

# THE TWO MAIN BRANCHES OF COVENANT THEOLOGY COMPARED



The chart below depicts the principal commonalities and differences between the two *main* branches of Covenant Theology: WCF Federalism and 1689 Federalism **as defined by their respective confessions** (with some additions). Although certainly **not** exhaustive, this chart highlights the principal commonalities and differences between these two *main* branches of Covenant Theology.

(✓) indicates that there is virtual agreement between the two *main* branches of Covenant Theology on this point. (⊗) indicates that the two *main* branches of Covenant Theology disagree on this particular point.

## WCF FEDERALISM

## 1689 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.

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### II. Trinitarian Theology

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### III. Protestant Principia of the Reformation

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- ✓ 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")

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### IV. Calvinistic Soteriology

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- ✓ 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.
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### VI. "Classic" Covenant Theology (i.e. paedobaptistic CT)

### VI. "Progressive" Covenant Theology (i.e. baptistic 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 had 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) as believers' children 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)

- ✓ 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) **promised** in Gen. 3:15 & **established** in the ratification of the New Covenant; in short, CG is held to be the New Covenant; CG unites redemptive history
- ⊗ D. Members of Covenant of Grace = **the elect**
- ✓ E. OT & NT saints **all** saved by grace through faith in Christ
- ✓ F. No one saved **apart** from covenant relationship with God.
- ⊗ G. Israel = **typological of Church (the eschatological Israel)**
- ✓ H. **One** redemptive plan to secure salvation of the elect.
- ✓ I. All OT saints had the Holy Spirit prior to Pentecost
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- ✓ M. Sunday = Christian Sabbath (creation ordinance)
- ⊗ N. Church = **the elect of all time; only believers are truly** members of Covenant of Grace.
- ⊗ O. The whole law of Moses, as it functioned under the Old Covenant, has been abolished, including the Decalogue. However, insofar as the Decalogue transcend the Old Covenant, they abide.
- ⊗ P. **All** biblical covenants advance the Covenant of Grace, but they do **not** constitute administrations of that covenant.
- ✓ Q. Law of Christ = Moral Law (i.e. Ten Commandments) as **correctly** interpreted by Christ.

### VII. Church Issues

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- ✓ 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 act of obedience admission to privileges of visible Church membership
- ✓ F. Lord's Supper = Remembrance + Spiritual Communion
- ✓ G. Church Discipline
- ✓ H. Centrality of Preaching
- ✓ I. Cessation of *miraculous* spiritual gifts (most hold this)

- ✓ A. Two Ordinances: Baptism & Lord's Supper
- ✓ B. Sign of New Covenant: Baptism
- ⊗ C. Baptism for Believers **Only** (*credobaptism*)
- ⊗ D. Baptism by Immersion
- ✓ E. Baptism = Symbol of salvation; important act of obedience admission to privileges of visible Church membership
- ✓ F. Lord's Supper = Remembrance + Spiritual Communion
- ✓ G. Church Discipline
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<b>WCF FEDERALISM</b>	<b>1689 FEDERALISM</b>
⊗ V. <b>Defined in Westminster Confession (WCF) (1647-49 A.D.)</b>	⊗ V. <b>Defined in 2nd London Baptist Confession (1689 A.D.)</b>
<b>VIII. Church Government</b>	<b>VIII. Church Government</b>
√ A. Plurality of Elders ( <i>teaching / ruling</i> elder distinction)	√ A. Plurality of Elders (all elders viewed as pastors)
⊗ B. Session, Presbytery, General Assembly (or <i>Consistory, Classis, Synod</i> )	⊗ B. Local Autonomy of Congregations
√ IX. <b>Christian Liberty</b>	√ IX. <b>Total Liberty of Conscience</b>
<b>X. Government Relations</b>	<b>X. Government Relations</b>
⊗ A. Magistrate (State) enforces correct theology	√ A. Separation of Church and State
	B. Voluntarily involvement of Church members in political activities
<b>XI. Eschatology</b>	<b>XI. Eschatology</b>
√ A. Visible, Bodily, One-Stage Return of Christ at End of Age.	√ A. Visible, Bodily, One-Stage Return of Christ at End of Age.
√ B. No Future Millennium; Millennium = Inter-Advent period (period between the Christ's Ascension & Second Coming) during which Christ is reigning in heaven with His saints. Adherents of amillennialism & postmillennialism.	√ B. No Future Millennium; Millennium = Inter-Advent period (period between the Christ's Ascension & Second Coming) during which Christ is reigning in heaven with His saints. Adherents of amillennialism & postmillennialism.
√ C. Bodily Resurrection of Just & Unjust for Day of Judgment at End of Age.	√ C. Bodily Resurrection of Just & Unjust for Day of Judgment at End of Age.
√ D. Eternal Hell for Reprobate.	√ D. Eternal Hell for Reprobate.
√ E. Eternal New Heavens/New Earth for Elect.	√ E. Eternal New Heavens/New Earth for Elect.
√ F. Antichrist = Papal Dynasty of Catholicism ( <i>papa Antichristus</i> )	√ F. Antichrist = Papal Dynasty of Catholicism ( <i>papa Antichristus</i> )
	G. <i>Now-Not-Yet</i> ' understanding of NT Prophecy
	H. <i>Recapitulation</i> necessary to understand NT Prophecy

\*Providence Theological Seminary used the "Theological Positions" (<http://www.dsf.org/positions.pdf>) document of Dayspring Fellowship in Austin, TX as the foundational base (i.e., format, some wording, certain areas) for this chart.