

WCF COVENANT THEOLOGY COMPARED TO NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY

The chart below depicts the principal commonalities and differences between New Covenant Theology (NCT) and Westminster Federalism (WF), one of the main branches of Covenant Theology. Although certainly **not** exhaustive, this chart highlights the principal commonalities and differences between these two theological systems.

(√) indicates virtual agreement with NCT

(◊) indicates partial agreement with NCT

(⊗) indicates significant disagreement with NCT

COVENANT THEOLOGY (CT)

WCF FEDERALISM

- √ I. **Sola Scriptura** ("by the Scriptures alone")
 - √ A. The Bible **is** the Word and words of God.
 - √ B. All Scripture is inspired by God and thus **wholly** inerrant, infallible, sufficient and authoritative.
 - ◊ C. New Testament (NT) has interpretive priority over the Old Testament (OT) due to NT being the **final** revelation of God. [**not** consistent].
- √ II. **Trinitarian Theology**
- √ III. **Protestant Principia of the Reformation**
 - √ A. *Sola Scriptura* ("by the Scriptures **alone**")
 - √ B. *Sola Fide* ("by Faith **alone**")
 - √ C. *Sola Gratia* ("by Grace **alone**")
 - √ D. *Solo Christo* ("through Christ **alone**")
 - √ E. *Soli Deo Gloria* ("to God **alone** be the Glory")
 - √ F. *Semper Reformanda* ("**always** reforming")
- √ IV. **Calvinistic Soteriology**
 - √ A. Five Points of Calvinism (i.e. Doctrines of Grace)
 - √ B. Regeneration precedes faith.
 - √ C. God's **absolute** sovereignty in **all** things.
 - √ D. Dual Imputation of Righteousness **indispensable** to the biblical Gospel.
 - √ E. Good works will **always** result from genuine faith.
- ⊗ V. **"Classic" Covenant Theology** (i.e. *paedobaptistic* CT)
 - ⊗ A. Eternal Covenant of Redemption (*pactum salutis*)
 - ⊗ B. Covenant of Works (CW) = pre-fall covenant whereby Adam could have merited eternal life by perfect obedience
 - ⊗ C. Covenant of Grace (CG) = **one** over-arching covenant with **multiple administrations** (i.e. the biblical covenants); CG unites redemptive history
 - ⊗ D. Members of Covenant of Grace = believers & unbelievers
 - √ E. OT & NT saints **all** saved by grace through faith in Christ
 - √ F. No one saved **apart** from covenant relationship with God.
 - ⊗ G. Israel = the Church in the Old Testament
 - √ H. **One** redemptive plan to secure salvation of the elect.
 - ⊗ I. All OT saints indwelt by the Holy Spirit prior to Pentecost
 - ⊗ J. Tripartite Division of Law (i.e. moral, civil, ceremonial)
 - ⊗ K. Moral (i.e. *transcovenantal*) Law = Ten Commandments
 - ⊗ L. Ten Commandments as "moral law" **cannot** be abrogated and **must** apply to the NC believer.
 - ⊗ M. Sunday = Christian Sabbath (creation ordinance)
 - ⊗ N. Church = mixed multitude (i.e. believers & unbelievers) in that children of believers viewed as members of Covenant of Grace.
 - ⊗ O. OT commands still in force unless canceled in NT.
 - ⊗ P. **All** biblical covenants are outworkings of the Covenant of Grace.
 - ⊗ Q. Law of Christ = Moral Law (i.e. Ten Commandments)

NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY (NCT)

(as defined by Providence Theological Seminary)

