



The Everlasting Covenant



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Part One

Dr. Hugh Martin (1821-1885) began his invaluable work on the atonement by saying, “If we would investigate the very doctrines of atonement which God’s Word sets forth—avoiding arbitrary and capricious speculations, and illegitimate and useless trains of thought—it must be laid down at the outset, as a proposition of transcendent importance, that the doctrine of the atonement ought to be discussed and defended as inside the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace.” Alas that so many have failed to do so, with the result that the foundations of faith have been undermined, truth has been perverted, the people of God have been perplexed, and the enemies of the Lord afforded every opportunity to attack with no little success an otherwise impregnable fortress. The satisfaction or atonement of Christ ought never to be separated from its *source*, that source being the eternal agreement entered into by the Persons of the Godhead. That which Christ wrought out in time was what had been determined upon in the timeless counsels of the Holy Trinity. That which was accomplished here in this world was what had been decided upon and ordained in heaven before ever this earth had an existence. Christ did not propose the plan of reconciliation or offer to carry it into execution, instead it was proposed unto Him. The Father drew the plan and proposed it unto Christ as the God-man, the Mediator. He most cheerfully engaged to carry out that plan. The Holy Spirit was a witness unto that great transaction between the Father and the Son, and He recorded it in the eternal volume of the divine decrees, and has accurately and authentically stated it in the Holy Scriptures, in which we read of, “The blood of *the everlasting covenant*” (Heb. 13:20).

When writing or thinking of the work of redemption, we ought to ascend to its *source*, and begin with the consideration of that eternal agreement between the Persons of the Godhead on which the whole dispensation of divine grace to the elect is founded. It is failure to recognize or refusal to believe what is revealed in the

Scripture of truth concerning the relation of Christ's mediatorial work to the everlasting covenant which has engendered so many fruitless controversies upon the atonement. Once we are enabled to discern the fact of, the terms of, the immutability of the covenant of grace, then, such questions as the injustice of an innocent person suffering for the guilty, of the certain efficacy or contingent inefficacy of Christ's sacrifice securing what it was designed to effect, and of the scope or extent of the atonement—whether for all mankind or only the elect of God—are settled once and for all.

That Scripture expressly reveals an organic connection between the covenant of grace and the sacrifice of Christ is plain from the words of Hebrews 13:20, "The blood of the everlasting covenant." So again in Zechariah 9:11, we find God saying to the Mediator, "By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." Our blessed Lord Himself, when instituting the memorial supper, said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (1 Cor. 11:25). It is the blood which makes an atonement for the soul (Lev. 17:11), but it does so because that blood is "the blood of the everlasting covenant." In Hebrews 8:6, Christ is expressly denominated the "mediator of a better covenant," and in Hebrews 7:22, "a surety of a better covenant." Yes, Scripture represents Him as the very *substance* of the covenant. "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a *covenant* of the people, for a light of the Gentiles" (Isa. 42:6).

Now a covenant is an agreement between two parties who are under mutual engagements. Something is to be done by one of the parties, in consequence of which the other party binds himself to do something in return. When a master, for example, enters into an agreement or covenant with a servant, he prescribes certain duties to be performed by the servant, and promises to recompense him with suitable wages. By consenting to the compact, the servant becomes bound to perform the stipulated work, and the master is bound to bestow the reward when the term of labour is finished. In a covenant, therefore, there are two

parts, a condition and a promise. When the condition of the covenant is met, the performer is by right entitled to the reward. In his truly excellent work, *The Satisfaction of Christ* (1650), Dr. John Owen (1616-1683), the prince of the Puritans, when treating of the everlasting covenant, pointed out, “There are five things required to the complete establishing and accomplishing of such a compact and agreement, 1. That there be sundry persons, two at least, namely, a promiser and undertaker, agreeing voluntarily together in counsel and design, for the accomplishment, and to bring about some common end, acceptable to them both, so agreeing together; being both to do somewhat, that they are not otherwise obliged to do; there must be some common end agreed on by them, wherein they are delighted; and if they do not both voluntarily agree to what is on each hand incumbent, it is no covenant or compact, but an imposition of one upon the other. 2. That the person promising who is the principal engager in the covenant, do require something at the hand of the other, to be done or undergone, wherein he is concerned. He is to prescribe something to him, which is the condition, whereon the accomplishment of the end aimed at, is to depend. 3. That he make to him who doth undertake, such promises as are necessary for his supportment and encouragement, and which may fully balance in his judgment, all that is required of him, or prescribed to him. 4. That upon the consideration of the condition and promise, the duty and reward prescribed and engaged for, as formerly mentioned, the undertaker do voluntarily address himself to the one, and expect the accomplishment of the other. 5. That the accomplishment of the condition being pleaded by the undertaker, and approved by the promiser, the common end originally designed, be brought about and established. These five things are required to the entering into, and complete accomplishment of such a covenant, convention, or agreement, as is built on personal performances; and they are all eminently expressed in the Scripture, to be found in the compact between the Father and the Son.”

