

AN ECCLESIAL THEOLOGY IN TOTUS CHRISTUS SPIRITUALITY

High Gospel Spirituality Of A Covenantal Orientation: *Preserving The Sacred Romance*

To the Editor:

As a Christian, I believe in God; I also believe that God is unknowable and therefore no religion or faith can claim any exclusive knowledge or relationship with him or her.

Cal Ratcliff, Lakewood, Ohio, May 13, 2008

Cal sums up nicely an emerging sentiment concerning the knowledge of a distinctly personal God by means of divine revelation and illumination. From out of the Kantian closed system universe that precipitated the modernist/post-modernist skepticism concerning the knowledge of God emerges a new openness to monism- the idea that God is everywhere in everything even if not a *personal* God or any particular God! And to be sure, this is made all the more appealing by globalization. Those who were once “them” is now “us”—people we care for and work with and actually like. This makes it all the more difficult to exclude “them” in so far as our spirituality is related to a distinct and personal God revealed in a distinct covenant history. And it makes it all the more plausible that Christian spirituality is changed to something different than it was classically understood to be relative to a personal relationship with a personal God revealed in the divine-personhood of Christ. Take for instance the growing trend in “Christian Buddhism.”

A Christian-Buddhist is someone who practices Christianity and Buddhism equally or at least makes both of these religions part of his or her personal spirituality. Such persons don’t consider themselves to be following only part of either religion, but to be a full member of both. For instance, as posted on the web resource page *Ecumenical Buddhism*, there is an essay entitled *One, Not Two: Being a Christian Buddhist*. The essay quotes Father Thomas Keating who explains “the idea that God is an object outside of oneself to which one relates through prayer” is totally unscriptural. It is heresy, and should well be forgotten. It is an idea that resonates within the cultural conditioning of a modern-postmodern subject-object dichotomy.¹ Here again, if there is no object-person, there is no relationship, even as this is more and more being celebrated in monistic focused spiritualities.

Increasingly being described as the “new science,” David Brooks describes how “over the past several years, the momentum has shifted away from hard-core materialism. The brain seems less like a cold machine. It does not operate like a computer. Instead, meaning, belief and consciousness seem to emerge mysteriously from idiosyncratic networks of neural firings.” And then directly to the present point here:

Scientists have more respect for elevated spiritual states. Andrew Newberg of the University of Pennsylvania has shown that transcendent experiences can actually be identified and measured in the brain (people experience a decrease in activity in the parietal lobe, which orients us in space). The mind seems to have the ability to transcend itself and merge with a larger presence that feels more real. This new wave of research will not seep into the public realm in the form of militant atheism. Instead it will lead to what you might call neural Buddhism.²

In other words, the debates Christians once had with Hitchens and Dawkins were the easy ones in comparison to what faces the classically minded Christian today. For as Brooks reminds us, “the real

¹ Thich Nhat Hanh, “Not One, Not Two: Being a Christian Buddhist,” at <http://ecumenicalbuddhism.blogspot.com/2007/10/not-one-not-two-being-christian.html>

² David Brooks, *The Neural Buddhists* Published: May 13, 2008 www.nytimes.com/2008/05/13/opinion/13brooks.html

challenge is going to come from people who feel the existence of the sacred, but who think that particular religions are just cultural artifacts built on top of universal human traits. It's going to come from scientists whose beliefs overlap a bit with Buddhism." That is, "in unexpected ways, science and mysticism are joining hands and reinforcing each other which is bound to lead to new movements that emphasize self-transcendence but put little stock in divine law or revelation. Orthodox believers are going to have to defend particular doctrines and particular biblical teachings. They're going to have to defend the idea of a personal God."³

All together therefore, the forces of globalization, new science and the philosophical assumptions of post modernity are forming into a perfect storm against any notion of a distinctly personal God replete with personality, particular traits, personal characteristics, values and will. What gets lost in all of this is of course the volition-God who then can be trusted as to purposefully move history, even our history, as to work things out for our ultimate good. But more than this, what's lost is even the possibility of grace since grace assumes benevolent sovereignty. We are left with the burden of karma style "works-righteousness" wherein our actions, even if accelerated by a nameless power in/with/through the universe, determine our fate unto personal flourishing or deterioration. Grace by its very nature presumes another person-God that is somehow both willing and able to override our actions in a way that will provide us with what we ourselves couldn't accomplish for ourselves. And to our present point, upon review of redemptive history is the Christian Bible, the instrument that God's uses to convey and execute this sovereign will unto grace is "covenant."

It's true, the covenantal orientation, in so far as it is a legal and declarative orientation, was perhaps more naturally suited to the individual-rationalist orientation of modernity than the post-modern communal-participationist orientation in spirituality. And yet if we are to achieve a more transmodern spirituality as predicated upon the pre-modern notion concerning the perspicuity of divine revelation, our interest in this chapter is to restore the covenantal orientation, especially in so far as it will be shown to preserve both the personhood of God and the grace of God within a sacred human-divine romance.

The basic argument is this: To loose the covenant is to loose the "gospel" in so far as it is predicated upon an objectifying divine grace. That is, however much the forensic facing covenantal orientation has been misunderstood and abused within modernist spirituality, the viewpoint of redemptive history will demonstrate how the loss of covenant is nothing short of losing grace as applied to a sacred romance with a personal and distinct lover God! It will be demonstrated, for instance, that the covenant, by its very forensic and "objective" nature represents a transaction that is entirely outside us, if for us, that is then the basis of gifted grace. This transaction is accomplished by means of a legal relationship with God as then satisfied by a legal or covenantal guarantor after the type of the first husband-guarantor Adam. The following explains how we get to a Christo-centric covenant of grace via the redemptive historical method of reading the Bible especially.

The Covenantal Orientation in Redemptive History Culminating in Christ

The genius of the Bible is its narrative. The Bible is less a systematic theology or a collection of wisdom sayings than the story of redemptive history beginning at creation and culminating with the consummation of the new heavens and new earth. And to be sure, one way to tell the story is to focus on the history of covenant between God and humanity as beginning with creation and culminating with Christ.

