

Setting the Record Straight About Dr. George Ella

Peter Ditzel

I want to start this article by saying that I am publishing it to set the record straight about my dealings with Dr. George Ella and his dealings with me. To do this, I am fully disclosing our correspondence. The reason I am doing this is because Dr. Ella has made untrue accusations about me and what I believe. I want to be clear, however, that I am not publishing this article out of personal vendetta or hurt feelings. Dr. Ella's remarks are not only defamatory to me personally but are potentially damaging to this ministry. They are thus divisive and stumbling blocks or snares (what the King James Version means by "offences") to those who are seeking the truth. I have nothing against theological discourse where someone accurately represents what I believe and then gives a reasoned response as to why he disagrees. He may even be passionate as long as he sticks to the facts. A reader can then weigh the facts and make his or her own decision. But Dr. Ella has not taken such an approach.

The Bible tells Christians to be longsuffering, but it does not tell us to be so to the detriment of the truth. In such cases, the Word of God instructs us to "mark [*skopeite*—"keep an eye on," "watch"] them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid [*ekkline*—"turn aside from"] them" (Romans 16:17). With this article, I am doing both. I am telling you, the reader, to keep an eye on this man and be careful, and I am giving you the evidence for why I am doing this. I am also serving notice that, following his absurd accusations that I am a Marcionite heretic and that I attempted (purposely tried) to distort his doctrine of justification (<http://evangelica.de/articles/covenant-theology-as-seen-by-the-nct-part-one/>), I am finished having any contact with Dr. Ella. If he writes to me to debate me, he will receive no reply. I am convinced that, until he sees the error of his way and repents, any debate is a waste of time. I believe the only thing to be done now is to publish this record of our correspondence to expose who has been attacking whom.

Dr. George Melvyn Ella is a historian, biographer, and theologian. He lives in Mülheim, Germany. He has written biographies on William Cowper, William Huntington, John Gill, James Hervey, and Augustus Montague Toplady. He has also written a book called, *The Covenant of Grace and Christian Baptism*. In this book, he attempts to refute

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Baptist theology and defend infant sprinkling and Reformed theology. But instead of being known as an enemy of Baptists, English-speaking people familiar with Dr. Ella's works seem to assume him to be a Baptist. This appears to be due to two facts. First, the above book has had limited circulation only in continental Europe (largely Germany), so that most English-speaking Baptists have never heard of the book. And, second, Dr. Ella writes for *New Focus* magazine. *New Focus's* other writers are frequently Baptists. Among them are Sovereign Grace Baptists, such as Don Fortner, Henry Mahan, Chris Cunningham, Joseph Terrell, and Clay Curtis. Clearly, *New Focus* seems to be geared to a Baptist readership.

In 2007, Dr. Ella began writing a series of articles in *New Focus* attacking New Covenant Theology. These articles were of concern to me for the following reasons: 1) I am a New Covenant Theologian who believes that New Covenant Theology expresses the biblical truth of the distinction between the Old and New Covenants; 2) Dr. Ella called New Covenant Theology a heresy and a false religion; 3) Dr. Ella seemed not to have a firm grasp of the teachings of New Covenant Theology and had made wild accusations against its proponents; 4) Dr. Ella often attributed to all New Covenant Theologians minor teachings that are held by only individuals among them; 5) Dr. Ella was approaching the subject, not from the viewpoint of another Baptist, but from a Reformed/Covenant Theology perspective, something I found disturbing for a magazine that otherwise seemed to be catering to Baptists; 6) Dr. Ella seemed to be unaware that New Covenant Theology has its roots in historic Particular Baptist theology and is thus closer to the teachings of *New Focus's* other writers than it is to the Reformed Theology Dr. Ella was espousing. Thus, it was Dr. Ella who, in writing these articles against New Covenant Theology, publicly attacked and misrepresented beliefs that I hold and espouse.

Because I believed Dr. Ella's articles were portraying an inaccurate picture of New Covenant Theology and was presenting Reformed/Covenant Theology to *New Focus's* Baptist readers as the biblical alternative, I did not simply sit by. I very properly wrote an email to the editors of *New Focus* with a CC to Dr. Ella. This resulted in an email exchange between Dr. Ella and myself. Even though, at the end of his first email (see below) Dr. Ella gives me permission to publish this correspondence on the web (albeit using sarcasm), I refrained from doing so in the hope of maintaining peace and not exposing Dr. Ella to the public as a man who does not address the issues but instead indulges in what I might call "verbal violence"—words that I hoped he might come to regret. But, unfortunately, the

time has come to set the record straight. I leave you, the reader, to determine whether Dr. Ella ever truly and without distortion addressed the issues I raised, and to weigh which of us is the one who indulged in offensive, divisive name-calling. We start with my email to *New Focus*:

10/30/2007

Subject: Dr. Ella & New Covenant Theology

I am pressed in the spirit to address, at least briefly, George M. Ella's recent series of articles attacking New Covenant Theology (NCT).

In reading Dr. Ella's articles criticizing NCT, I have to wonder whether Dr. Ella has actually read the works he is criticizing. His evaluation of what these books say, and what my (and others') evaluation of what they say are at times very much at odds. I also wonder whether Dr. Ella has ever contacted any of the NCT writers and given them a chance to explain and defend themselves.

The charges Dr. Ella makes against the teachers of NCT are very serious indeed. In just the first installment, Dr. Ella calls NCT a heresy with a new gospel and ends by calling it a false religion. Of course, if true, this implies that its teachers are accursed (Gal. 1:8-9). Yet, I find much of Dr. Ella's "Critical Evaluation" muddled at best. I get the distinct impression that Dr. Ella simply does not know what NCT is. Some of his charges, for example, that NCT is "dyed-in-the-wool Dispensationalism of the most extreme kind under the guise of New Speak," and that NCT adherents are both Antinomian and Neonomian are simply absurd.

I am truly sorry to sound so harsh. I would like to consider Dr. Ella a brother, have enjoyed his biographies, but from his anti-NCT writings, he apparently would not return my brotherly feelings. It is, after all, Dr. Ella who has started shooting wildly at anything that does not bear his stamp of approval.

Concerning some of his other points, while it is true that some NCT theologians espouse peculiar doctrines, so do some Covenant Theologians. But these particular teachings should be addressed as they apply to their particular teachers instead of painting with so broad a brush as to imply that all adherents to a school of theology believe all of these teachings. I am also at a loss as to why Dr. Ella seems to be critical of the fact that NCT theologians, such as John Reisinger and Fred Zaspel, "invite constructive criticism and have altered, if not corrected, their views openly since the late nineteen-nineties." Is not inviting constructive criticism and changing when proved wrong a good thing? Apparently not to Dr. Ella as he likens it to having a dialogue with a piece of wet modeling clay. But such changeability is nothing new on the face of the earth, and Dr. Ella surely knows that the Reformers frequently changed their views.

For the sake of the record, New Covenant Theology's distinctive and core features are these: The Old and New Covenants are distinct covenants, and that all whom Jesus has saved are loosed from and dead to the law. The Abrahamic Covenant is a covenant of promise. Abraham's physical descendants fulfilled it in type, but it ultimately has a spiritual fulfillment in the New Covenant. In this covenant, God promised Abraham a great number of descendants, a land, and that Abraham would be a blessing to many people. Abraham's physical descendants fulfilled these promises in type by becoming a large nation that occupied the land of Canaan. But Jesus Christ is the ultimate Seed of Abraham. All those for whom Christ died are the children of Abraham by faith. Abraham's blessing to the nations is the preaching of the Gospel to all nations and the saving of the elect out of those nations. The promised land is the eternal, heavenly inheritance of the saints. The Old Covenant was made with Israel in Horeb (Sinai). He did not make this covenant with anyone else previously or otherwise. The Ten Commandments are central to the Old Covenant. Although God had a gracious purpose in giving the Old Covenant (much as He had a gracious purpose in foreordaining the Fall of Adam), this covenant was not a covenant of grace, but of works. It demanded perfect obedience. Transgression of the covenant brought God's curse. The purpose of the Old Covenant was to make those under it see their continual sinfulness and to help them and those who read or hear about them see their need for the Savior. The Old Covenant was a covenant of shadows in an immature age. The Old Covenant was clearly temporary. The New Testament calls this covenant old and passing away. It lasted only until the Seed promised in the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants came. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ ended the power of the Old Covenant. The New Covenant is the ultimate fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham about his Seed. God makes the New Covenant with His elect. Jesus Christ is central to the New Covenant. The New Covenant is completely a covenant of grace, not works. The New Covenant—because of Christ's perfect obedience to the law, as well as His bearing its curse—promises only blessings to all those who belong to it. Those under the New Covenant are not under the bondage of the law. In contrast to the Old Covenant, the New Covenant is founded upon better promises and mediated by a better Mediator. The New Covenant is a covenant of light in a mature age. The New Covenant is eternal. Unlike the Old Covenant, when the law of Moses was written on tablets of stone, believers under the New Covenant have the law of Christ written in their hearts. The Old Testament is "able to make" us "wise unto salvation" only "through faith which is in Christ Jesus." That is, its types and shadows (including the Law) point to Christ. This understanding of its New Testament fulfillment in Christ is the way that it "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." The Bible, therefore, must be viewed and interpreted from the viewpoint of Jesus Christ's new revelation, that is, the New Testament. The New Testament interprets the Old.