Let us adopt these statements as our divisions:

I. The Agreement between the Father and the Son

God and the Mediator agreed together in counsel for the accomplishment of a common end, namely, the promotion of the manifested glory of God in the salvation of His elect. In Zechariah 6:13, we read, “And the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” The reference here is to the Lord JEHOVAH, and the Man, whose name is “the Branch” of the previous verse. The “counsel of peace” signifies the compact or agreement between Them, as to the reconciliation between God and His sinful people. There was a voluntary concern of the Father and the Son for the accomplishment of the work of peace in bringing us to God. It is to this that Isaiah 9:6 also refers. There Christ is called, “Wonderful, Counsellor,” as concurring in the design of His Father, and with Him, to be the Child born and the Son given “to us,” that He might be the Prince of peace. In that connection, and in that passage (only) is Christ called “the everlasting Father,” because His everlasting “children” (Heb. 2:13) were being covenanted for. So, too, in Zechariah 13:7, the Mediator is addressed by JEHOVAH as, “My Fellow,” because they had taken counsel together about the work of our salvation.

The Mediator’s voluntary acceptance of the Father’s proposal is clearly seen from His own language in that great Messianic Psalm, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa. 40:7-8). These words express His cheerful compliance with the terms of the covenant, and those terms—God’s “will”—are recorded in the volume of the divine decrees concerning the salvation of God’s elect, and transcribed in the Holy Scriptures.

Therefore is Christ called the “surety of the covenant” (Heb. 7:22). A “surety” is a person who gives security for another that he will perform something’s which the other is bound to do. That is, in case of failure, will perform it for him. This work, as given to our Saviour, signifies that He came under obligation to fulfil the conditions of the covenant for His people. He undertook to yield that obedience unto the law which they owed, and to make

satisfaction to divine justice for their sins. A surety for a bankrupt is one who engages to satisfy his creditors by paying his debts. Hence, when the Lord Jesus is called the Surety of the new covenant, it denotes that He undertook to discharge the whole debt which His people owed to the Law of God, the debt of obedience, the debt of suffering.

As we have seen above, our Saviour is also called the “mediator” of the covenant. This title imports that He interposes between God and men to reconcile them. “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). For this office, He is qualified by the constitution of His person. Possessed of the divine nature, He agreed to assume the human, that He might be allied to both parties. Very similar in force to the “Mediator” of the new covenant is Christ’s title of, “the last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45) and a contrast (Rom. 5:18) between him and the first Adam. This designation of our Saviour’s declares that He is a *federal Head*, by whose conduct others are affected.

II. The Work the Father gave the Son to do

There are many expressions used in both Old and New Testaments which, when carefully weighed, oblige us to conclude that there was an eternal transaction between the Father and the Son—the former assigning to the latter a certain task in order to secure the salvation of His elect. First, it was required of the Surety that He should take on Him the nature of those whom He was to bring to God. Therefore do we find him saying, “A body hast thou prepared me” (Heb. 10:5)—that is “appointed for me.” Hence it is said, “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman” (Gal. 4:4).

Second, it was required of Him that, in this “body,” or human nature, He should be a *servant*, and yield obedience to God. Therefore we hear the Father saying of Him, “Behold, my servant” (Isa. 42:1). The Father required from the Mediator perfect obedience to all the precepts of His law. Therefore are we told in Galatians 4:4, that He was “made under the law.” And so

we hear Him expressing, in view of His future incarnation, His intention to fulfil it, “I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa. 40:8). He knew and loved the Law, and came into this world to honour it by submission to its authority. From the beginning, He was ever ready to recognize His obligations to God. As a boy, He was “subject unto” His parents (Luke 2:51). By receiving baptism at the hands of His forerunner, He solemnly and publicly dedicated Himself unto the service of His Father, saying, “Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15); and His whole conduct was a commentary upon His declaration, “I must work the works of him that sent me” (John 9:4). Though He were a Son, “yet learned he obedience” (Heb. 5:8).