More specifically, the story we want to follow is one of a sacred romance as preserved by covenant grace. It will begin in Genesis 2, but will not get fully consummated until Revelations 21. This way of telling the story will pay special attention to the "legal" and "justifying" images such as the bride being

³ Ibid.

clothed in a great wedding gown “made white with the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14). What a curious if not grotesque image, one that can only be understood if read within the context of Genesis 2 and then the rest of redemptive history after it. For what does it mean that the beauty of the bride in Revelations is somehow related to the sacrifice of her husband? In what sense is the marriage success being guaranteed by her husband such as to bless her with an irrevocable and secure standing within the marriage itself. Indeed, this way of telling the story will want to focus on the divine-human romance made secure by divine law as, in the words of Revelations, through “the word of the covenant” (Rev.12: 11). And in direct ways, this is related to the transition from an eternal typifying “law-covenant” in Adam’s marriage to the real deal in relation to Christ and the Church. Indeed, as Dorothy Sayers has said, we discover in covenant how the dogma IS the drama per an amazing and objectifying grace relative to an ultimate marriage between God and humanity (c.f. Romans 7:1ff, Eph. 5, Rev. 20, etc).

Redemptive History As Sacred Erotica

Bruce Marshall’s provokingly observed, “when a young man rings the bell at the brothel, he is unconsciously looking for God.” A rather jolting image, but it is perfectly in line with a Biblical worldview as related to the covenant orientation. G. K. Chesterton hinted at this in an odd sort of way as well when he said, “When once you have got hold of a vulgar joke, you may be certain that you have got hold of a subtle and spiritual idea.”¹ To be sure, both of these examples see the promiscuity of sexuality as a mis-placed erotica as related to the ultimate erotica between God and humanity.

More on the positive dimension of this erotica, the Puritans were especially keen to the sexual metaphor in so far as it is ultimately satisfied in a romantic union with God. This is for instance the point of Richard Godbeer’s intriguing history entitled *Sexual Revolution in Early America*, (2002). Edward Taylor for instance envisaged Christ as a “spotless male in prime” in conjugal relation with the church, even as this informed his own love and passion for his wife, Elizabeth Fitch. One portion of his love poem to his wife read:

Thou are the loveli’st object over spread,
With brightest beauty object ever wore...
Lord make my love and thee its object meet,
And me in folds of such love raptures keep.

And then with seamless integrity, Taylor proceeds to bring the whole love union event with his wife to bear upon his love-union with Christ saying. He considers his hearth as “a feather-bed... with gospel pillows, sheets and sweet perfumes to welcome Christ the lover.” He then yearns for such a “divine arousal” as within the “womb” of his soul wherein in due course by union with Christ “the *spermadote*” is said to produce the “the babe of grace” wherein he prays:

Lord make my love and thee its object meet,
And me in folds of such love raptures keep.⁴

That is, the Puritans didn’t so much spiritualize the erotic, but eroticized the spiritual as then to inform the very idea of the human-divine covenant as being inherently related to a passion and personal love union itself. It’s only within this context that we can possibly understand the covenant orientation in so far as a “law” that is “good news” related to preserving and informing something so sacred as the divine-human love. That such a perspective is warranted is of course reflected throughout a covenantal history of redemption both in its positive and negative contexts of covenant faithfulness and covenant infidelity respectively.

In the positive sense, such a perspective makes sense of the passionate and at times explicitly erotic prose as *canonically* presented in the *Song of Solomon*. It portrays the love union within human

⁴ Richard Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press2002), p. 53.

marriage. And yet notwithstanding its relevance to real marriages today, it is also almost universally acknowledged to be a metaphor depicting the human-divine marriage as well (C.f Song 1: 2, 13, 2:6-7, 3:4-5, 4:5, 16, 5:4, etc.). And to be sure, this image of a human-divine marriage is consistently depicted in starting in the Genesis account of the first marriage as explicitly applied to the marriage of God to his holy bride-church in Christ (c.f. Gen 2:18, 21-24 and its NT commentary in Eph.5: 31-32). And of course, the whole of covenant history is shown to culminate in the marriage of Christ to the church in Revelations 19 where we read, "Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.
Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;
it was granted her to be clothed
with fine linen, bright and pure..."

In the negative sense, and given the deeply personal nature of the covenant orientation that is assumed by its sacred erotica, it also explains something of the vulgarity of covenant infidelity that is so repugnant to God. One thinks of Ezekiel wherein sixteen times the *zenah* word in Hebrew is used to express the "spiritual adultery" or "harlotry" of God's covenant wife Israel/Judah. In Ezekiel twenty-three for instance, God sees in the most graphic of images his lover-wife naked in the arms of a pseudo-lover using the stories of *Oholah* the elder sister in vs. 5-10 (representing the spiritual adultery of Samaria, the capital city of the Northern Kingdom of God) and *Oholibah* the younger sister (vs. 11:31 and representing Jerusalem, the capital city of the Southern Kingdom of God). Together, they portray the tragic story of Judah and Israel as God's sacred lover-bride giving herself over to a false lover. The tragedy is depicted in terms of the devastation that results for the two sister-nations wherein they are sullied and eventual killed by their false lovers (*Oholah*-Samaria in 722 BC at the and of the Assyrians, and *Oholibah*-Israel in 586 BC at the hands of Babylonians). God's broken heart within the covenantal orientation is clearly depicted in all of this. Ezekiel describes the sexuality promiscuity of human infidelity ways that makes the reader feel God's broken heart over his humiliate, if not also rebellious, wife:

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother. They played the whore in Egypt; they played the whore in their youth; there their breasts were pressed and their virgin bosoms handled... Oholah played the whore while she was mine, and she lusted after her lovers the Assyrians...Her sister Oholibah saw this, and she became more corrupt than her sister in her lust and in her whoring, which was worse than that of her sister. She lusted after the Assyrians...she lusted for them... then the Babylonians came to her, into the bed of love... (1-3, 5, 11-12, 16-17).

Well I think we get the point! It's the same story told with respect to the "zenah" pattern that introduces the history of the Judges and is repeated again and again in redemptive history such as in third chapter of Jeremiah and the second chapter of Hosea.