What makes me really curious is the fact that, despite his work as a church historian and biographer, Dr. Ella seems not to realize that NCT is closer to historic Particular Baptist theology, and therefore closer to

the theology of many of *New Focus's* other writers (and to the 1644/46 London Baptist Confession of Faith that *New Focus* uses) than [to] Reformed Theology. Has Dr. Ella never read Thomas Patient's *The Doctrine of Baptism and the Distinction of the Covenants* (written in 1654)? It is essentially a treatise in NCT. Does Dr. Ella not realize that the doctrine of believer's baptism is solidly founded in the Biblical teaching that the Old and New Covenants are two distinct covenants (one made with a physical nation of people born into it at physical birth, and the other with a spiritual nation of people born into it at regeneration), and that the Reformed concept of one covenant/two administrations was made necessary by the political expedient of continuing infant sprinkling and excusing it as the new administration form of infant circumcision?

I have for some time suspected that there are two nations struggling in the womb of *New Focus*. It seems that Dr. Ella has now taken the first shot and, now that he has done so, we Sovereign Grace Baptists are not going to just sit here without defending ourselves. Is Dr. Ella, who describes himself as "keeping to old Reformed patterns of doctrine, exegesis and hermeneutics," aware that Don Fortner has written, "There is one form of religion that is even more subtle than Arminianism and just as deadly, one form of religion which more subtly promotes the mixture of works with grace than any other. That is what men call Reformed Theology, or the Reformed Faith, or Reformed Doctrine"? My intention is not to put Pastor Fortner into the middle a fight he has not picked (at least, not in the pages of *New Focus*). I bring this up only to show the disparity between other writers for *New Focus* and Dr. Ella. As long as no one said anything, this might have been okay. But now that Dr. Ella has begun to shoot, I think *New Focus* had better decide where it is going to stand. Pastor Fortner goes on, "I want you to understand at the outset that we (The men and women of Grace Baptist Church of Danville) are not Protestants. We are not reformed. We are Baptists. Baptists are not, never have been, and simply cannot be either Protestant or reformed.

"When I speak of Reformed Doctrine, the Reformed Faith, or Reformed Theology, I am basically talking about Presbyterianism as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith. In recent years a denomination has arisen called Reformed Baptists. In reality, for the most part, they are not Baptists at all, but just ducking Presbyterians. They hold to reformed theology in all areas except baptism.... So for the past several weeks I have been carefully studying those confessions of faith most commonly accepted as the doctrinal standards of both Presbyterians and Reformed Baptists: The Westminster Confession and The 1689 Baptist Confession. You will be shocked to discover the heresies cleverly packaged in them. I am bringing this message to you because these things are not matters of indifference. They are matters vital to the gospel." The full text of this message can be found on this webpage: <http://grace-for-today.com/858.htm> [Note: That link no longer works, but the message can now be found here: http://www.donfortner.com/sermon_notes/51_colossians/col%2002v08%20Five%20Subtle%20Heresies%20of%20Reformed%20Doctrine%201300.htm].

In conclusion, I believe it is high time that *New Focus* either stop Dr. Ella's confused attacks, which are often attacks on the beliefs of *New Focus's* Baptist readers, or allow open and equal rebuttal to them in its pages, or openly declare that Baptists are welcome only as long as they don't mind being insulted and tow the Reformed line (in which case, I think that many of us will let our subscriptions lapse).

Thank you for your time.

By His grace alone,
Peter Ditzel
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The next day, 10/31/2007, I received a reply from Dr. Ella. The subject line was, "Dud squibs are useless ammunition." On 11/2/2007, I replied to Dr. Ella. I did so by commenting between the lines of his original email. The following contains the full text of his original email plus the full text of my response. Dr. Ella's words are in blue, mine are in red.

Dear Dr. Ella,

I am responding to your email by writing my comments in red between your paragraphs.

Dear Peter,

You certainly have an axe to grind the bluntness of which is clearly evident. So, too, your unfounded, emotive arguments are clear proof that a blunt axe, in the wrong hands, can be a more harmful weapon than a well-trimmed axe in the hands of a professional.

I am sorry that, instead of addressing the concerns I brought out, you have chosen to do just what you accuse me of. It is the person who begins an attack who has an axe to grind. I did not start this attack. It is you who have, in this email, given nothing but emotive, unfounded arguments.

Yours is the kind of argument I hear often from NCT tyros. Full of wild speculations and accusations as to the position of their opponents, believing that a strategy of bluff, bluster, misrepresentations and an entire lack of analytical acumen will win their wars for them. Such tactics proclaim surrender and defeat on the untrained recruit's side before the battle has started.

This paragraph says nothing. It is itself nothing but wild speculations and accusations, bluff, bluster, and misrepresentations.

The bulk of your scatter-bombs are of the boomerang type. You accuse me of not having read the NCT strategy books I have studied for years and not having corresponded with the leading NCT Generals

in order to arrange a Peace Treaty. Obviously you have not done this yourself as you would not launch into such sabre-rattling manoeuvres. I am fully conversant with the plans of your rebel forces and have had lengthy correspondence with your military experts, including Commander John Reisinger, with whom I have been discussing treaty management for some time. He owes me a dispatch but I have not given up hope of a continued correspondence.

Here you continue with your emotive language, speaking of scatter-bombs, NCT Generals, Peace Treaties, sabre-rattling, rebel forces, military experts, and Commander John Reisinger. Is this any way to settle a theological question? I did not make an accusation against you of not reading the books or not contacting the NCT writers. I said I wondered because your evaluation of them and mine are at times very much at odds. If, by saying, "Obviously you have not done this yourself," you mean that I have not read the books, you have made a direct and false accusation against me. As far as contact with the "leading NCT Generals," by whom I assume you mean NCT writers, I have no axe to grind with them and therefore do not need to grill them. Nevertheless, I have had some casual contact with them over the years.

That a rebel force should count the costs of their warfare and know their enemy goes without saying but you, Private Peter, must realise that before you can know the enemy, you must know yourself. If you cannot see the Dispensationalism in your own NCT strategy, although you yourself partition the terrain you hope to conquer into such zones, then whoever gives you the two-edged Sword of the Spirit must realise that you will use it to your own destruction. Innocence may be bliss but naivety in warfare is certain suicide.

Again, this paragraph is full of emotive, warlike language and says almost nothing. I suppose that by calling me "Private Peter" you either mean to throw me off guard with an insult or to imply that I am under the command of "Commander Reisinger." I am neither thrown off guard nor am I under the command of anyone but my Lord Jesus Christ, in which case I do not put myself even at the rank of a private. For your information, so that you do not mistakenly put me into anyone's army, I will tell you that I came to understand what I believe about the covenants, law and Gospel, etc., independent of anyone else. It was only after I mentioned my convictions to a friend that he said I might like to read John Reisinger's books. Before that, I had never heard of him or any of the NCT writers. As I read their books, I see some that I agree with and some that I do not. But I have never felt that I had to publicly attack their character, intelligence, or Christianity over our disagreements.

As far as your charge of Dispensationalism, I must ask what your esoteric definition of Dispensationalism is, because my beliefs certainly do not fit into the standard definitions of that theological system. For example, I do not believe in the necessity of a physical fulfillment of God's OT promises to Israel. I do believe that everything God did intend for national Israel He fulfilled (Joshua 23:15), I do not believe

in a future for national Israel, I believe that the church is the true Israel of God, I am amillennial. Yes, I believe in a distinction of the covenants because the Bible clearly teaches this, but Dispensationalism goes beyond what the Bible teaches. Your colorful language in the rest of this paragraph sounds like something from Alice in Wonderland and adds no further information.

