gordon. "Law and Monarchy in the Old Testament." Pages 69–88 in *A Royal Priesthood?: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically: A Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan*. Edited by Craig G. Bartholomew. Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press; Zondervan, 2002.
- McCoy, Charles S., J. Wayne Baker, and Heinrich Bullinger. *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991.
- McGiffert, Michael. "William Tyndale's Conception of Covenant." *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 32, no. 2 (1981): 167–184.
- McIlwain, Charles Howard. *Constitutionalism, Ancient and Modern*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1940.
- McKnight, Scot. "The Hermeneutics of Confessing Jesus as Lord." *Ex Auditu* 14 (1998): 1–17.

- Meilaender, Gilbert. "Ethics and Exegesis: A Great Gulf?" Pages 259–264 in *A Royal Priesthood?: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically: A Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan*. Edited by Craig G. Bartholomew. Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press; Zondervan, 2002.
- Mendenhall, G. E. "Covenant." Pages 767–778 in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Edited by Katharine Sakenfeld. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006.
- . *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Pittsburgh: Biblical Colloquium, 1955.
- Merton, Robert K. "Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England." *Osiris* 4 (1938): 360–632.
- Miller, Perry. *Errand into the Wilderness*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956.
- . *The American Puritans, Their Prose and Poetry*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.
- . *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953.
- Miller, Perry, and Thomas Herbert Johnson, eds. *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2014.
- Milton, John. *Complete Prose Works*. Edited by Don M. Wolfe. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953.
- . *Political Writings*. Edited by Martin Dzelzainis and Claire Gruzelier. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Mitchell, Joshua. *Not by Reason*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.
- Moore, Russell. *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004.
- Nave, Orville J. "Covenant—Nave's Topical Bible—Bible Concordance." *StudyLight.org*, n.d. <http://www.studylight.org/concordances/ntb/c/covenant.html>.
- Neuhaus, Richard John. *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.
- Neusner, Jacob. *Tractate Sanhedrin*. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984.

- Niebuhr, Reinhold. *Man's Nature and His Communities: Essays on the Dynamics and Enigmas of Man's Personal and Social Existence*. New York: Scribner, 1965.
- . *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*. New York: Scribner, 1960.
- . *The Structure of Nations and Empires; a Study of the Recurring Patterns and Problems of the Political Order in Relation to the Unique Problems of the Nuclear Age*. New York: Scribner, 1959.
- Niebuhr, Richard. "The Idea of Covenant and American Democracy." *Church History* 23, no. 2 (1954): 126–135.
- Nielsen, Eduard. *The Ten Commandments in New Perspective; a Traditio-Historical Approach*. Naperville: A.R. Allenson, 1968.
- Novak, David. *Covenantal Rights: A Study in Jewish Political Theory*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- . "Oliver O'Donovan's Critique of Autonomy." *Political Theology* 9, no. 3 (2008): 327–338.
- . *The Jewish Social Contract: An Essay in Political Theology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Novak, Michael. *Free Persons and the Common Good*. Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1989.
- O'Brien, Peter Thomas. *The Letter to the Ephesians*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- O'Donovan, Oliver. *Common Objects of Love: Moral Reflection and the Shaping of Community*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
- . "Deliberation, History and Reading: A Response to Schweiker and Wolterstorff." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54 (2001): 127–144.
- . "Government as Judgment." Pages 712–730 in *An Eerdmans Reader in Contemporary Political Theology*. Edited by William T Cavanaugh, Jeffrey W Bailey, and Craig Hovey. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.
- . "Judgment, Tradition and Reason: A Response." *Political Theology*, no. 92 (1999): 36–44.
- . *Principles in the Public Realm: The Dilemma of Christian Moral Witness*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.