Third, it was required of Him that He should suffer and undergo what in justice was due to those He came to deliver. Satisfaction had to be made for their sins. The glory of the Gospel is that, “Grace reigns through righteousness” (Rom. 5:21). Salvation is of grace, but this grace comes to us in a way of *righteousness*. It is grace to us, but it was brought about in such a way that all our debt was paid. Thus God is seen to be both just and merciful—just in requiring full compensation to His broken Law—merciful because it was He, and not the sinner, who furnished the ransom. The redeemed are saved without any injury to justice. Now, Christ was “foreordained before the foundation of the world” as the Lamb whose precious blood was to be shed (1 Pet. 1:19-20). He had received “commandment” to lay down His life (John 10:18). Therefore was He “obedient unto death” (Phil. 2:8), and hence, when the bitter cup which had been appointed was presented to Him, He said, “Not my will, but thine, be done.”

III. The Promises the Father made the Son

The promises of the covenant may be distinguished into two classes—the one, those which immediately respected Christ, and the other, that which respected His elect. Let us consider the former first. In relation to Christ Himself, God promised to furnish him with all necessary *preparation for* the arduous work

which He had undertaken to perform. Let the reader carefully consult Isaiah 11:2-3; 49:1-3. Again, the Father promised to support him *in* that work. That work was attended with such difficulties that created power, although unimpaired by sin, would have been totally inadequate to it. It was to be performed in human nature, and *that* had failed in an easier undertaking even when possessed of untainted innocence, and of faculties in all their freshness and vigour. Our Saviour was encouraged by the assurance of the divine presence and assistance (see Isaiah 42:1-7). Blessed is it to behold the Lord Jesus firmly depending upon those promises in the most trying occasions.

Once more, the Father promised to confer a glorious *reward* upon His Son's *accomplishment* of the work. He promised to invest him with honour and power (Psa. 110:1; 89:27; 72:8). These promises were fulfilled after His resurrection from the dead, when God gave him a name above every name (Phil. 2:9-11). He promised too to accomplish and secure the salvation of that people for whom He had obeyed, suffered, and died (see Isa. 53:10-12). He would have an offspring who would arise to call him blessed, and rejoice in the wondrous benefits which He had purchased and procured for them.

Concerning the promises which respect the elect, they were made in the first instance *to Christ*, with whom alone God transacted in the Covenant of Grace. Those promises were made to the Surety, for the persons in whose favour they were to be performed had no actual existence, for that transaction took place before Genesis 1:1. A remarkable proof of this is found in Titus 1:2, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, *promised* [not simply "purposed"] before the world began." If eternal life was promised "before the world began," it follows that it must have been promised to Christ, who was then constituted the federal Head of His people. "Eternal life" is *the* promise, including all others (see 1 John 2:25). With Titus 1:2 should be carefully compared 2 Timothy 1:9.

IV. *The Son's Acceptance of the Conditions*

The covenant engagement into which our Saviour entered was

entirely *voluntary* on His part. There existed no previous obligation, nor was there any authority by which He could be compelled to do it. As a divine Person, He was subject to no one and acknowledged no superior, “He thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Phil. 2:6). By a free action of His own will, He consented to execute that work which the Father had proposed to Him. Proof of this is found in Psalm 40:6, which takes us back to the servant of Exodus 21:5-6, who willingly relinquished his rights. So Christ freely and cheerfully undertook to do and suffer the will of His Father.

It is important to be clear upon and hold fast this point. Whatever was the will of the Father, was the will of the Son. Whatever the Father proposed, the Son consented to. If there are any verses in the New Testament which speak of the Father *sending* the Son, there are also many others which affirm His own voluntariness therein, “The Son of man is *come* to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10), “Christ Jesus *came* into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15), etc. His words, “I *delight* to do *thy* will, O my God” (Psa. 40:8) for ever settle this point.