To claim that I started the defence of orthodoxy by wild shooting is a doubly strategic mistake on your part. Orthodoxy has been revealing NCT error long before it denounced Marcion and every Christian soldier worth his wage has his sights focused accurately on the NCT: not to kill them but to rescue them from themselves and de-traumatise them. NCT wild-fire such as your own is merely practicing on Aunt Sallies. However, the numerous shots that miss their mark and harm innocents standing by are all ammunition for those who are bound to defeat you.

Again, this is empty propaganda. By the way, why do you speak of "every Christian soldier worth his wage"? All we have earned is death and hell. Remember Romans 6:23?

I must deplore the falseness in your pleads for a parley. You express your brotherly desire for peace but spoil it by false propaganda, claiming that my side would not give you a hearing. Your spies have informed you falsely. You claim that change is at the core of your rebellion. Let us hope you are willing to change back to honest Christian warfare.

You presume to judge my heart. But the Bible teaches that we are not supposed to do that. God is my witness that my desire for peace is genuine and your accusation is false. I still desire peace, but on the condition that you stop your false accusations and empty rhetoric. What do you mean by, "Your spies have informed you falsely"? This simply has no basis in reality.

I have read your propaganda flyer concerning your basic grounds for a peace treaty but find you merely whitewash the grave stones of your fallen ones. My articles have shown, I trust, the fallacy of your stated objectives and nowhere have you defined the true teaching of NCT on law, gospel, church, covenant and all the other major doctrines. It does not suffice to ignore what we are saying but you must face our arguments without hiding your head in the sand. That has always been the weakest form of camouflage. Having said that, if you would care to read my statement of strategy in NF, you will see how far even your Sunday-best presentation is from the pan-Biblical gospel.

Again, this is more emotive rhetoric. What propaganda flyer? In my email, I listed the distinctive and core features of NCT. Yet you say that nowhere have I defined the true teaching of NCT. I suppose I must take this as an accusation that I am a liar. Are you the one who determines what the true teachings of NCT are?

Obviously you are not aware of the teaching of the Particular Baptists whose paths you have left. None of their leading men such as Gill, Booth, Ryland, and Kinghorn held anything like NCT tenets. These started with the impact of rational Fullerism which invited back a host of heresies into Baptist ranks. It is difficult to parley with rebels who have not the foggiest idea why they are rebelling and are oblivious to the fact that their own calling-up papers are pure forgeries.

These are more false accusations. It is interesting that the four men you mention are all post-1689 Confession Baptists. The 1689 Confession was a backing away from the historic Baptist position, likely due to the political climate and stresses they were under at the time. The four men you name are closer to what today would be called Reformed Baptists than to the Old Particular Baptists who wrote, or at least lived at the time of, the 1644/46 Confession. Those earlier men certainly did hold to something like NCT tenets. Thomas Patient wrote a book on the subject in 1654. It is called *The Doctrine of Baptism and the Distinction of the Covenants*. I will quote just a small part of it (please excuse the formatting; I cut and pasted it from a MS Word file I have of it to save some typing):

The Scriptures Set Forth Two Covenants

That I may with as much clear satisfaction, inform others as God has clearly convinced my own soul of the truth of this, I shall propound this method to be handled:

There are Two Covenants Held Forth in the Scriptures, One of Grace and One of Works

First, I shall make it appear to you that there are two covenants held forth in Scripture, the one a Covenant of Grace, and the other a Covenant of Works. An absolute covenant and a conditional covenant.

The Covenant of Circumcision was not a Covenant of Life, but a Covenant of Works

Secondly, I shall prove, that the Covenant of Circumcision was no Covenant of Eternal Life, but a conditional covenant, a Covenant of Works.

Only Believers Have a Right to the Covenant of Grace

Thirdly, I shall prove, that none but believers ever had; or shall have a right to the Covenant of Grace.

An Answer to Those Who Allege the Contrary

Fourthly, I shall endeavor to answer such Scriptures (especially those in the New Testament) that are usually alleged for defense of a Covenant of Life in the flesh.

Two Covenants, the One of Works, the Other of Grace, or the One the Old, the Other the New

To the first: there are Two Covenants mentioned in the Scripture. This is very plain. One is a Covenant of Eternal Life, the other is a Covenant of Works in which eternal life was not

conveyed or given, as appears in Jeremiah 31:31-34. "But behold the day cometh, saith the Lord, that I will make a New Covenant with the House of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their Fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the Land of Egypt, which my covenant they brake, although I was to them an husband saith the Lord. But this shall be the Covenant that I shall make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts and will be their God, and they shall be my people, and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord, for I will forgive their Iniquities and remember their sins no more."

Herein There are Two Covenants

You see here Two Covenants, the one Old, the other New. As here we find a New and Old Covenant, so there is likewise mention of Two Covenants in the eighth to the Hebrews. There you have the very same words, only it is clear that Jesus Christ is the Minister of the New Covenant, in the 6th and 7th verses of that chapter: "But now hath he obtained a more excellent Ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better Covenant, which was established upon better promises, for if that first Covenant had been faultless, there would no place have been sought for the second."

Jesus Christ is the Administrator of the New Covenant

In which place we may understand Two Covenants, a New Covenant and an Old Covenant, and Jesus Christ holding Himself to be the peculiar Minister of the New Covenant, (unto the Church then gathered) which is all those who are in Christ, being God's Israel, Abraham's seed.

Those in Christ are Abraham's Seed

If you be in Christ then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to promise, Gal. 3 to the latter end. So that those who are Christ's have this Covenant now made to them. It appears at the 3rd verse that the other covenant was a mere Covenant of Works, in that he says He has made the first old.

The Old Covenant Vanished Away

That which waxes old is ready to vanish away. He means the old covenant, that typical Covenant of Works, which ran upon the fleshly line of Abraham till Christ came out of the flesh of Abraham and so put an end to that covenant in the flesh. This you have further proved in Heb. 9:15, 16. There is again mention made of Two Covenants or Testaments, the first and second.

The First Covenant was Confirmed by the Blood of Animals and the Second by the Blood of Jesus Christ

The first was confirmed by the blood of goats and calves, the second by the blood of Christ. Now if anyone will search these Scriptures it will appear that there are two real, distinct Covenants or Testaments, the one of Grace, and the other of works. One is conditional and the other is absolute.

Notice Samuel Richardson writing in *Justification By Christ Alone* in 1647:

Now we are dead to Moses' Law, but not to Christ's, "now we are married to another," Rom. 7:4, to Christ; we ought to be subject to him and obey his commands, and though we may not bear Moses, we must bear Christ, He has a yoke for our necks and we must put it on, and bear it, "Take my yoke upon you," Matt. 11:29. Christ gives the same law, to be a rule to all His to walk in, and obey Him in. Christ's Testament is His will, which is full of His commands.

Nothing to Do For Our Salvation But Much To Do For Christ's Service

I grant we have nothing to do as a cause or means of our acceptation, justification, or salvation, etc.. Yet we have much to do, for to honor and glorify God, and herein is my father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit, John 15:8. And although there is no curse or wrath annexed to Christ's commands, (as there was to Moses' law, Gal. 3:10) to constrain us to keep the law, or to be inflicted upon us, when we fall and come short, yet know that the power of divine love sweetly and violently constrains a soul to obey Christ's words, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation, teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world," Titus 2:11,12. Christ says "if any man love me, he will keep my words," John 14:23 and 15:16. See Eph. 2:10.

Now hear Edward Drapes in *The Invisible and Visible Worship of God* in 1649:

Christ's laws are very excellent. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. O how hard a matter was it, yea impossible to fulfill Moses' law, but Christ communicates of His fullness that we may fulfill the royal law of love....

I chose these quotes to show that the Old Particular Baptists certainly taught a distinction between the Old and New Covenants and that, while we are dead to Moses' law, we are not dead to Christ's. These are NCT teachings that you have attacked.

Of the later Particular Baptists, I will quote from *Gadsby's Catechism*:

Q.49 What law was Christ made under in His estate of humiliation?

ANSWER. The law of works.

Matt. 5.17-18; Rom. 5.19; Gal. 4.4-5.

Q.50 What is meant by the law of works?

ANSWER. The law of God, commonly called the moral law, chiefly contained in the ten commandments.

Ex. 20.1-17; Deut. 5.6-21.

Q.71 What blessings are connected with faith in Christ Jesus?

ANSWER. The blessings connected with faith in Christ Jesus are, a freedom from the bondage of sin, Satan, the world, death and the law, with free access to the Father, and a hearty welcome to all the glory of the gospel and the blessings of God's house.