And so the first observation concerning a covenantal orientation is to direct us to the deeply personal nature of the human-divine relation, together with its fragility, as to then warrant the use of law in so far as its objectivity is meant to save us from the subjectivity of our misplaced affections leading to destruction. That is, the whole focus on *oath taking* by means of a "cutting" (*berith*) ceremony and "ritualized" in the form of covenant renewal events is meant to "condescend" to our sympathies in order to express just how devastating false love can be! Significantly, this word "berith" is the Hebrew word for "cutting a covenant" as taken from the ancient oath ritual wherein an animal was slain and *cut* into two parts depicting death as the curse for violating the "law-covenant." The image of this says it all!

There was something about covenant infidelity that was so repugnant as to be death itself!

The covenant orientation subsequently changes the way we think about "sin." For whatever else sin is, the covenant orientation reminds us that it is a mis-applied hunger for romance and intimacy as ultimately related to our deep-seated hunger for God. As Augustine would eventually come to discover, the heart is empty apart from union with God since "*because you made us for yourself, our hearts find no peace until they rest in you.*"⁵

Covenant infidelity as "spiritual adultery" informs us that sins begin in love. This is the point of Henry Fairlie's *The Seven Deadly Sins Revisited* much like the point Paul makes in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 calling sin "misplaced love" (2Tim 3:1-5). Here again, human oppression is more comparable to what Aldous Huxley predicted than to what Orwell predicted. For if in George Orwell's *1984* we read about a people that are oppressed by what they fear and hate due to the inflection of pain, in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* we read about a people who are oppressed and controlled by what they love concerning the things that inflict pleasure. That is, as Neil Postman once explained, "if Orwell feared that what we hate would ruin us, Huxley feared that what we love would ruin us."⁶

In light of the heinous depiction of spiritual adultery as the root cause of our miseries, we discern therefore how "*Law covenant,*" in so far as it's propositional, objectifies our love relationship with God in a way that preserves true love against the whims of our subjectivity. That is, it safeguards against the subjective side of our affections in a way that saves us from not only misplaced love, but also from our own insecurity with respect to God's love for us. Thinking in terms of Jonathan Edwards' "light and heat" description of religious affections "law-covenant" acts as the objectifying "light" such as to guide an otherwise subjectifying "heat." In the language of Augustine, apart from the light of "law," we become as "boiling cauldrons of lust" and its accompanying vulgar and sullied consequences relative to the intended erotica of divine-human love! By means of the Emmaus Road hermeneutic of redemptive history culminating in Christ, we turn now to the rediscovery of this objectifying grace in relation to covenant.

The Eternal Typifying Marriage of "Adam"

Not by serendipitous chance, the first recorded covenant "oath" is located in the marriage of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:23ff. That is, when Adam made his solemn affirmation, "this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh," it was more than some inane observation as if God needed to be informed concerning Eve's origins. It's true that according to the Genesis narrative "she was taken out of man" (vs.23) even as this was referenced by Paul to establish the principle of solidarity in Ephesians 5:28 ("He who loves his wife loves himself.") And yet there is much more to be mined by these versus than this.

These words constituted a solemn oath of covenant faithfulness based upon the union of covenant solidarity-- an abbreviated way of saying something like, "may this woman be to me as my own body so that I will assume the burden of 'one flesh' as with the sanctioned bones and flesh being wrenched out of my body upon covenant infidelity." The sense of its meaning related to a standard covenantal oath in the ancient near eastern context is demonstrated by the use of the exact same phrase "bone of my bones" in other oath taking ceremonies such as in Genesis 29:14. (See also the use of this formula in Judges 9:2, 2 Samuel 19:12-13). And we have already noted how Adam's marriage with Eve is explicitly related to the human-divine "marriage covenant" evidenced by Paul's use of Genesis 2:23 in Eph. 5:31 saying *this is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church* (vs. 32).

Now the crucial thing here is to observe *who* exactly assumes the oath and therefore the burden of the covenant. For we notice the conspicuous absence of an oath taken by Eve! In and of itself, we would probably not want to make a big deal about it. And yet set within the context of redemptive history, it

⁵ St. Augustine, *Confessions* (Alfred A Knopf, Random House, NY, 2001), p. 21.

⁶ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves To Death, Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (Penguin Books: NY, NY, 1985) p. vii-viii.

becomes a very big deal in so far as Adam's covenant "headship" is expressed in successive generations of covenant making as related to God's covenant headship in the divine-human marriage culminating in Christ. By "headship" here, we are merely referencing the one who assumes ultimate responsibility for the covenant or the guarantor of the covenant. The one who assumes the oath is the one who assumes the responsibility of fulfilling and preserving the covenant. Again, why is it that Adam is only remembered as assuming the oath of the first marriage covenant? The answer is reflected in the ancient covenant treaty that is here being assumed in marriage. Before then returning to the narrative, we should briefly review the centrality of this covenantal framework to the whole of redemptive history.

The Covenant Framework and the Covenant Guarantor in Redemptive History

Geerhardus Vos reminded us that as revelation is the interpretation of redemption, "it must therefore unfold itself in installments as redemption does." That is, the organic nature of the historic process of revelation proceeds from seed form to full growth. Within this analogy, if the seed is salvation that began in Genesis, Christ is the full-grown tree as expressed in Revelations. Within a redemptive "word-deed-word" pattern that existed within each of the various epochs of revelation, Vos explains how the whole of the Bible can be read as "the Old Testament brings the predictive preparatory word, the Gospels record the redemptive-revelatory fact, and the Epistles supply the subsequent, final interpretation."⁷ And at the center of all this, there is the "covenant."

That the *covenant* orientation in spirituality is universally inherent to redemptive history is evidenced by its transcending trajectory both through the Old and New Testament narrative as culminating in Christ. This is perfectly illustrated by the particular use of the words "old" and "new" as assigned to "covenant" respectively throughout. So for instance, the prophet Jeremiah in the old covenant context anticipates the coming of a "new covenant" (Jer.31: 31. c.f Malachi 3:1) even as Paul in the new covenant context references the "veil" of the *old covenant* that was lifted by Christ in the *new covenant* (c.f. 2Cor 3:14).