- √ I. **Sola Scriptura** ("by the Scriptures alone")
 - √ A. The Bible **is** the Word and words of God.
 - √ B. All Scripture is inspired by God and thus **wholly** inerrant, infallible, sufficient and authoritative.
 - √ C. New Testament (NT) has interpretive priority over the Old Testament (OT) due to NT being the **final** revelation of God (i.e., **consistent** Christocentric Hermeneutics).
- √ II. **Trinitarian Theology**
- √ III. **Protestant Principia of the Reformation**
 - √ A. *Sola Scriptura* ("by the Scriptures **alone**")
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- √ IV. **Calvinistic Soteriology**
 - √ A. Five Points of Calvinism (i.e. Doctrines of Grace)
 - √ B. Regeneration precedes faith.
 - √ C. God's **absolute** sovereignty in **all** things.
 - √ D. Dual Imputation of Righteousness **indispensable** to the biblical Gospel.
 - √ E. Good works will **always** result from genuine faith.
- √ V. **New Covenant Theology** (Theology of the New Covenant (NC))
 - √ A. God's eternal Purpose of redemption **not** a covenant
 - √ B. Pre-fall covenant (**no** probationary period; **eternal life not** promised to Adam for obedience; **not** Covenant of Works)
 - √ C. NCT rejects Covenant of Grace (CG). All versions of CG (in CT) **flatten** redemptive history; NCT holds to post-fall covenant of promise, that **(1)** is summed up in Gen. 3:15; **(2)** *proleptically* has NC in view, and **(3)** was instituted with Adam.
 - √ D. New Covenant Members = elect (**retroactive** following Cross)
 - √ E. OT & NT saints **all** saved by grace through faith in Christ
 - √ F. No one saved **apart** from a covenant relationship with God.
 - ⊗ G. Israel = **type of Church** (i.e. *eschatological* Israel) as God's people
 - √ H. **One** redemptive plan to secure salvation of the elect.
 - √ I. **Only** select OT saints had the Spirit prior to Pentecost
 - √ J. Tripartite Distinction **helpful** but Tripartite Division/Separation **not** supported by Scripture
 - √ K. Absolute (*transcovenantal*) Law = 2 Greatest Commandments
 - √ L. Ten Commandments as "summary statement" of Law of Moses was abrogated along with Old Covenant & Law of Moses.
 - √ M. Jesus Christ, not Sunday, fulfills Sabbath (Sign of OC).
 - √ N. Church = elect of all time **first** constituted in history as the spiritual body of Christ at Pentecost via Spirit Baptism
 - √ O. OT Scriptures are *profitable & authoritative* for NC believer as they reveal Christ but are **no** longer covenantally binding since Old Covenant has been fulfilled by Christ & thereby abrogated.
 - √ P. **All** the biblical covenants are fulfilled by Christ in the NC.
 - √ Q. Law of Christ = Law of Love, Christ's Example & Teaching, NT commands/teachings, **All** Scripture interpreted in light of Christ.

⊗ VI. Defined in Westminster Confession (WCF) (1647-49 A.D.)

- √ VI. **Agrees with 1st London Baptist Confession (1644/46 A.D.)**
 - √ A. NCT asserts there are **substantial** differences between the 1st & 2nd London Baptist Confessions (e.g. covenants, law of God)

VII. Church Government

- √ A. Plurality of Elders (teaching / ruling elder distinction)
- ⊗ B. Session, Presbytery, General Assembly (or *Consistory, Classis, Synod*)

VII. Church Government

- √ A. Plurality of Elders
- √ B. Local Autonomy of Congregations

(√) indicates virtual agreement with NCT

(○) indicates partial agreement with NCT

(⊗) indicates significant disagreement with NCT

COVENANT THEOLOGY (CT)**WCF FEDERALISM****VIII. Church Issues**

- √ A. Two Ordinances: Baptism & Lord's Supper
- ⊗ B. Sign of New Covenant: Baptism
- ⊗ C. Baptism for Infants (*paedobaptism*)
- ⊗ D. Baptism by Sprinkling
- √ E. Baptism = Symbol of salvation; important as act of obedience admission to privileges of visible Church membership
- √ F. Lord's Supper = Remembrance + Spiritual Communion with God
- √ G. Church Discipline
- √ H. Centrality of Preaching
- √ I. Cessation of *miraculous* spiritual gifts

IX. Christian Liberty**X. Government Relations**

- ⊗ A. Magistrate (State) enforces correct theology

XI. Eschatology

- √ A. Visible, Bodily, One-Stage Return of Christ at End of Age.
- √ B. No Future Millennium; Millennium = Inter-Advent period (specifically between the Christ's Ascension & Second Coming) during which Christ is reigning in heaven with His saints.
- √ C. Bodily Resurrection of Just & Unjust for Day of Judgment at End of Age.
- √ D. Eternal Hell for Reprobate.
- √ E. Eternal New Heavens/New Earth for Elect.
- F. Antichrist = Papal Dynasty of Catholicism (*papa Antichristus*)

NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY (NCT)

(as defined by Providence Theological Seminary)

VIII. Church Issues

- √ A. Two Ordinances: Baptism & Lord's Supper
- √ B. Sign of New Covenant: Cup of Lord's Supper (Luke 22:20)
- √ C. Baptism for Believers **Only**
- √ D. Baptism by Immersion
- √ E. Baptism = Symbol of salvation; important as act of obedience admission to privileges of visible Church membership
- √ F. Lord's Supper = Remembrance + Spiritual Communion with God
- √ G. Church Discipline
- √ H. Centrality of Preaching
- √ I. Cessation of *miraculous* spiritual gifts

IX. Christian Liberty & Total Liberty of Conscience**X. Government Relations**

- √ A. Separation of Church and State
- √ B. Voluntarily involvement of Church members in political activities

XI. Eschatology

- √ A. Visible, Bodily, One-Stage Return of Christ at End of Age.
- √ B. No Future Millennium; Millennium = Inter-Advent period (specifically between the Christ's Ascension & Second Coming) during which Christ is reigning in heaven with His saints.
- √ C. Bodily Resurrection of Just & Unjust for Day of Judgment at End of Age.
- √ D. Eternal Hell for Reprobate.
- √ E. Eternal New Heavens/New Earth for Elect.
- √ F. Varying positions on identity of the Antichrist - **all** which identify the Antichrist with an end-time apostate one-world government.
- √ G. *Now-Not-Yet* understanding of NT Prophecy
- √ H. *Recapitulation* necessary to understand NT Prophecy
- √ I. Future end-time ingathering of *elect*, ethnic Israel into Church.