Jn. 3.14-17; Rom. 5.2 & 6.14 & 8.1-4; Eph. 2.18-22; I Jn. 2.12-14 & 5.4-5.

Q.72 Since a believer is made free from the law, is it any part of his freedom to be at liberty to sin?

ANSWER. No; for he is called to holiness; and though he is dead to, and free from, the law of works, he is not now, nor does he wish to be, without law to God but is under the law of Christ.

Luke 6.46; Rom. 6.1-2,6-7,11-19 & 7.1-6; 1Cor. 9.21; Gal. 5.1,13-25; Col. 2.6-7; 2Tim. 2.19; Tit. 3.8.

Q.73 What is the law of Christ?

ANSWER. The law of Christ is the gospel of His grace, which is the law from Zion, called the law of faith, the law of liberty, and the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Isa. 2.2-3; Jer. 31.31-34; Mic. 4.1-2; Rom. 3.27 & 7.21-25 & 8.1-4; Gal. 6.2; Heb. 1.8 & 8.6-13; James 1.25.

Q.74 What is the gospel?

ANSWER. The gospel may be taken in a limited or in a more extensive sense.

Mark 1. 14-15; Jn. 1.17; Rom. 1.16; Eph. 3.6; 1Tim. 1.11,14-15.

Q.75 What is meant by the gospel in a limited sense?

ANSWER. Glad tidings of great joy, or a free proclamation of rich mercy, without money and without price, to poor, sin-burdened sinners; with the glorious invitations, doctrines and promises of God's everlasting love, and the blessings these truths contain.

Isa. 55.1-3,6-7; Matt. 11.28-30; Luke 2.10-11,14 & 11.9-10; Jn. 1.16-17 & 3.14-17 & 7.37; Rom. 1.16 & 10.13; Tit. 3.4-7; Rev. 21.6 & 22.17.

Q.76 What is meant by the gospel in a more extensive sense?

ANSWER. The above things, together with the precepts and ordinances enjoined on the church by Christ and His apostles, and the things connected therewith.

Matt. 28.18-20; Jn. 13.34 & 14.15; 1 Cor. 11.23-26; Eph. 2.8-10; Col. 2.6-7; Tit. 3.8-9; 1Jn. 2.6; 2Jn. 6.

So, it is certainly true that the Gospel is the rule of life for believers. But the Gospel encompasses the Law of Christ, which is not the OT law of works, "commonly called the moral law, chiefly contained in the ten commandments."

It does appear odd, if not amusing, that you profess to be a Sovereign Grace Baptist but deny not only the Covenant of Grace in both Testaments but stress a legalism that not even the Jews knew. You are Antinomian in that you have destroyed God's Law and Neonomian in that you have invented a New Law with which God has nothing to do.

Okay, all we Sovereign Grace people, including (I believe) you, have been accused of being Antinomian. I did not destroy God's law. Jesus fulfilled it. He kept it perfectly for me and died to pay the penalties it had against me. I am now under the law of my Husband. To turn back to the Old Covenant law would be spiritual adultery. My attempts to keep Christ's law merit me nothing and nothing I do can ever obligate God. It is simply something I want to do because God working in me, renewing my mind, causes me to want to keep my Lord, Savior, and Husband's laws. This frees me from the charge of Neonomianism, which teaches that there is merit earned for obedience. It also follows Article XXIX of the 1646 Confession, which states:

All believers are a holy and sanctified people, and that sanctification is a spiritual grace of the new covenant, and an effect of the love of God manifested in the soul, whereby the believer presseth after a heavenly and evangelical obedience to all the commands, which Christ as head and king in His new covenant hath prescribed to them.

I continue to offer you the right hand of fellowship, believing that God in His grace makes His strength perfect in our weakness and that election is never conditioned by the momentary rebellion of His chosen ones.

Among other things, you did not address my point concerning the connection between the Reformed concept of one covenant/two administrations and the political expediency of continuing infant sprinkling and excusing it as the new administration form of infant circumcision; and you did not address my observation, backed up by quoted evidence, that much of what other writers for *New Focus* believe is closer to what you are criticizing as NCT than it is to your Reformed beliefs.

In closing, I want to say that I am disappointed with your continual resort to argumentum ad personam and vitriolic, inflammatory language as a "defense." You have done nothing to further my understanding of your position. Thank you for your offer of the right hand of fellowship. I will accept if you will agree to my condition that

you stop your false accusations, character assassinations, empty rhetoric, and acerbic words.

Peter Ditzel

I can thus sign myself,
Yours in grace,
George M. Ella
PS: Please add this manifesto to your internet dispatches.

The next day, I received the following email from Dr. Ella:

11/3/2007

Subject: Re: Dud squibs are useless ammunition

Dear Peter, Please call me George. I must remind you that you took the initiative in approaching me in person and determined the method and tone of your communication with me. I gave you a Roland for your Oliver and this has dismayed you. I, for my part, trusted it would help you to plan your Christian strategie better. I am still hopeful. As a better and more profitable way, I suggest you isolate those traits which are typical of the NCT movement from the orthodox-looking wrappings that you give them. I would thus appreciate your giving me one idea at a time so that we do not lose sight of the trees in the wood. Would you mind starting with the NCT opinion that God's eternal law, the revelation of His immutable nature, has been abolished? I do not ask for your view which appears to diverge radically from that of the NCT, but for the official pronouncements of leading NCT authors. I have read them myself and take them literally at their word. You read them quite differently. I would like to know why you feel your interpretation and application are correct and my literal interpretation wrong. Yours sincerely,

George

It took me a while to respond, but my answer is below:

2/22/2008

Dear George,

I am sorry that, because of other responsibilities, I was forced to put our dialogue on the back burner for so long.

You asked, "Would you mind starting with the NCT opinion that God's eternal law, the revelation of His immutable nature, has been abolished?"

You asked not for my view "but for the official pronouncements of leading NCT authors. Although I have answered with the quotes below, I do, in fact, somewhat mind your question. First, NCT authors no

more speak with one voice on all matters than do Covenant Theologians. I am sure that I could find many points on which you, Calvin, Bullinger, Zwingli, Hodge, and Herman Hoeksema, for example, disagree.

Second, I know of no NCT author who has specifically stated that "God's eternal law, the revelation of His immutable nature," has been abolished. Since it is you who say that they have said this, the onus is on you [to] produce quotes. In a series of five articles and one book review, you have failed to produce such a quote.

Third, the burden is on you to establish that a) There is such a thing as "God's eternal law," b) "God's eternal law" is the revelation of His immutable nature, and c) NCT has the opinion that "God's eternal law" has been abolished.

Nevertheless, to prove that I do not make the above points with rancor, I have fulfilled my homework assignment as best as the truth will allow. I have found the following quotes on the general topic, but none of them say what you seem to think NCT writers say.

John Reisinger writes, "A New Covenant was ratified in the blood of Christ at the cross. The Old Covenant written on the Tablets of Stone at Sinai have been 'fulfilled' and done away. The claims of the Old Covenant have been met; its curse has been endured and removed; and its blessings have been secured by Christ and bestowed on His Church.... It was the Tablets of Stone that blocked the way into the presence of God's presence, but now the terms of the covenant written on stone (Ten Commandments) have been fully met and we enter boldly into the Most Holy Place (Heb. 10:1-23).... A new Pedagogue took over in the conscience of the New Covenant believer. The Tablets of Stone were, in themselves, the old Pedagogue in the conscience of an Israelite. That old Pedagogue has been dismissed (Gal. 3:24, 25) and been replaced by the indwelling Holy Spirit" (John G. Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*, Southbridge, MA: Crowne Publications, 1989, pp. 84-85).

Steve Lehrer writes, "When the Old Covenant had fulfilled its purpose, the Law of that covenant and the covenant itself came to an end.... The Old Covenant and its institutions only illustrated what the New Covenant and the work of Jesus Christ actually accomplished.... Therefore, what Christ means when He says, '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 is that He is the eschatological culmination of the entire plan of God...Jesus Christ, by his death and resurrection, has brought to an end the Old Covenant era and has accomplished all that the Old Covenant had revealed in picture form. According to this option, we should understand the verses as the following paraphrase suggests: 'Until I accomplish all that I came here to do (live the perfect life, reveal the Father, and die on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of My people), the Old Covenant will remain in full force. In fact, God would sooner wipe out everything than bring the Old Covenant to naught before I have accomplished my mission.'