Relative then to the old covenant context, the covenantal hermeneutic and orientation in spirituality is observed by the simple fact that the Hebrew word for "covenant" (*berith*) is used at least 289 times. So for instance, the Hebrew word covenant is explicitly used to summarize the whole of the Genesis history in Exodus 2:24 and the Old Covenant "Bible" itself was called the "book of the covenant" in Exodus 24:7. As related then to a covenant renewal event in worship, it is said how the, "book of the covenant" was first read and then explained in the hearing of the people wherein it was reported how they said, "all that the LORD has spoken we will do" wherein the Hebrew word "do" conjoins both the idea of "believing" and "acting on that belief" or "a life of believing." But "do" what exactly?

Evidently their belief and actions were being regulated by specific propositional content relative to the "covenant" (see below). Likewise, the Old Covenant sacrament of sacrifices was administered by Moses and the priests using the words, "see the *blood of the covenant* that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words" (Ex.24:8). As we will see in our next chapter on Temple, the covenant was then mediated between God and humanity by means of a human mediator "prophet, priest and king" vis-à-vis the Old Covenant theocracy of a "kingdom-temple."

Returning then to this idea of *covenant*, the covenantal elements themselves introduce us to the various components of a covenant orientation in spirituality and practice. For as gracious condescension to our propensity for allowing "heat" to overwhelm "light," God chose the media of covenant as would have been common to the people of the Ancient Near East (no less than today even) as the basis for framing a relationship of any kind, no less so with God. To be sure, like in any relationship, the union exceeds a covenantal (or forensic-legal) union, but it may well be directed and regulated "law" as to preserve the interest of the two distinct parties even if inseparable by the covenant itself. AS illustrated by Meredith

⁷ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology, Old and New Testaments* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1975). p.7.

Kline in his *The Treaty of the Great King*, the following six covenant elements common to the Ancient Near East are perfectly reflected in a literary structure of Deuteronomy. There would have been:

- *The Preamble*: Wherein the treaty maker is named in a way to motivate respect and loyalty ("I am..." Dt. 1:1-5).
- *The Historical Prologue*: Wherein a survey of history relative to the great accomplishments of the treaty maker is presented in order to encourage respect and trust (Dt. 1:6-4:49).
- *The Covenant Requisites*: Wherein "laws" or "stipulations" themselves are presented as conditions relative to the reception of the covenant sanctions (Dt. 5-26).
- *The Covenant Sanctions*: Wherein a description of the curses or blessings is given related to either breaking or keeping the treaty respectively (Dt. 27-30).
- *The Instructions Concerning Covenant Renewal and Succession*: Wherein there were instructions about how then to utilize the treaty document itself is in so far as covenant renewal and safe keeping was concerned (Dt. 31-34).
- *The Covenant Oath Ceremony*: Wherein there is the oath ceremony itself wherein the two parties would take their vows in so far as a promising covenant faithfulness.

These same elements are likewise reflected in the literary framework of the Genesis-Exodus narrative of redemptive history. In poetic fashion, Genesis 1-2:3 functions as the *covenant preamble* of the Mosaic covenant itself wherein the seventh day-framework names the great creator God as "sovereign King of Kings and Lord of Lords" over the lesser kings (day-frame 2, 4, 6) who rule over their related kingdom spheres (day-frames 1,3,5). As Meredith Kline describes it in his *Kingdom Prologue*, the covenant preamble of Genesis 1 presents a "pictorial framework of a Sabbath-crowned week whereby God identifies Himself as the one for whom all things are and were created, the Lord worthy to receive glory and honor and praise." That is, the first creation account is less "history" as it is poetic theology for the purpose of "naming" God as the covenant King within the Covenant Preamble.

The first creation account is then followed by a second creation account presented as the first of ten histories that make up the *historical prologue* portion per the above description. In Genesis 2:4 the first "history" itself is a redemptive historical sequence of "covenant making-covenant breaking-covenant keeping" by a promised *penal* substitute as received by faith. Adam's faith is expressed most especially in the naming of his wife "Eve" as to anticipate the fulfillment of the promise concerning the savior born of the seed of a woman. Altogether the ten "histories" (or "generations") tell the history of a sovereign God who elects some by grace vis-à-vis five "elect" lines of human history in contrast to the five non-elect lines of human history. The tenth "history" itself carries over to Exodus and God's miraculous salvation of Israel from Egyptian slavery. Upon completion of the historical prologue, the covenant pattern is continued in Exodus 20 with the Covenant requisites, sanctions, covenant renewal instructions and oath ceremony vis-à-vis covenant sacrifices as to fill out the rest of Exodus and its instructions.

Moving into the prophet era, we discern how prophets are less foretellers of history (less than 2%) as they are often thought of as covenant executors. When they did prophesy about the future, it was almost always a mere application of the promised sanctions of the Mosaic covenant itself to the realities of Israel at the time. That is, a prophet by definition was a *covenant executor* wherein the "law" and "sanctions" portion of the covenant treaty was applied to the ground conditions of Israel. The prophets didn't so much receive new revelation as pertaining to covenant stipulations, sanctions, and rites of covenant renewal as they received new revelation relative to the divine execution of these things into the fluid history of Israel. Sometimes they did this in the form of a covenant "lawsuit" (Is. 3:13-26; Hos. 3:3-17, etc).

For example, Isaiah and Hosea brought a covenant lawsuit against Israel in the 8th century BC, and both Jeremiah and Ezekiel brought a covenant lawsuit against Judea in the 6th century BC wherein each

prophet addressed the generation on which the Covenant curses would fall. And so whether in the form of a covenant lawsuit or in the form of a covenant renewal oracle (such as in Amos 9:11-15), the focus was on “divine law” as expressed in the classic covenant treaty framework and grounded in the Mosaic covenant especially. Here again, so essential was the covenant orientation to pre-Christ redemptive history, we see how the book of Hosea was carefully patterned again after the classic covenant treaty format (c.f. Preamble: Chapter 1, Historical prologue: Chapters 2-3, Requisite stipulations: Chapters 2-7, 4. Sanctions: Chapters 8-9, Succession Arrangements: Chapters 10-14).