- . “Response to Gordon McConville.” Pages 89–90 in *A Royal Priesthood?: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically: A Dialogue with Oliver O’Donovan*. Edited by Craig G. Bartholomew. Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press; Zondervan, 2002.
- . *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.
- . *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology*. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- . *The Ways of Judgment*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- O’Donovan, Oliver, and Joan Lockwood O’Donovan. *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100–1625*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Oehler, Gust, and George Edward Day. *Theology of the Old Testament*. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883.
- Orlinsky, Harry M., and Norman H. Snaith. *Studies on the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977.
- Padilla, Rene C. *Hacia Una Teologia Evangelica Latinoamericana*. San Jose, CA: Editorial Caribe, 1984.
- . *Mission Between the Times*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985.
- . “Revolution and Revelation.” *Is Revolution Change?* Edited by Brian Griffiths. London: IVP, 1972.
- Paine, Thomas. *The Complete Works of Thomas Paine*. New York: Peter Eckler Pub. Co., 1922.
- Palmer, P. F. “Christian Marriage: Contract or Covenant?” *Theological Studies* 33, no. 4 (1972): 617–665.
- Pangle, Thomas L. *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Ethics*. Philadelphia; London: Westminster Press; Search Press, 1981.
- Paul VI, Pope. *Gaudium, et Spes*, “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Vatican: Vatican, 1965. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_cons\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html).

- Penn, William. "Charter of Liberties and Frame of Government of the Province of Pennsylvania in America (1682)." Pages 272–286 in *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution: A Documentary History*. Edited by Donald S. Lutz. Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2007.
- Perkins, William. *Christian Oeconomie: Or, a Short Survey of the Right Manner of Erecting and Ordering a Family, according to the Scriptures*. London: Printed by Cantrell Legge, Printer to the Universitie of Cambridge, 1618.
- Perry, Ralph Barton. *Puritanism and Democracy*. New York: Vanguard Press, 1944.
- Philpott, Daniel. "Sovereignty." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Edward N. Zalta. Summer 2016. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/sovereignty/>.
- Pinker, Susan. *The Secret to Living Longer May Be Your Social Life*, n.d. [https://www.ted.com/talks/susan\\_pinker\\_the\\_secret\\_to\\_living\\_longer\\_may\\_be\\_your\\_social\\_life](https://www.ted.com/talks/susan_pinker_the_secret_to_living_longer_may_be_your_social_life).
- Pollard, Alfred W. *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640*. London: The Bibliographical Society, 1926.
- Pricke, Robert, and Robert Allen. *The Doctrine of Superioritie, and of Subiection*. London: Printed by T. Creede for Ephraim Dawson, and Thomas Downe, 1609.
- Quash, Ben. "Life Beyond Judgment: Communication. Response to Section III of The Ways of Judgment by Oliver O'Donovan." *Political Theology* 9, no. 3 (2008): 309–318.
- Ratzinger, Joseph. *Many Religions—One Covenant: Israel, the Church, and the World*. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1999.
- Ratzinger, Joseph, et al. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Liguori Publications, 1994.
- Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971.
- Regan, Richard J. *The Moral Dimensions of Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Reynolds, Philip Lyndon. *Marriage in the Western Church: The Christianization of Marriage during the Patristic and Early Medieval Periods*. Boston: Brill, 2001.

- Richards, Peter Judson. “‘The Law Written in Their Hearts’?: Rutherford and Locke on Nature, Government and Resistance.” *Journal of Law and Religion* 18, no. 1 (2002): 151–189.
- Rist, John. “Judgment, Reaction and the Common Good.” *Political Theology* 9, no. 3 (2008): 363–372.
- Roop, Eugene. “Two Become One Become Two.” *Brethren Life and Thought*, no. 21 (1976): 136.
- Ross, Allen P. *Introducing Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.
- Rummel, R.J. “Freedom, Democide, War: Home Page.” *Freedom, Democracy, Peace; Power, Democide, and War*, February 27, 2018. <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Statistics of Democide: Genocide and Mass Murder since 1900*. Piscataway, NJ: LIT; Distributed in North America by Transaction Publishers, Rutgers University, 1998. <http://books.google.com/books?id=TRbdAAAAIAAJ>.
- Rutherford, Samuel. *Lex, Rex: Or, The Law and the Prince: A Dispute for the Just Prerogative of King and People; Containing the Reasons and Causes of the Most Necessary Defensive Wars of the Kingdom of Scotland*. Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1982.
- Sailhamer, John H. *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.
- Sampley, J. Paul. “‘And The Two Shall Become One Flesh’”: *A Study of Traditions in Ephesians 5: 21–33*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511554773>.
- Sandoz, Ellis. *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730–1805*. 2 vols. Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1991.
- SBC. “The Baptist Faith and Message.” *The Southern Baptist Convention*, 2000. <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>.
- Schaeffer, Francis A. *A Christian Manifesto*. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1981.
- Schaff, Philip, ed. “Savoy Declaration.” Pages 829–833 in *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes*. 3 vols. New York: Harper, 1877.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Church and State in the United States: Or, The American Idea of Religious Liberty and Its Practical Effects, with Official Documents*. New York & London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1888.