When was His mission accomplished? It was accomplished at the cross.... Let me summarize my answer to this question by showing you how this interpretation of Matthew 5:17-19 makes sense of the apparent conflict between Matthew 5:17, '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' and Ephesians 2:14-15, 'For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace.' Jesus did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets and yet he does abolish the law with its commandments and regulations.

"This interpretation leads us to the conclusion, as stated earlier, that Jesus did not come to turn all of God's preparatory work (the law and the prophets) on its ear and to make it utterly meaningless. In addition, the Mosaic Law was still in effect throughout Jesus' ministry and He even taught that people must obey the minute details of the Mosaic Law. In both senses, Jesus did not come to abolish the law and the prophets. But His work on the cross did bring the purpose of the Mosaic Covenant to an end. Also, when Jesus died on the cross and inaugurated the New Covenant in His blood, he brought the binding nature of the Law of the Old Covenant to an end and put the Law of the New Covenant into effect. In these ways, Jesus did 'abolish the law with its commandments and regulations'"

(Steve Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology—questions answered*, 2006, pp. 132-136).

John Zens writes, "Rather than trying to get the 'moral aspect of Moses into the Messianic age, we do well to submit ourselves to the progress of redemptive revelation. New Covenant subjects are under the 'law of Christ (Gal.6:2). Whatever law binds the Christian is in the hands of Christ, not Moses. The covenant of which Moses was the mediator is abolished. We are now under the law of a better' covenant. Obviously, there is no place for antinomianism' (anti-law; lawlessness) in the New Covenant. In it, the law will be put in the heart by the operation of the Spirit"(John Zens, "Is There A Covenant of Grace?").

I am not speaking for these writers, but my summation of what I read here is that Christ abolished the law only in the sense that He fulfilled it. And what He fulfilled is not something called "God's eternal law, the revelation of His immutable nature." You will have to prove that the Bible teaches something called "God's eternal law, the revelation of His immutable nature." You will have to show that the law God gave Israel through Moses at Sinai is "God's eternal law, the revelation of His immutable nature." "You will have to show that because this law is "God's eternal law, the revelation of His immutable nature," Christ could not have abolished it in the sense of having fulfilled it, and that He could not have obrogated [to annul a law by enacting a new law—ed] it in the sense of having replaced it with the New Covenant. Otherwise, I will continue to believe that the Bible shows that Jesus fulfilled the law.

Suppose I am an artist, and I am engaged to paint a mural in the city hall. A contract is drawn up detailing the obligations of all parties involved. Once I have completed the painting and fulfilled my obligations to the city, and they have fulfilled their obligations to me, the contract is fulfilled and ended. It no longer has a legal hold over me or the city. In that sense, it is abolished. But suppose, before I fulfill my obligation in the contract, the state government steps in, reviews the contract, and says there is something about it that is contrary to state law. They then use their authority, or the authority of the court, to end the contract, to declare it void, to abolish or destroy the contract before it is fulfilled. Jesus was saying that He had not come with the authority of God to destroy the law before it was fulfilled, but that He was going to fulfill the law right down to every jot and tittle. Once He did that, the law would end because all obligations in the contract would have been fulfilled. The law changed when the Old Covenant law was fulfilled by Christ and replaced by New Covenant law, the law of Christ, which is, as Gadsby said, "the gospel of His grace, which is the law from Zion, called the law of faith, the law of liberty, and the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

You write in part 1 of your series of articles, "After all, Moses did not invent the law but was given it by the God of both Testaments. The law shows the eternal standard of Father, Son and Holy Ghost and is a description of the Divine character. As God is immutable, nothing can be added to or taken away from that character." To me, you are confusing a creation of God, the law, with God Himself.

What do you make of Jesus' answer to the Pharisees in Matthew 19:8-9? "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

Jesus is essentially saying that from the beginning, the law of marriage did not allow for divorce except for adultery. But the law later given by Moses allowed divorce for other reasons. And now, we are again to have no divorce except for adultery. If God's law is as immutable as God, and if Moses was giving as law only what God gave him, how did he make the change he did? Or, again, if the law is immutable, how did Jesus change what Moses gave? What about Hebrews 7:12? Also, are the dietary laws of Leviticus 11 the eternal standard of Father, Son and Holy Ghost? Are they a description of the Divine character? Are they immutable as God is immutable? How, then, did Jesus declare all meats clean? Can some laws change and others cannot? Where does the Bible say this?

So, as I said at the beginning, the onus is on you [to] produce the quotes that you believe are so damning to NCT writers. And the burden is on you to establish that a) There is such a thing as "God's eternal law," b) "God's eternal law" is the revelation of His immutable nature, and c) NCT has the opinion that "God's eternal law" has been abolished.

Also, I would be very interested to know what you think of the following:

The Word of God does, most emphatically, teach that in Christ the believer is entirely free from the law, and for this simple reason Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth (Romans 10:4). We have been crucified with Christ, we are become dead to the law by the body of Christ" (Romans 7:4). Consequently there is no sense whatsoever in which it may be said that the believer is under the law as a rule of life....

When the Word of God declares, as it universally does, that all who look to Christ as their Lord, Saviour and King, are totally free from the law, this is what that freedom means:

1. We have no covenant with the law. The law has examined Christ and found Him perfect and holy. It has nothing more to say against Christ and, as we are in Him, no more to say against us. We now live under a covenant of grace.
2. We have no commitment to the law. Our commitment is to Christ, who obeyed the law for us.
3. We do nothing by constraint of the law. "The love of Christ constraineth us."
4. We fear no curse from the law. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. For it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."...

The Ten Commandments are commonly referred to as "the moral law". However, you will search the Word of God in vain to find a separation between the Ten Commandments and the "other" laws given by God, in the hand of Moses, to the children of Israel. When the scriptures declare that believers in Christ are free from the law and that Christ is the end of the law, the declaration is that we are free from all the Mosaic law (ceremonial, judicial, civil, dietary, economic, and moral) by which the nation of Israel was governed in the Old Testament.

Those who try to separate the moral law, that is, the Ten Commandments, from the rest of the law of God given to Israel tell us that the believer is free from the dietary laws, circumcision laws, sacrificial laws, etc., but he is still under the moral law. However, when Paul told the Galatians that such doctrine is no better than witchcraft (Galatians 3:1), and affirmed our total freedom from the law, he quoted a passage

from Deuteronomy which specifically refers to the Ten Commandments (Galatians 3:10; Deuteronomy 27:14-26).
[Readers: This quote is from Don Fortner, a Sovereign Grace Baptist pastor who usually has at least one article per issue of *New Focus* magazine. It illustrates my point that Dr. Ella's views of the law and the covenants are out-of-step with those of many other *New Focus* writers, and that what those writers teach, Dr. Ella would condemn as New Covenant Theology. Source of quote: <http://www.pristinegrace.org/media.php?id=291>]

I am glad we are having this dialogue. But, again, please understand that I do not consider that I am obligated to know everything that every New Covenant Theologian has said and is saying, nor must I agree with everything they say to still be in the NCT camp.

By His grace alone,
Peter Ditzel

On 3/19/2008, Dr. Ella sent me the following email:

Dear Peter, I have been very ill for some time and away at my son's in the north of Germany. Back here, I am still in great pain. For the next week, I shall be busy preparing for the New Focus Conference where (God willing) I shall give two lectures on the Heroes of the North. I must also finish my update and extension of my new edition of *Law and Gospel in the Theology of Andrew Fuller* by then. However, as things stand, I am not fit enough to travel. I shall come back to you at the beginning of April. I feel that I have already covered your questions in my articles but, as the adage goes, 'If you do not succeed at first, try, try and try again.' I did prepare two further lengthy rebuttals of your points and sent them off but was advised not to proceed as there was obviously too great a chance of rancour raising its ugly head. Your latest letter put such fears on my part at bay.

Yours in grace,
George

I immediately responded with the following:

Dear George, I am sorry to hear of your illness. I hope that you will somehow find the time to rest despite your busy schedule. Please do not feel obligated to respond until you have recovered and have the time. You will be in our prayers.