Finally relative to a cursory covenant history, it can be noted how throughout the Old Testament, and increasingly with the prophets, the term “law” was used as synonymous to “covenant.” This is important, for whatever else the covenant might address, its fundamental nature is legal and declarative less itself effectual and participational. Again, it is not that the covenant doesn’t speak to or even legislate the effectual-participation aspect of Israel’s relationship with Israel (per the temple). Rather, by its inherent nature and intent, the covenant is forensic even as to add light to heat as it were. Whereas the mere volume of such uses exceeds our ability here to fully document them, if by way of an example, notice how Malachi, along with many others, explicitly relates “law” with “Moses” as already discerned in the covenant pattern and nomenclature. Malachi says in conclusion of the canonical Old Testament, “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. (Mal. 4:4) The history of Israel in relation to God is by way of covenant a legal relationship—and our point is that this is a good thing in so far as preserving the sacred romance between God and humanity.

Transitioning then to the New Covenant, we observe how the Old Covenant had every expectation that the “law-covenant” orientation would continue, even if in a revitalized way as related to the “law written on the heart.” So for instance, the prophet Jeremiah says while under the Old Covenant:

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt--a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.... I will make an everlasting covenant with them, never to draw back from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, so that they may not turn from me. (Jer. 31-33, 32:40)

This “new covenant” was again not a new idea to the New Testament writers. The very description by Jeremiah of the coming new covenant is a reference to what Moses promises in Deuteronomy 20:6 when he spoke about the coming of a new prophet after him and how, “the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.” What is here envisioned is of course the ascended ministry of Christ as by the Holy Spirit that changes the fundamental disposition of the human heart to “love the law”—which begs the question concerning any post-modern interpretations of “law” based spirituality that is inherently biased against the “law” orientation, however much it was abused in the modern era perhaps.

Notwithstanding the inherent “legal-forensic” nature of the law-covenant, and perhaps also instances where it seems that the law IS oppressive even according to Paul for instance as related to its temporal-typifying aspects in the Old Covenant context, we should start with the observation that redemptive history is general exceedingly positive about the “law.” The Psalmist could declare “Oh how I love your law” (Ps.119:97, etc) for instance. And in the New Covenant context, Paul himself could declare how “the law is holy” and even “the law is spiritual” (Rom.7:12, 14). Moreover, and again, Christ made it absolutely clear that he came “not to abolish the law” but “to fulfill it” as then to explain, “until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until it is accomplished”

(Mt.5: 17-18). This is key, for according to Christ, the law will somehow become the gospel! Law isn't the opposite of gospel, but congruent with it. Herein, we return to the idea of *sacred romance*, even as the law is very much related to it being a romance of grace.

Picking back up with the new covenant expectation, it could be argued that if John wanted to emphasize the "temple" orientation" in canonical spirituality as "by divine participation" (next chapter), Matthew wanted to emphasize the "kingdom-covenant" orientation in canonical spirituality as "by divine law." That is, whereas John immediately introduces Christ as the *tabernacle* of God in our midst (John 1:14), Matthew immediately introduces Christ as King per his "Genealogy of a Kings" culmination in Christ (1:1-17). We then discover that the kingdom theme is more prominently displayed in Matthew concerning Christ's ministry than in any other gospel (c.f. Mt 14:9, 18:23, 21:5... and Mt. 3:2, 4:17, 5:3, 6:10, 6:33...) Again, whereas John will construct a Christology culminating in Christ's ascension ministry in and through the "temple-church," Mathew will do the same as culminating in Christ's ascension ministry in and through the "kingdom-covenant" paradigm (Mt. 16:19ff). The difference in the two gospels is not of course represented in an *either-or* fashion, rather only by way of emphasis in relation to the other.⁸ As such, Matthew most especially applied the fulfillment motif relative to the Old Covenant expectations as Christ fulfilling the law-covenant. For instance, it narrates Christ's saying, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the *Law* or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the *Law* until all is accomplished." (Matthew 5:17-18) Here again, Christ is shown throughout his ministry to fulfill the law-covenant in relation to the "law" of love. Our point is how we often don't see the two together in praxis contra redemptive history (Dt. 6:5, 13:3 and Matt. 22:29-32).

The covenant orientation is likewise prominent in the epistles. Paul, for instance, will speak of the "veil" that remained "unlifted" in "the old *covenant*" until Christ was able to take it away (2Cor.3:14). Christ is later described as the "mediator of the new *covenant*" (Heb 9:15, 12:15) even by his own atoning "blood of the new *covenant*" that is then specifically related to the meaning and practice of the Eucharistic meal in the new *covenant* church (Luke 22:20, 1Cor.11:25). But like in the Old Covenant context and the gospel, beyond even the explicit references to "covenant" in the New Testament, we discern as well the use of "law" (*nomos*) as again synonymous with "covenant" throughout. Likewise, the "book of the law," as often used by the prophets in reference to the "book of the covenant" (Josh 24:26, Neh. 8:8, 18, etc) is perfectly aligned with Paul's use of the same in reference to the old covenant (Rom. 7:22, 25, 1Cor.9: 21).

The single point in all of this is as simple as perhaps not altogether apparent after modernity. For however much we live in a time that has viewed "law" as synonymous for "oppression" and "manipulation," we would be hard pressed to see it as anything less than an essential element of the gospel according to God's love and grace. This has often led to a bias against the "forensic" aspects of salvation and yet perhaps ironically to some, it has directly related to the demise of gospel grace as well. We turn then to a similar misunderstanding in Paul's day and how Paul directed us through "law" to grace.

The Law Covenant Guaranteed in Christ

Returning then to where it all began, we should carefully observe the series of events immediately following Adam's oath (*bone of my bones*) wherein he consigns himself to the responsibility of guaranteeing the marriage success. The canonical narrator tells us: *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.* What an amazing thing to tell us. At first glance, it seems utterly out of place except for the greater redemptive historical context. And yet we are surely again directed to

⁸ We will return to the way that this gets executed under the Temple Orientation wherein the "on earth as it is in heaven" is related to Christ's ongoing the Temple presence.

this erotic metaphor of marriage. So then, the question is begged, how does the “oath” relate to the “erotica?” And here is what we learn:

Before the fall, being naked together was an image of perfect covenant security wherein it was totally safe to be both intimate and exposed. Those who are married will know for instance that –sex gets better over the years in direct proportion to it getting emotionally and existentially “safer” in so far as being secure and unafraid vis-à-vis rejection.