- Schmitt, Carl, George Schwab, and Tracy B Strong. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Schwarz, Hans. "Paul Althaus (1888–1966)." *Lutheran Quarterly* XXV (2011).
- Schweiker, William. "Freedom and Authority in Political Theology: A Response to Oliver O'Donovan's The Desire of the Nations." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54 (2001): 110–126.
- Scruton, Roger. "Constitution." Pages 135–136 in *The Palgrave Macmillan Dictionary of Political Thought*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Sell, Alan. *John Locke and the Eighteenth-Century Divines*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997.
- Sharman, Lyon. *Cape Cod Journal of the Pilgrim Fathers: Reprinted from Mourt's Relation*. New York, NY: The Roycrofters, 1920.
- Singer, Isidore. "Covenant–The 1901 Jewish Encyclopedia–Bible Encyclopedia." *StudyLight.org*, n.d. <http://www.studylight.org/encyclopedias/tje/c/covenant.html>.
- Smith, Page. *Religious Origins of the American Revolution*. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press for American Academy of Religion, 1976.
- Smith, William. "Covenant–Smith's Bible Dictionary–Bible Dictionary." *StudyLight.org*, n.d. <http://www.studylight.org/dictionaries/sbd/c/covenant.html>.
- Smyth, John, and William Thomas Whitley. "Principles and Inferences Concerning the Visible Church." Pages 249–268 in *The Works of John Smyth: Fellow of Christ's College, 1594–8*. Vol. 1. Cambridge: University Press, 1915.
- Snaith, Norman H, and Daniel Judah Elazar. "The Covenant-Love of God." Pages 94–130 in *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*. New York: Schocken Books, 1964.
- Snyder, C. Arnold. *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction*. Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1995.
- Spellman, W. M. *John Locke and the Problem of Depravity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2014.
- Spinoza, Baruch. *Tractatus Theologica-Politicus*. Translated by Samuel Shirley. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991.
- Stamm, Johann Jakob, and M. E. Andrew. *The Ten Commandments in Recent Research*. Naperville, IL: A.R. Allenson, 1967.

- Strauss, Leo. *History of Political Philosophy*. Edited by Joseph Cropsey. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity: Essays and Lectures in Modern Jewish Thought*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "On a New Interpretation of Plato's Political Philosophy." *Social Research* 13, no. 3 (1946): 326–67.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*. New York, NY: Schocken, 1965.
- Strong, James. *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: With Main Concordance, Appendix to the Main Concordance, Topical Index to the Bible, Dictionary of the Hebrew Bible, Dictionary of the Greek Testament*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990.
- Stuart, Douglas K. *Hosea-Jonah*. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987.
- Suárez, Francisco. "De Lege et Deo Legislatore." Pages 723–742 in *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100–1625*. Edited by Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Selections from Three Works of Francisco Suárez, S.J.: De Legibus, Ac Deo Legislatore, 1612, Defensio Fidei Catholicae, et Apostolicae Adversus Anglicanae Sectae Errores, 1613, De Triplici Virtute Theologica, Fide, Spe, et Charitate, 1621*. Edited by James Brown Scott. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944.
- Tarwater, John K. "The Covenantal Nature of Marriage in the Order of Creation in Genesis 1 and 2." PhD Dissertation, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002.
- Thatcher, Adrian. *Marriage After Modernity: Christian Marriage in Postmodern Times*. New York: NYU Press, 1999.
- Thatcher, James. "Military Journal." Pages 79–82 in *A Magazine of Record and Review*. Vol. XXVIII. New York, NY: Current Literature Publishing, 1900.
- Thayer, Joseph, and James Strong. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Coded with Strong's Concordance Numbers*. Reissue, Subsequent edition. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, <http://biblehub.com/greek/>.
- The Baptist Confession of Faith: First Put Forth in 1643; Afterwards Enlarged, Corrected and Published by an Assembly of Delegates (from the Churches in Great Britain) Met in London July 3, 1689; Adopted by the Association at*