Peter

Dr. Ella never replied, and I assumed he was either too ill or too busy to do so. At about this time (I don't remember just when, nor do I seem to have any record of when), Michael Lyman, pastor of City on a Hill Baptist Church in Tennessee, sent me a set of lectures Dr. Ella had given at his church a few years before. I asked Michael if he was going to put them on his website. He said he would like to have them online, but he did not have the technical expertise to do it. So, it was decided that I would put them on wordofhisgrace.org. I had no problem with this, especially considering that Dr. Ella's last email was less vitriolic than his first two. But I did have reservations about putting Dr. Ella's talk, "John Gill and Justification from Eternity," on the site without a rebuttal. Thus, I wrote one and put it online when I uploaded the talks. While my rebuttal is frank, I was careful to not include rancor or personal remarks. Considering Dr. Ella's state of health, I did not want to bother him with a personal email, but figured that as he recovered and got out and about, he would probably come to hear of my rebuttal and, when he could, resume our email exchange. This did not happen.

Despite the fact that Dr. Ella said he would get back to me when well enough and he had the time, he did not. What he did instead was to write and publish on his site an article, "Peter Ditzel on Justification" (<http://evangelica.de/articles/peter-ditzel-on-justification/>) that misleads his readers about what I said and gives them the false impression that my rebuttal is a confused mix of poor philosophy, illogic, alterations of the Authorized Version, and false accusations. If anyone cares to read my rebuttal and then compare it with Dr. Ella's article, I leave them to judge whether what Dr. Ella wrote fairly represents what I said in my rebuttal article. As just one example among many I could cite, Dr. Ella writes, "In his final complaint, Ditzel accuses me of misrepresenting John Murray by quoting his words, 'Justification is not the eternal decree of God with respect to us.'" But what I said was, "Something that must be addressed in this article is the fact that Dr. Ella in his talk most obviously misinterprets John Murray. I don't want to be misunderstood here as either defending John Murray or of accusing Dr. Ella of purposefully misrepresenting John Murray's position." "Misinterpret" and "misrepresent" have two entirely different meanings (with "misrepresent" usually including the intent to deceive), and I

specifically said I did not want to be misunderstood as accusing Dr. Ella of misrepresenting John Murray's position—the very thing Dr. Ella accuses me of doing.

Also on Dr. Ella's site is a two-part article, "Covenant Theology as Seen by the NCT" (<http://evangelica.de/articles/covenant-theology-as-seen-by-the-nct-part-one/>), which begins with these inflammatory sentences: "Peter Ditzel, whose attempt to distort Peter Meney's and my own doctrine of justification was dealt with in the last issue, belongs to the latter day New Covenant Theology group of para-church movements. These have radically altered their common beliefs of some dozen years ago and are now expanding their Marcionite dualistic vision from their various contradictory views of the Covenant into all areas of theology. They are now winning recruits from once staunch holders of Presbyterian covenant views such as The Founders Ministries who have brought new variations with them." Notice that Dr. Ella accuses me of holding to Marcionite dualism. Marcionism was the belief that the God of the Old Testament was a different and lower God from the God of the New Testament. It rejected the God of Israel, the Old Testament, and even much of the New Testament (its canon consisted of an edited version of the Gospel of Luke and ten of Paul's epistles). To accuse me of this heresy is defamatory and slanderous and totally irresponsible for a man who is supposed to be a scholar. It is also an utterly ridiculous lie that is unbecoming of a Christian.

As soon as I found out about these articles, I wrote to the following email to Dr. Ella:

4/4/2012

Dr. Ella,

When you last corresponded with me in March 2008, you told me you were very ill. I hope you have recovered.

It has now been brought to my attention that you have some articles on your website, evangelica.de, in which you mention me. The two primary ones are "Peter Ditzel on Justification" and "Covenant Theology as Seen by the NCT." While not at all agreeing with your assessment in the former of what I wrote in "A Rebuttal to George M. Ella's "John Gill and Justification from Eternity", it is the latter article that I am especially concerned with.

You begin "Covenant Theology as Seen by the NCT" by saying, "Peter Ditzel, whose attempt to distort Peter Meney's and my own doctrine of justification was dealt with in the last issue, belongs to the latter day New Covenant Theology group of para-church movements. These have

radically altered their common beliefs of some dozen years ago and are now expanding their Marcionite dualistic vision from their various contradictory views of the Covenant into all areas of theology."

Since an attempt is a purposeful action, you therefore begin your article by accusing me of purposefully attempting to distort Peter Meney's and your doctrine of justification. This is a defamatory statement. You have no evidence to back it up. Indeed, it would be impossible to have such evidence because the statement is not true.

You may certainly say that I misunderstood your doctrine, and I may take another look and either agree or not agree. This is scholarly debate. But to say that I made an "attempt to distort" your doctrine is to accuse me of a purposeful deceit and, thus, to say that I am a deceiver, a liar. This is slander.

In the next sentence, you group me together with others and say we are expanding our "Marcionite dualistic vision." This statement implies that I am a Marcionite. As a theologian and historian and biographer of the Christian church, you certainly should know that Marcionism is named after the second century heretic, Marcion. I think that anyone who understands the beliefs of Marcion would agree that the following are his essential doctrines:

1. He believed in two gods, distinguishing between the creator and redeemer god.
2. He rejected the God of the Old Testament as an inferior demiurge.
3. In rejecting the God of the Old Testament, he rejected the Old Testament.
4. He rejected much of the New Testament—his canon consisted of an edited version of the Gospel of Luke and ten of Paul's epistles.

On the other hand, I am on record as believing:

1. One God: "God is a Trinity of three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory" ("Why Christians Believe in the Trinity" <http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/trinity.html>).
2. The God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New Testament (evidence of this is throughout my writings—I never distinguish the God of the Old Testament as somehow being different from the God of the New Testament).
3. The Old Testament is a part of the canon of Scripture: "Christians rightly believe that the written Word of God consists of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments;" "The Old Testament Was Written for Our Sakes" ("The Superiority of Jesus Christ and His New Testament Revelation" <http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/ntsuperiorot.htm>). Saying that the New Testament is the superior revelation and that New

Testament writers interpret the Old Testament is not a rejection of the Old Testament, and it is certainly not Marcionism.

4. The twenty-seven books of the New Testament are part of the canon of Scripture: "Christians rightly believe that the written Word of God consists of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments" ("The Superiority of Jesus Christ and His New Testament Revelation" <http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/ntsuperiorot.htm>). I use all of the New Testament books throughout my writings.

Thus, I am not a Marcionite. I am not even close to being a Marcionite. To include me in a group that you say holds a "Marcionite dualistic vision" is a defamatory statement.

I also want you to know that there would be very little, if anything, that you have said in any of your articles that mention me that I consider to accurately reflect what I actually teach. From what you have said, you also apparently believe that what I have said in "A Rebuttal to George M. Ella's 'John Gill and Justification from Eternity'" does not accurately reflect your position. Although I do not agree with this assessment, I am willing to remove that article and all references to you on my website and not mention you there again if you will remove all references to me on your website and not mention me again. Please don't misconstrue this as a capitulation. It is just that, considering your refusal to discuss what I consider to be the real issues in both our email exchange and in your articles and your apparent unwillingness to accurately quote me or summarize what I say, I consider that any further effort in this area would be a waste of time.

But however you consider my offer in the previous paragraph, I do want to stress the following: Your statement accusing me of purposefully attempting to distort Peter Meney's and your doctrine of justification is defamatory. And your including me in a group that you say holds a "Marcionite dualistic vision" is a defamatory statement. Do you, as a scholar, really want to make such irresponsible statements? Do you, as a Christian, really want to publish unfounded calumnies against my character and reputation?

I request that you retract these statements. I would not construe your doing so to be any sort of admission or agreement with me.

So that this is not something that sits for any length of time, I will expect an answer by April 12. If this is not enough time, then please at least send me a suggested alternative date by April 12. Please also know that I am NOT interested in debate. That moment is past and was a waste of time.

Peter Ditzel

On 4/5/2012, Dr. Ella responded with the following:

Dear Peter,

Thank you for your enquiry concerning my health. I have had ten operations in all recently, 12 hospitalisations and three rehabilitation clinic periods of three weeks each but am now through God's grace picking up.

Your letter was a great puzzle to me for several reasons:

1. You refer to your broken off correspondence with me in 2008 and now reply four years later. Yet, though you have taken your time, you demand from me that I reply to your mail before 12 April, giving me a week to reply. Is this fair?

2. You originally questioned the doctrine of Justification from Eternity publically as held by me publically and misrepresented it publically, though obviously not understanding it. Though I replied in public, you did not thereafter explain yourself in public. You remained silent. Now, years after you bombard me with new, strange accusations, though you ignore our original topic which needs settling first. I repeat: my point then was that you had fully misunderstood the doctrine but instead of confessing this and asking me to clarify my terms (which I nevertheless did in later articles), you sought to refute what you did not understand, thus causing more misunderstandings. You still owe me this response, though, admittedly, I did not give you a deadline.