After the fall, everything changed. The image of nakedness is just the opposite and is often used as a metaphor for fear, shame and guilt due to being exposed in one’s moral failures and brokenness such as to desperately attempt a “cover up!” One thinks here of the almost laughable attempt of Adam and Eve and their attempted cover up with a make shift robe crafted from the itchy, coarse cloth of a brittle fig leaf (Gen. 3:7). And the cover up is directly related to their attempted avoidance of God. We can of course surmise all the ways this ridiculous scene depicts our own human cover-ups-- ranging from blame shifting to mindless busyness to moral reductionism to attempts at self-righteousness in moralism to substitute achievements to substance abuse to expressions of verbal and even ritual self-mutilation, to putting others down to make ourselves look better... the list goes on and on doesn’t it?

But here again the narrative takes an amazing turn. For we discover how the promise of grace was *added* to the “law-covenant” (vs. replacing it!) when after Adam and his wife sinned, God promised a gracious “seed” from the woman’s offspring who would defeat Satan (Gen. 3:15) and overturn the shameful consequences. Evidently Adam received the gift of grace by faith as depicted in the naming of his wife “Eve” which means “the mother of life” (3:20). This is immediately followed by an oath ritual wherein by means of a *berith* (“cutting”) ceremony, *God* clothes Adam and Eve with the ceremonial robe of absolution by means of a substitutionary sacrifice (3:21). That is, as somehow related to the “promise,” God takes responsibility for taking away the shame and guilt of their nakedness albeit in a foreshadowing way anticipating the fuller reality. For however embryonic, the idea of covenantal substitution is introduced even to take away the shame of moral failures. That is, the law was *satisfied* in so far as the sanctioned “curse” for covenant infidelity to God (c.f. Gen.2:17) as related to oppression and death is here satisfied by a covenant representative—in this case as typologized by means of a slain animal resulting in their being “covered –up.”

What this means is that grace was operative not by means of God’s annulling the law, but by means of God’s satisfying the law by means of a *law-abiding* divine substitute per the oath of the *berith* ceremony itself. This same pattern will of course be repeated over and over again through the Old Covenant history and with almost the exact same images. One thinks of God’s covenant with Abraham and the promise of grace by a divine substitute added to the divine law-covenant in Genesis 15:7ff. And of course one thinks of the Passover itself (Exodus 12:11,21,27) as then related to the ritual of substitutionary sacrifice that was an essential element of covenant renewal under the Leviticus context of worship in the temple (Lev.17:11).

Entering then the New Covenant context, the grace transaction as typified by Adam and fulfilled by the “seed of a woman” is again perfectly illustrated in Paul’s application of all that we just reviewed in terms of it being a “type” or “picture” of Christ and the church. For instance, it is not by coincidence that Paul specifically quotes the first marriage ceremony and then relates it directly to Christ and the church in Ephesians 5. He even compares the intended sacrificial nature of a husband’s love for his wife per Adam’s “oath consigned” as fulfilled as “Christ loved the church and gave himself for her” (Eph. 5:25). And the restoration of the “naked and not ashamed” nature of the covenant oath is again explicitly related to the “bone of my bones” idea as fulfilled in Christ’s substitutionary atonement “having cleansed her (the church-bride) by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:26-27). This is of course the language of covenantal justification in the forensic sense, even as it refers to a radical and objectifying grace as a basis for Christ’s sacred marriage to the church

(vs. 32).

Paul relates the story of Adam and Eve to Christ and the Church, albeit less overtly. To begin, notice that in Romans 7 Paul wants to talk about marriage in relation to “the law.” He says:

Or do you not know... speaking to those who know the law... that a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage... Likewise, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may be married to another.

Clearly, Paul’s point here is that we are bound to covenant fidelity to a spouse as long as he/she is alive, but if he/she dies, the law itself then annuls the first covenant such as to make room for another—that is, to be married to another spouse! Now, this would make sense if it were not for Romans 5. Within the context of Romans, the whole argument rests on what Paul means in Romans 1: 16 that the “righteousness of God is revealed unto salvation.” What exactly does this mean? Picking up with Romans 3:22-26, we read how -

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the works of the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe... and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith... It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

The key point here is that whatever “righteousness” is, it is related to being made righteous unto salvation by means of a substitutionary “satisfier” (propitiation) as then directly related to a covenant guarantor. In this case, “by his blood” directs us to Christ who “satisfies” the covenant sanctioned curse against covenant infidelity with God (e.g. the logic here is that in so far as God IS life, to leave God for another is to leave life itself—less God “punishing” as “delivering us over” to the very thing we choose for ourselves per Romans 1:18ff).

Jumping then to Romans 5, Paul explicitly introduces us to the eternal typifying nature of Adam as the covenant guarantor in a way that is then being satisfied in Christ by way of substitution. The whole logic assumes a legal-objective transaction FOR us, even if entirely outside of us in the subjective sense. We notice first of all the “just as.. so” logic being applied to the conclusion that what Adam failed to do as the first covenant guarantor, Christ did(c.f. 5:12-20).⁹ In Romans 5:18, Paul explains,

Therefore, just as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

And the result of this legal transaction as entirely based on “law” is really amazing! Paul will conclude with a grace so radical it is almost unbelievable (see the objection in Romans 6:1) for he says, based upon this entirely objective and legal transaction, “so that where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more!” (5:20)

And so Paul’s point is to “secure” or “guarantee” our salvation on something entirely “alien” to us, our feelings, our performances, our morals, everything. That is, the whole transaction is accomplished NOT by means of an actual and subjective transaction of infused grace but rather by a legal and credited grace per the banking term used by Paul in Romans 5:13 to describe the transaction. The sum effect is to make it safe to be morally exposed (naked) without shame or guilt (and not ashamed) within a sacred marriage covenant-oriented spirituality. As Christ’s bride, we are assured of his love by means of God’s initiating and completing love. So great is this security, that Paul will go so far as to say that we are “safe” from God’s rejection or condemnation “even while still weak” and “while we were still sinning”

⁹ Of course, this succession principle of headship is demonstrated throughout redemptive history (Ex. 34:1-9, 27-28 for instance).