V. The Father’s Acceptance of the Work Performed

When Christ had completed on earth the work which had been given Him to do, He “offered himself without spot to God” (Heb. 9:14). The Lord God evidenced His acceptance of the Mediator’s sacrifice, first, by preserving His body in the grave. With absolute trust the Saviour said, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Psa. 16:10). Nor did He. Second, by raising Him from the dead, “Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death” (Acts 2:24). In bringing forth the crucified Saviour from the tomb, God showed to all created intelligences that He *was* well pleased with the work His incarnate Son had performed. Moreover, He was raised not as an act of grace or mercy, but “according to the spirit of *holiness*” (Rom. 1:4). Thus, the death of Christ was the payment of His people’s debt. His resurrection was God’s receipt. Third, God evidenced His acceptance of Christ’s mediatorial work by

exalting His Servant-Son above all creatures (Phil. 2:9-11).

VI. *The Son's Claim to the Promised Reward*

This is what Christ's present intercession on high consists of. It is not through strong crying and tears, in earnest pleadings and supplications, as in the days of His humiliation, but in *laying claim* to His rightful remuneration, namely, that God shall now save "unto the uttermost" all those for whom He acted as Surety. The whole of His high priestly prayer in John 17 is to be regarded in *that* light. There, we behold the Mediator demanding the accomplishment of the whole compact and the fulfilment of all the promises which were made to him when He undertook to become a Saviour (John 17:1-4, 9, 12-16), concluding by saying, "Father, I *will* that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" (verse 24).

In Psalm 2, there is a remarkable unfolding of our present theme, which is understood by very few of the Lord's people today. It contains a series of prophecies, which, like all others, are to receive a *double* fulfilment. We confine ourselves now to the original accomplishment of them. First, we behold the leaders of the Gentiles and the rulers of the Jews taking counsel together against JEHOVAH and against His Christ (Psa. 2:1-3). This found its fulfilment at the cross, as Acts 4:25-28 plainly shows. Second, we have JEHOVAH's response (Psa. 2:4-6)—His derision against them, His threat to visit them in wrath—which was fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. 22:7), and His exaltation of Christ (Psa. 2:6). Third, we hear JEHOVAH saying, "I will *declare* the decree" (Psa. 2:7), i.e. I will now make known, publish abroad, the mystery of the everlasting covenant. He owns Christ in resurrection (Acts 13:33). Then, He says, "*Ask* of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance," etc. (Psa. 2:8). "*Ask* of me"—put in your claim for the fulfilment of that promise to which Thou art now justly entitled.

VII. *The Immutability of the Covenant*

From all that has been before us, it should be evident, beyond

all possibility of contradiction, that the Covenant of Grace is entirely *unconditional* as far as man is concerned, for it was made long before he drew his first breath. The elect themselves cannot be a party to it, though their salvation was the purpose of it. How far, far below the glorious truth of God are the wretched thoughts and opinions of people today! The idea which now prevails is that Christ's death has merely made possible the salvation of men, that it has simply afforded sinners an opportunity of becoming reconciled to God. Instead, the death and resurrection of Christ were the ratification of an eternal agreement between the Father and the Son, which infallibly ensures the salvation of all named in it.

The covenant work of Christ not only gave full and final satisfaction to God for the failed responsibilities of His people, atoning for all their sins and securing a perfect righteousness for them, but it also procured for them the gift of the regenerating Spirit, and with Him, the gifts of repentance, faith, preservation, and glorification. God "*hath* blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). When? When we believed? No, "*According* as he hath chosen us in him *before* the foundation of the world." That was not merely an election *to* those blessings, but an actual *bestowment* of them upon us in Christ, and this secures the actual communication of them to us now *through* Christ. In like manner, we are told, "Who hath saved us...according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9). The "grace" there is in addition to God's "purpose," and that "grace" *included* regenerating grace, justifying grace, sanctifying grace, believing grace, glorifying grace (compare 2 Tim. 1:2). The salvation of God's elect is not left contingent on their repenting and believing, but is made certain by God's promise to Christ that He "*shall* see of the travail of his soul, and shall be *satisfied*" (Isa. 53:11). And that promise is made good by giving the Holy Spirit to each of those for whom Christ fulfilled His covenant engagements. Though God's elect be yet in a state of nature, some of them dead in trespasses, wallowing in the mire of this world, yet has the

Father assured His Son, “By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth *thy* prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water” (Zech. 9:11). He acquired a legal right to their persons, and therefore, in His own appointed time, does God, by His Spirit, bring them forth on to resurrection ground. Assured of this, Christ declared, “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they *shall* hear my voice: and there *shall* be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16).