- Philadelphia September 22, 1742; and Now Received by Churches of the Same Denomination, in Most of the American States: To Which Is Added, a Short Treatise of Church Discipline.* Early American imprints. First series; no. 26614. Portland, OR: Printed by Thomas Baker Wait, 1794.
- Thielicke, Helmut. *Theological Ethics; Volume 1 & 2: Politics.* Edited by William Henry Lazareth. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966.
- Thorpe, Francis Newton, ed. *The Federal and State Constitutions Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws of the States, Territories, and Colonies Now or Heretofore Forming the United States of America. Compiled and Edited Under the Acts of Congress of June 30, 1906.* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1909.
- Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy in America. Vol.* Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2012.
- Triandis, Harry Charalambos. *Individualism & Collectivism.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995.
- Trinterud, Leonard J. "The Origins of Puritanism." *Church History* 20, no. 1 (1951): 37–57.
- Troeltsch, Ernst. *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches.* Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.
- Underhill, Edward Bean. *Confessions of Faith and Other Public Documents Illustrative of the History of the Baptist Churches of England in the 17th Century.* London: Printed for the Society by J. Haddon, 1854.
- Van Groningen, Gerard. "Covenant–Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology–Bible Dictionary." *StudyLight.org*, n.d. <http://www.studylight.org/dictionaries/bed/c/covenant.html>.
- Van Til, Cornelius. *Christian Theistic Ethics.* Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1980.
- Vines, W. E. "Covenant–Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words–Bible Dictionary." *StudyLight.org*, n.d. <http://www.studylight.org/dictionaries/ved/c/covenant.html>.
- Vitoria, Francisco de. "De Potestate Ecclesiae." Page 45 in *Vitoria: Political Writings.* Edited by Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrance. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Voegelin, Eric. *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin.* Edited by Ellis Sandoz, Gilbert Weiss, and William Petropulos. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1989.

- . *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1952.
- Walker, Williston. *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism*. Boston, MA: The Pilgrim press, 1960.
- Walzer, Michael. *The Revolution of the Saints; A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965.
- Wannenwetsch, Bernd. “Soul Citizens: How Christians Understand Their Political Role.” *Political Theology* 9, no. 3 (2008): 373–394.
- Weber, Max. *Politics as a Vocation*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1946.  
[http://archive.org/details/weber\\_max\\_1864\\_1920\\_politics\\_as\\_a\\_vocation](http://archive.org/details/weber_max_1864_1920_politics_as_a_vocation).
- . *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism and Other Writings*. New York: Penguin Books, 2012.
- Weinfeld, Moshe. “The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient near East.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90, no. 2 (1970): 184–203.
- Weir, David A. *Early New England: A Covenanted Society*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Wevers, John William. *Ezekiel*. New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982.
- Wilhelmsen, Frederick D. *Christianity and Political Philosophy*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1978.
- Wilson, James. *The Collected Works of James Wilson*. Edited by Kermit Hall and Mark David Hall. Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2007.
- Wilson, Peter H. *Europe’s Tragedy: A New History of the Thirty Years War*. London: Penguin, 2010.
- Winthrop, John. “A Model of Christian Charity.” Pages 195–199 in *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings*. Edited by Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson. Vol. 1. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1938.
- Witte, John. *Covenant Marriage in Comparative Perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005.
- . *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.

- Witte, John, and Robert M. Kingdon. *Sex, Marriage, and Family in John Calvin's Geneva*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Wolf, C. Umhau. "Terminology of Israel's Tribal Organization." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 65, no. 1 (1946): 45–49.
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas. "A Discussion of Oliver O'Donovan's The Desire of the Nations." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54 (2001): 87–109.
- Wright, Christopher J. H. *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.
- Wright, N. T. *The New Testament and the People of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.
- Yee, Gale A. *Composition and Tradition in the Book of Hosea: A Redaction Critical Investigation*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987.
- Yoder, John Howard. *The Politics of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.
- Zagorin, Perez. *A History of Political Thought in the English Revolution*. London: Routledge & Paul, 1954.
- Zimmerman, Carle C., James Kurth, and Allan C. Carlson. *Family and Civilization*. Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2008.