(Romans 5:6, 8). All required of us is to assent to it, receive it and rest upon it, or what Paul calls “faith” as was argued in Romans 4 as alone sufficient in order to benefit from the legal transaction—the marriage equivalent of “I DO.”¹⁰

Of course, what is here being described is the classic doctrine of “justification” as a forensic or legal way of thinking about salvation in relation to Paul’s “the righteousness of God has been revealed unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). This is not to exclude a subjectifying righteousness as will also be discussed in Romans 6 as especially related to the New Covenant “temple” rite of baptism per the second major salvific orientation in redemptive history. But the key here is to establish that however much this second kind of subjectifying work of righteousness IS grace, it is not the basis of our Christian assurance a per the ontology of a divine-human marriage covenant! Rather the objective “law” is!

Grace in this sense was not the result of God annulling his own law or of God just turning a blind eye to his law (antinomian). This would be paramount to God abandoning the sacred marriage itself as to abandon his own identity in the marriage. Rather grace was related to God committing himself to satisfying the law if by means of a divine substitute in our stead so that we might receive the sanctioned of blessing as if we ourselves had satisfied the stipulations. Therefore, it can be said that the “law” IS perfected by “grace.” Meredith Kline explained the issue very well when he argued

The difference between the pre-redemptive and redemptive covenant is not then that the latter substitutes promise for law. The difference is rather that redemptive covenant adds promise to law. Redemptive covenant is simultaneously a promise administration of guaranteed blessings and a law administration of blessing dependent on obedience, with the latter foundational.¹¹

Paul said it this way, “there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:1-1). All of this is of course grounded in what Paul has previously said in Chapter 4 for concerning justifying” faith and in Chapter 5 concerning the covenant headship of Christ in fulfillment of the prior covenant headship of Adam as related to the forensic burden of the “oath.”

The Dogma IS The Drama In A High Gospel Orientation

Contrary then to some emerging spirituality that wants to down play “dogma”—a covenant history of redemptive portrays how, in the words of Dorothy Sayers, the “Dogma IS the Drama!” By way of illustrating her point, Sayers compares redemptive history to a play she scripted entitled, “The Zeal of Thy House.” The action of the play involves a dramatic presentation of a few fundamental Christian “dogmas.” She tells of an incident during the play’s production when the producer sought to edit out certain “tedious complexities of dogma” to which Sayers insisted, “if my play was dramatic it was not in spite of the dogma but because of it!” Her point was that even if we could tell the story of redemption in a “creedless” way, we wouldn’t want to lest we would be left to the cruel whims of our *unregulated* subjectivity. And if regulated, by who and how would we know—and off go in search of a “covenant.” Here again, Sayers reminds us of a conversation that Jesus once had with a women at the well. In her words:

Christ in his divine innocence said to the women of Samaria, “you worship what you do not know”—being apparently under the impression that it might be desirable, on the whole, to know what one was worshipping. He thus showed himself sadly out of touch with the 20th century mind, for the cry today is “away with tedious complexities of dogma—let us have the simple spirit of worship, just worship, no matter of what! The only drawback to this demand for a generalized and undirected worship is the practical difficulty of arousing any sort of enthusiasm for the worship of nothing in particular.

¹⁰ A transaction by the way that Christ volunteered for with God the Father completely on his own volition. C.f. John 10:17-18.

¹¹ Meredith Kline, “Law Covenant”, *Westminster Theological Journal* (27, 1964/65: 1-20). p.13-14.

For Dorothy Sayers, you could say that the possibility of intimacy with God is very much attached to the particulars of a relationship, particulars that are at once inherent to the objective characteristics of two becoming one. And if the relationship were to consist of worship even, then all the more important would it be to know the particulars that are being worshipped in relation to the one being worshipped. For the communion to be intimate, it must involve the intimate details of real and objective personal traits being shared and enjoyed without fear of condemnation and guilt. This is the function of the “law-covenant” in marriage assuming of course that God is “person-God” as then the basis for being in romantic communion with “person-humanity.”

For the sake of argument, let's assume that there really is a *personal* God! AS “God,” he has been described as “infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, ... most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth”—well we get the point!¹² The question this raises is this: How would mere mortals who are finite and never “most” anything related to such an otherwise personal God? What would God need to do if in fact he wants to have communion with us? The answer that has been affirmed by the church over the past two millennia is aptly summed up in the 17th century Westminster Assembly:

The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto Him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of Him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which He hath been pleased to express by way of covenant. (WCF 7:1)

Again, contrary to the way “law” is often depicted, the covenant from a redemptive historical vantage is itself a gracious concession in order that we who are prone *not* to “get it” or “feel it” relative to God’s blessedness and rewards of grace might in fact be convinced of it by the *objective* terms of the “law-covenant.” Again, in today’s *trifecta* of globalism, new science and post Kantian subjectivity in spiritualism, we are prone to see absolute subjectivity in spirituality as a good thing. And yet in a moment of even introspective honesty, we discern how subjectivity as related to the issue of Christian assurance is the very enemy of grace! We are our own worst critics, all the more inflamed by the heat of our passions left to the subjectivity of our own criticisms. This then leads us to our final point about the covenant and how a covenantal orientation in spirituality and ecclesiology is to preserve a “high gospel” orientation over against

Covenantal Orientation and It’s “High Gospel” Spirituality

Some today will want to see the covenantal and forensic way of thinking about salvation as anything but gracious. Many will see it is a kind of “divine child abuse.” Brian McLaren for instance will express this through a fictional character that says about the cross, “it sounds like divine child abuse.” Spence Burke and Barry Taylor notes how “it reinforces a caricature of a God who is angry, bloodthirsty and judgmental.” And perhaps Doug Pagitt expresses best the visceral reaction of many today concerning the forensic and covenant orientation when after describing penal substitution he exclaims, “Yikes!”