WHAT IS THE *SINE QUA NON* OF NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY?

The *consistent Christocentric* interpretation of the OT in light of the NT (Luke 24:27, 44; Rom. 10:4; 2 Cor. 1:20) which results in the following theological distinctives: **(1) the plan of God**: one plan of redemption, centered in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:10; 2 Cor. 1:20; Col. 1:18), implemented according to the God's eternal purpose (Eph. 1:11; 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9), and securing the salvation of God's elect (Rom. 8:28-32); **(2) the biblical covenants**: the covenants of Scripture progressively unfold God's kingdom purpose (Matt. 6:10) in history, culminating in the New Covenant; **(3) the Old Covenant**: the *conditional* (Exod. 19:5-6) treaty which God established with the ethnic descendants of Jacob at Mount Sinai – a covenant which formed *the nation* of Israel as a geopolitical entity, the sign of which was the Sabbath (Exod. 31:15-17), which was *temporary* in terms of its purpose and duration (Heb. 8:7-13), and which was superseded by the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-33); **(4) the New Covenant**: the promised everlasting covenant (Heb. 13:20) established by Christ Jesus (Luke 22:20; Dan. 9:26-27) that fulfills all preceding *biblical covenants* – a covenant in which all believers have full forgiveness of sins (Jer. 31:34), are *permanently* indwelt by the Spirit (Ezek. 36:25-27; Eph. 1:13-14), and are empowered by the Spirit to please God (Jer. 31:31-33; Phil. 2:12-13); **(5) the people of God**: all God's elect, comprised of believing Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:15), first formed as the body of Christ, which is the Church, at Pentecost (Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-41), not before (John 7:39; 17:21; Col. 1:26-27; Heb. 11:39-40), as one corporate spiritual body in New Covenant union with Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:19-21; Col. 1:18, 24); **(6) the nation of Israel**: the ethnic descendants of Jacob (Gen. 28:13-15) formed into a geopolitical entity at Sinai via the Old Covenant (Exod. 19:5-6), comprised of *both* believers and unbelievers (1 Cor. 10:1-5; Heb. 3:16-4:2), typological of Christ (Hos. 11:1; Matt. 2:15) and His Church (Exod. 19:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:9), the believing remnant (Rom. 9:27; 11:5) of which was transformed into the Church at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-10, 41), and which awaits consummation at a future *spiritual* restoration (Amos 9:8) in the form of a massive, end-time ingathering of *elect* Jews into the Church at Christ's Parousia (Rom. 11:12, 15, 25-27); **(7) the law of God**: the two greatest commandments – love of God and neighbor (Matt. 22:36-40) – constitute God's *absolute* or *innate law*, which is righteous, unchanging, and instinctively known by man (Rom. 2:14-15) created in God's image (Gen. 1:27), and of which each *system* of *covenantal law* is a temporary, historical outworking (Heb. 7:12) in accordance with God's eternal purpose (Eph. 1:11; 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9); **(8) the Law of Moses**: the *covenantal* outworking of God's absolute law under the Old Covenant – the exhaustive, *indivisible* (Jas. 2:10; Gal. 5:3) legal code, summed up in the Ten Commandments (Exod. 34:28), covenantally binding upon *the nation of Israel* (Exod. 19:5-6; 24:3), temporary in its duration (Heb. 7:11-12; Col. 2:14), and fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:4; Matt. 5:17-18; Col. 2:16-17); **(9) the Law of Christ**: the *covenantal* outworking of God's *absolute law* under the New Covenant – the gracious law of the New Covenant (Rom. 6:14), which is covenantally binding upon the *Church* (1 Cor. 9:20-21) and consists of the *law of love* (Matt. 5:44; Gal. 6:2; Jas. 2:8; Rom. 13:8-10), *the example of the Lord Jesus Christ* (John 13:34; Phil. 2:4-12), *Christ's commands and teaching* (Matt. 28:20; 2 Pet. 3:2), *the commands and teachings of the New Testament* (2 Pet. 3:2; Eph. 2:20; Jude 1:17; 1 John 5:3), and *all Scripture interpreted in light of Jesus Christ* (Matt. 5:17-18; Luke 24:27, 44; 2 Tim. 3:16-17); **(10) the Kingdom of God**: the everlasting reign of God over the universe and His people, progressively unfolded via the biblical covenants – ultimately realized in the messianic reign of Jesus Christ in heaven with His saints (Heb. 1:1-4; Rev. 20:4; Eph. 2:6), that was eschatologically inaugurated at His ascension (Dan. 7:13-14) in fulfillment of the biblical covenants (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Acts 2:25-36), is advanced through the Spirit-empowered preaching of the Gospel (Acts 1:7-8), and will be consummated in the new heavens and new earth at the Second Coming when Christ subdues all His enemies (1 Cor. 15:24-28).