3. I have looked into your web-site regularly over the past few years but found no public explanation of why you rejected my defence. You obviously did not do the same but have been informed by third parties, relying on hearsay which is always questionable. I have, however seen how you have become more and more radical since your all too radical WCG days and are now seeking to drive the NCT likewise to further extremes by adding new doctrines to the list of those you claim are of your faith. Your recent denunciation of your own father-in-the faith Abraham as not being born-again was a pioneer novelty of your own which I have never come across, so worded, in NCT literature before. As Abraham is your father in the faith and you rob him of the new birth, does this mean you are not born again either? The New Testament speaks of the Old Testament faith of Abraham given him by Christ which was his justification and made him your father in the faith as well as mine. I trust you do own Abraham as your father in Christ within the terms Christ and the author to the Hebrews lay down.

4. You say that you do not wish to debate but you have given me a programme for further debate which would last until Kingdom Come, should we both rise to the occasion. This is most confusing. Do you wish to debate or do you not? If we are to debate, however, I suggest we do so on far different irenic grounds.

If you wish to debate, I would expect you to avoid complicating the issue with matters which tie you up with further knots rather than stick to the original point which is not cleared up. I promise to deal with all

your other topics point for point, though it will take ages, but as they all develop from your initial criticism which is not yet cleared up, it would be folly to start on new misunderstandings from your side leading from your initial faulty argument. Faulty arguments usually lead to faulty faith and faulty apologetics, witnessed by your letter.

I thus suggest we drop all polemics, rhetoric and hot air in future, which will be difficult but necessary for us both, and keep to the topic of your original attack on Peter Meney and myself and your view of Justification from Eternity which I find un-Biblical and therefore faulty. Your misunderstanding has given rise to your present over-reaction as you build one wrong thought on another initiated by your first mistake. This has given rise to your present letter which merely takes us further away from the matter in hand. Unless you can understand me whom you attack, how can I understand you, the attacker who continues to misunderstand?

Let us therefore, take one step at a time in brotherly cooperation.

As you started this debate on a condemnation of Justification from Eternity as I see it, and you did not, let us clear the air by you stating as concise as possible what you feel is my doctrine. I shall then respond and you are free to respond back. Then we shall mutually work out the pros and cons together. We can then proceed to other topics. The Covenant itself would be of great interest to us both. What do you think?

Yours sincerely in Christ,

George M. Ella

A few hours later, Dr. Ella sent me via email an article he had published, "Christ's work as Saviour within the Covenant of Grace" (<http://evangelica.de/articles/christ's-work-as-saviour-within-the-covenant-of-grace/>) in which he again publicly attacked me and New Covenant Theology.

I answered on 4/6/2012 with the following:

Dr. Ella,

On April 4, I sent you an email that needed your response on two points. In the two emails you have sent me since, you did not respond to these points. I will try to make them clearer by putting them into question form:

1. Will you take up my offer of removing all references to me on your website and not mentioning me again if I remove all references to you on my website and not mention you there again?
2. If not the above, will you at least remove the defamatory statements you made about me on your website?

In one of your emails, you say you want to work on "irenic grounds" and suggest "we drop the polemics, rhetoric and hot air" and "take one step at a time in brotherly cooperation." This makes you out to be the innocent victim wanting only to peacefully discuss theology whom I have attacked. But the record of our correspondence and the tone of your articles bears witness that the facts are the other way around.

Then, in another email sent only hours later, you sent me another of your articles, "Christ's work as Saviour within the Covenant of Grace," in which you mention me three times, and misrepresent me, and in which, again, you link New Covenant Theologians to Marcion, call Marcion their founder, and label New Covenant Theology Neonomian, Antinomian, and new Judaism all at the same time! This does not sound like you are trying to be irenic, Dr. Ella.

And then, toward the end of the article, you again portray yourself as the saintly victim: "I would very gladly enter into dialogue with them but my many overtures up to now have been rejected with arrogant and sneering ridicule and hate. Perhaps I am now too old and frail for the job. I can only love them and pray for them.... I would not ban a single NCT follower from my table or prayer chamber, nor refuse to commune with him at the Lord's Table. I trust I am also prepared to learn from them as no professing Christian is without something of the Lord which he can impart to others. I extend to them the right hand of fellowship and wish to enter into dialogue with them so that we can grow in grace and a knowledge of Jesus Christ together." Why do I hear Seth Pecksniff when I read those words? No, Dr. Ella, you will not draw me back to debate only to again avoid the issues and personally abuse me.

Just answer my two questions.

Peter Ditzel

On 4/7/2012, Dr. Ella sent the following email:

Dear Brother Peter,

I did not expect this kind of letter from you, a brother in Christ. I wrote in an irenic spirit and pointed out that we must begin at the beginning and work forwards and not begin with your impolite, immodest, prejudiced language and work backwards as your accusations were based, as I see things, on faulty misapprehensions, misunderstandings and misrepresentations which can be easily dispensed with. Why will you not take the right hand of fellowship I offer you?

There were far more than two points in your last letter which I found so confused as to be unintelligible and I gave my reasons for answering as I did, overlooking your most impolite innuendoes and bullying manner. Especially your revolver-to-the-head demand for a

reply before April 12, though you had taken years to react yourself, is quite unacceptable and un-called for. Nevertheless, I gave you a reply the very next day. I read no 'thank you' for this irenic gesture of mine in your present letter. I also miss a brotherly 'Dear George', or even 'Dear Dr. Ella' in your salutations.

Now to your 'points'

The six essays [Dr. Ella refers to "A Rebuttal to George M. Ella's 'John Gill and Justification from Eternity'" which is one essay in six parts] you wrote denouncing and denigrating imagined views which you faultily attributed to me were written, of course, before my defence which you failed to meet objectively, giving reasons for your behavior. If apologies are needed, which I did not demand, surely we must start here. I was willing to leave the matter as it was but you insist on clarity. Then please provide the clarity you demand. The onus is on you as you first started this ball of misrepresentations rolling. Furthermore, you badly need instruction as to what I really believe. This would change your tone totally and provide a platform for further debate. However, you say you will not have debate from me but debate on yourself, nevertheless. A one-sided debate merely from you is not my idea of fellowship.

Your six articles on the web cannot be removed. The damage is done publicly for all time and, though I understand you have second thoughts on the subject and thus would like to see what you have said unsaid, it cannot be done. You must carry the responsibility of your action. I offered you a peaceful way out of your dilemma but you bluff your way out of your Christian responsibilities by insisting that I apologise for my defence against your misrepresentations. If you feel I have misrepresented you, I am truly sorry, but I acted on the basis of what you said of me which was a misrepresentation. The fact that you stubbornly will not admit your faults makes you judge every criticism of your mistakes as a misrepresentation for which you demand satisfaction. This is sheer vanity. Only by going back to the roots of the matter will you understand what you have done wrong. You cannot accuse me of misrepresenting your misrepresentation. What would be the point?

One day, an angry lady knocked on our house door demanding entry. She had brought her son who complained that my son had struck hers. After soothing the savage spirit in the woman, we asked for the boy's opinion. He said 'I struck your son first'. We then asked the mother what all the fuss was about. Our son had already informed us of the escapade and that he had struck back once and the matter ended there. We did not go and knock on the lady's door to demand satisfaction. However, to our surprise, the mother said that her boy had not hurt my son (how could she tell?) as much as my son had hurt her boy (how could she tell) and therefore my son was the guilty partner. This is exactly how you are reasoning. However, we soon patched up the matter with both mother and son and we have been good friends ever since that event happened thirty years ago. I am

sure we can patch up things too. Why not give us a chance? If this wild lady turned mild, a brother like you will find it easy.

To come back to the matter of your erasing your blog and forgetting the matter. Your blog has been copied and re-copied and made its rounds world-wide amongst both friends and critics and I am continually been called names by your friends for the silliness of my doctrines as described by you. Forgetting things cannot repair the damage as people do not forget. When they read how I define justification and how you say I define it, they draw conclusions unflattering to you. The only way to escape from your dilemma is to put your right hand into mine and we shall both analyse the matter from the beginning and both apologise where we truly have misrepresented each other. If we could both speak in words of mutual peace and honest agreement, or explained disagreement, but show we are brethren in Christ, we will help build the House of God together. We cannot do this by massive denunciations and the throwing in of irrelevant matter which shows a total lack of understanding of what is at stake. Let us therefore, in brother love and respect, take it one step at a time. You started things off by misrepresenting my doctrine of justification and inventing reasons why you thought I held to it. Let us clear that up first and go on to other points peacefully after that.