To be sure, the idea of a legal-forensic styled “child lynching” conjures up notions of atonement by a blood-spilling, wrath bearing kind of God. Notwithstanding the redemptive historical misunderstanding, perhaps naïveté concerning the suffering servant motif and how this ultimately results in the vindication of the servant as the victorious king, it surely misses the objectifying grace of this otherwise audacious orientation. As then by way of a final and practical illustration concerning the covenantal orientation as essential to “high gospel” spirituality, let's consider the issue of the Eucharist and especially the covenantal orientation as related to who ought to participate. In other words, in so far as the Lord’s

¹² Taken from Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 1, Section 1.

Supper is meant to “confirm” the gospel of grace, how then ought it to be practiced? Who should participate?

According to 1 Corinthians 11, it should first of all require self examination as related to a person’s own spiritual relation to the thing signified as explained in relation to the cross of Christ per his “body and blood.” (C.f. 1Cor 11:23ff per the “spiritual discernment” of 1 Cor.2) The supposition here of course is that presumably someone CAN participate in a manner that Paul will go on to describe as self-destructive even.

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, And so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. (1Cor. 11:27-28)

That is, even as the table CAN be a means of grace, it can also be a means of curse evidently by means of inappropriate participation. So what would it mean to inappropriately participate? Here is where the modernist-subjectivist take on self-examination would tempt us to examine ourselves, our feelings, our morals, and our turning away from sins even (a false understanding of saving repentance as to turn away from self-righteousness in so many words). Apart from a spirituality of a covenantal orientation, we might as one prominent “new perspective” theologian recently explained to me, examines our love. But how much love will it take, how sincere of a love, how unpolluted of a love in relation to the conjoining self-love with an otherwise love of God and neighbor? In other words, if I have learned anything in my twenty-seven or so years of ministry, it is that people are their own worst critics, even if then attempting to cover up by means of blame-shifting, criticizing others or moralizing against themselves.

The point of this chapter has been to demonstrate how throughout redemptive history there is a one-to-one correlation between the covenantal orientation and “high gospel” spirituality. By “high gospel” it is meant a gospel that is ultimately predicated upon divine grace rather than by human performance. For grace to be grace, our salvation must be accomplished by a transaction that is entirely outside of ourselves albeit for our benefit. The legal or forensic nature of a covenant orientation is the mechanism by which this can happen via the actions of a covenant guarantor. That is, using the metaphor of marriage itself, God has “by divine law” transacted a way for humanity to be safe in God’s love even while humanity struggles in its moral failures and mis-placed loves. When the covenant or “forensic” orientation is properly understood as culminating in Christ, to speak of “justification” is to speak of a sacred love story in the mystery of Christ’s covenant union with his bride-church. The Covenantal orientation therefore wants to establish a relationship with God that is predicated upon an objectifying grace such as to make us safe in God’s free love.

If there were no covenantal framework to “the gospel” it would be a “low gospel” for sure. God would have left us to our own subjectivity as a basis for enjoying Him in our marital bliss as predicated upon grace! In so far as church practice, the liturgist would become less a conduit of grace as per the very meaning of Christ’s once and for all substitutionary atonement as then to point us to Christ as moral exemplar vis-à-vis a horrifying self-examination in subjectivity even then to negate the tale as a “means of grace” that directs us to the divine guarantee of our marriage union that is ours merely by accenting to, receiving and resting upon Christ’s objective love as by faith.

Indeed, the intimacy must be *mediated* as by covenantal spirituality lest we loose the distinctly “personal” of God in an otherwise inseparable union. And yet in stressing the object-covenant of Christ’s heavenly being, we would not want to loose the subjective-temple as per Christ’s efficacious and earthly form. That is, the covenantal orientation will of course be applicable this way to all sorts of issues in Christian spirituality and church practice. It will regulate the way we worship, the way we pray, the things we teach and believe, the way we interpret the Bible, and the way we treat one another. And to be sure, it can be portrayed as if to put us into bondage with respect to an ungracious and

impersonal law—but if viewed within the covenant history of a divine-human marriage, it is everything but! It is in fact an essential element of the gospel, even if not alone essential—which then brings us to our next chapter in Christian spirituality and church practice.

By then regulating the power of “divine-law,” we are in fact *regulated* in so far as our spirituality is *personal and gracious*. As especially related to the “covenantal” orientation as to preserve the sacred erotica of divine-human union, there is something that C.K. Chesterton once said which is indelibly etched in my mind. He once said about Christian spirituality - how it is “the combination of something that is strange with something that is secure. We need so to view the world as to combine an idea of wonder with an idea of welcome.”¹³ And this, said Chesterton, is the true being of romance.

Surely, anyone who has experienced even human romance knows something of what Chesterton is talking about—when upon gazing at a person you are romantically inclined, you are at once comforted and scared in the mystery of wonder and familiarity. Without covenant, that which is rightly “strange” is at once *insecure*, that which ought always to fill us with *wonder* will never be *welcome*.” This is because God is both “person” as to be wholly other, as to want intimacy as to be wholly one. There is a distinct but not separate nature to marriage on earth no less than is true concerning our marriage in heaven. This is the meaning of covenant even as it assumes, if not also regulates, a real and life-giving divine participation in relation to a complementary subjectifying grace vis-à-vis the covenant regulated temple presence of God on earth as it is in heaven. That is, how will it look if our legal union with Christ is at once so powerfully real in efficacious presence that in terms that approximate erotic intimacy? John Calvin can say of the mediatorial presence of Christ in the temple-church,

No extent of space interferes with the boundless energy of the Spirit, which transfuses life into us from the flesh of Christ.¹⁴

¹³ Gilbert K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, (John Lane Company, 1908) p. 5 (public domain scanned by Harry Plantinga located at www.ccel.org/c/chesterton/orthodoxy/orthodoxy.html)

¹⁴ John Calvin, *Corpus Reformatorum*, 37: 48. For works on Calvin’s view of the sacraments, see Joseph N. Tylenda, “Calvin and Christ’s Presence in the Supper-True or Real”, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 27 (1974): pp. 65-75, Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1953), John Adger, “Calvin Defended Against Drs. Cunningham and Hodge”, *The Southern Presbyterian Review*, 27 (1876),