You complain that I think myself an innocent victim. I do not use such pathetic words as that but you did start the polemics, did you not?

You find I do not sound irenic. I am truly sorry though you take my unwillingness to be bullied by you as aggressive. I presume it is difficult for one who wants a fight rather than fellowship to call, using your word, his victim 'irenic'. That would be to admit that one is in the wrong. However, I urge you to try and approach the matter ironically [sic] yourself as I have striven to the best of my ability. Judging by what you teach, and the aggressive way you go about your ministry, I do not believe that criticism of it displays like aggression. My honest opinion is that one who treats the Bible of the Christians as you do is a Marcionite. So, too, your legalism is obviously Neonomian and Antinomian as you reject the law in its covenant setting and preach a new law. Of course, you see yourself in a different light but unless you are prepared to explain yourself, your light is dim indeed to me. You find your broadside in your last letter is light enough but it comes over as a splitter-bomb that shatters all chances of a mutual understanding and is partly confused, partly irrelevant, partly mere hot air and partly acute hypocritical arrogance. This is not the way of peace.

What I quoted from me in your last paragraph, I believe honestly from my heart. Are you not prepared to say 'amen' to this? Have you no desire for peace? If you feel incapable of explaining yourself, I am very patient as I have a pastoral duty to you as you have to me and I trust we both wish to live in peace with all men. I know this demands a lot from me but without mutual efforts from both sides, we both stand in need of reconciliation.

I realize that you will not easily accept my response to your many questions on the grounds that we take one at a time. I see no other way out. I certainly do not wish for more impolite wrangling and harangues from you if you have no desire for peace, mutual understanding and clarity. If you are not interested in what your opponents say, why oppose them? I am very interested in what NCT and its split-offs say and believe their main difficulty is that they do not understand true Biblical covenant teaching. They start on the wrong footing by striving to repair the quite faulty bi-covenant, enlightenment teaching of such as Prynne and Rutherford who were motivated by politics, Platonism and Aristotelianism rather than the Bible as we read in Rex Lex. By developing Rutherford and Co. further, the NCT-ites feel that they are nearer the Scriptures, whereas they have gone even further away. This view has been rightly called the first stage in the Enlightenment and the way to mere human Rationalism. The Covenant teaching of our Reformers and most of the non-Presbyterian Puritans of the 17th century had quite a different view of God's Covenant with His Son than that of the Presbyterians and present day NCT movements.

I could not, therefore, leave out, let alone erase your writings from my studies as they help to chronicle and explain the dumbing-down of doctrine in the movement and the drift from true Covenant teaching. I understand from your writings that you have not the foggiest idea of what the covenant is all about as, like Marcion, you separate not only the Old Testament teaching from the New but also divide both your parts into separate law and grace, thus postulating four covenants. Until you accept that what you call New Testament teaching is a misunderstanding and misuse of the Old Testament and that New Covenant teaching is part and parcel of Old Testament teaching continued in the New Testament, you will continue to split up into sect after sect. Where truth does not reign, chaos ensues.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

George

I did not respond to this email because Dr. Ella did not really respond to me. In fact, if you will notice going over all of our correspondence, Dr. Ella never responded to the questions I raised or directly addressed the issues. But I will now take this opportunity to address the points Dr. Ella raises in his last two emails.

1. I did not break off correspondence with him in 2008. He broke it off with me because he was ill. I then only recently found out that he had made defamatory remarks about me on his website, and, naturally, set a time limit for his response because I wanted these remarks removed as soon as possible. "Is this fair?" Was it fair for him to slander me? Of course it was fair of me to set a time limit. He should not have published the remarks in the first place. But I did say that if

he did not have the time, he could give me an alternative date. Yes, I was fair and, perhaps, too lenient.

2. Dr. Ella has confused the order of events and continually accuses me of starting the accusations. It was he who first attacked New Covenant Theology publicly. I responded to these attacks with an email to *New Focus* magazine. Dr. Ella responded to that with an email to me of pure invective, and, thus, began our correspondence. It was only after he ended this correspondence that I published my rebuttal to his doctrine of justification from eternity. How he sums this up by saying that I owe him a response, I do not know.

3. I did not rely on hearsay. Someone told me that Dr. Ella had published articles about me on his website, which turned out to be true. I read the articles and found them to be diatribe containing the defamatory statements I have mentioned. I have never denounced Abraham. The accusation is laughable. To denounce someone is to pronounce them blameworthy of evil. What Dr. Ella apparently has reference to is my article, "Were the Old Testament Saints Born Again? The Least in the Kingdom is Greater Than John the Baptist." (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/johhkingdom.htm>). This is not the place to rehash that article, but in that article, I clearly state that the Old Testament saints, including Abraham, "lived under the Old Covenant, they had the Holy Spirit, and they were saved by faith—looking forward in faith to the promise of the Messiah. But they were not born again or born from above into the kingdom of God that we born again Christians under the New Covenant now live in." Nothing in the article even remotely suggests that I have rejected Abraham as the father of the faithful. The Bible clearly states that he is, and I believe it.

4. I do not know what Dr. Ella means by saying I have given him a program for further debate. I told him I wanted his defamatory statements removed, stated what they were, and said that I did not want further debate. Why is this unclear?

5. Dr. Ella suggests that we "debate on irenic grounds," "drop all polemics, rhetoric and hot air in future, which will be difficult." I agree that this would apparently be difficult for Dr. Ella, as he certainly did not achieve it in his email correspondence to me or in his articles about me. On the other hand, what I have written does not fit that description. I tried to keep the debate on topic by sticking to Scripture, doctrine, and church history, and asking Dr. Ella questions directly related to the topic of New Covenant Theology (questions that he did

not answer). It was Dr. Ella who continually abused and insulted me in his emails, and it was I who called on him to stop his "false accusations, character assassinations, empty rhetoric, and acerbic words." Yet, it was after this that he published defamatory statements about me. I cannot take his suggestion that we debate on irenic grounds seriously.

6. Again, the original topic was New Covenant Theology, not justification from eternity.

In my latest emails to Dr. Ella, I requested that he remove defamatory statements he made about me on his website. I quoted the statements so there could be no doubt what they were. I also offered to remove all references to him on my website and never refer to him there again if he would remove all references to me on his website and not mention me there again. Since Dr. Ella seemed unable to peacefully discuss theology, I saw my proposal as a peace offering: in other words, let's just erase everything and forget the whole thing. Instead, he refused my offer and turned it around to make it sound as though I was trying to back out of what I said because I was having second thoughts. This is not at all the case. Therefore, I have removed all of Dr. Ella's talks from my website (so that no one would mistakenly assume that I agree with Dr. Ella and his website) except the one on justification from eternity, and I have kept my rebuttal to that talk on the site.

In one of my emails, I proved from the beliefs of Marcion that anyone can verify and my own beliefs of record that I am not a Marcionite. Yet Dr. Ella refuses to retract or even remove his accusations that I am a Marcionite, as well as his other absurd accusations that I am both a Neonomian and an Antinomian, and that I attempted to distort Peter Meney's and his doctrine of justification. This he does while at the same time calling for peace. Dr. Ella has used his emails to make it sound to the undiscerning that I am picking on him, being unfair, and that we should now have brotherly cooperation. I am sorry, but trying to have a brotherly relationship with Dr. Ella has left me feeling like the victim of attempted fratricide. Rather than discussing the Bible as a brother in Christ, Dr. Ella seems to be following the advice of Arthur Schopenhauer:

A last trick is to become personal, insulting, rude, as soon as you perceive that your opponent has the upper hand, and that you are going to come off worst. It consists in passing from the subject of dispute, as from a lost game, to the disputant

himself, and in some way attacking his person. It may be called the argumentum ad personam, to distinguish it from the argumentum ad hominem, which passes from the objective discussion of the subject pure and simple to the statements or admissions which your opponent has made in regard to it. But in becoming personal you leave the subject altogether, and turn your attack to his person, by remarks of an offensive and spiteful character. It is an appeal from the virtues of the intellect to the virtues of the body, or to mere animalism. This is a very popular trick....

Arthur Schopenhauer, The Art Of Controversy

Therefore, repeating what I said at the beginning, based upon biblical instruction, I now refuse to contact, correspond with, debate, or in any way have discourse with Dr. Ella unless he convinces me of sincere and heartfelt repentance.