How invincibly certain then is the salvation of every one for whom Christ covenanted! Each of them shall yet say with David, “He hath made with me [in Christ] an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and *sure*: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire” (2 Sam. 23:5).

The Everlasting Covenant Administered

Part Two

The salvation of God’s people originated in the covenant acts of the Eternal Three. The Covenant of Grace comprises all the divine designs and transactions respecting the redemption of the elect. In it, we learn the eternal purpose of Father, Son, and Spirit, fixing the manner of redemption and everything relating thereto, and entering into a mutual agreement, in which the part each divine Person should perform, as distinguished from the others, was fixed and voluntarily undertaken. A proper apprehension of these covenant transactions is of vast importance, for when the Holy Spirit reveals to a soul the reality of them, he is at once brought off from all creature-acts, for he then perceives that the salvation of God’s people is the *certain* consequence of that covenant. He now discerns that it was the will of God from all eternity to save His people from all their sins and miseries, and out of the hands of all their enemies, by Jesus Christ alone. He now knows that, in the sight of God, he was saved in Christ and by Christ from all sin.

The God-given blessing of an eye of faith enables the recipient of it to see that his salvation was from eternity wholly dependent

upon the responsibility of his Surety, and He being sufficient and all-sufficient for them for whom He engaged, and He having completed the whole of His incarnation, life, and death, has obtained “eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12). He now sees for himself the truth of the apostle’s words that God made Christ to be sin for His people, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). This causes the Spirit-taught soul to admire and adore the Lord Jesus Christ for His righteousness and sacrifice. He sees such worth, such perfection, such virtue and efficacy in His merits and blood, as causes him to rest his heart with holy contentment and delight thereon. As the Spirit grants him clearer spiritual apprehension of these divine realities, he sees his righteousness in the sight of God as Christ Himself.

The everlasting covenant is *published* in the Gospel of God’s grace. As we read in Romans 16:25-26, “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.” Notice, first, the Gospel is here said to be a “*revelation* of the mystery.” This “mystery” had been “kept secret,” not from all men, but from all nations. Second, it was revealed “by the scriptures of the prophets,” but that which had for centuries been known only to Israel was now to be “made known to all nations.” Third, mark the title here given to the Deity, “the *everlasting* God!” This attribute of eternity is hereby ascribed to Him because the “everlasting covenant” is here in view.

Above, we have said that the Gospel is a *revelation* of a divine mystery. Clear proof of this is found in 1 Corinthians 2. There the apostle declared, “But we speak the wisdom of God...ordained before the world unto our glory” (verse 7). The apostle here calls the Gospel (see 1 Cor. 1:17-18 and compare with 2:2-6) the “wisdom of God,” because in it the wondrous wisdom of God is made known. But more, he affirms that the Gospel exhibits a

“*hidden wisdom*” (compare with “kept secret”—Rom. 16:25), yea, that which God had predestinated to the glory of His people. That the whole of this passage in 1 Corinthians 2 concerns the eternal grace of God toward His elect is clear from “the things which God hath *prepared* for them that love him” (1 Cor. 2:9), which things “God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the *deep* things of God” (1 Cor. 2:10), i.e. the Spirit is thoroughly cognizant of and conversant with the secret counsels of the Eternal Three in the “everlasting covenant.”

The words “kept secret since the world began,” in Romans 16:25, are not to be taken absolutely, as the very next verse clearly shows. This “mystery” or “hidden wisdom” had, to a considerable degree, been made known in the Scriptures of Israel’s prophets, but as 1 Corinthians 2:8 tells us, it was something which “none of the princes of this world knew.” “But now is made manifest” (Rom. 16:26) is explained in the last clause of the verse, “made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.” Parallel with this is Ephesians 3:3-9. There, Paul again refers to “the mystery,” the “mystery of Christ” which “in other ages was not made known to *the sons of men*” (though it was to Israel), but now he was to “preach among the *Gentiles* the unsearchable riches of Christ.” So in Colossians 1:25-27, note, “this mystery *among the Gentiles*” (verse 27).

Reverting once more to Romans 16:26, the apostle declares that this mystery, or hidden wisdom, concerning the everlasting covenant had been made manifest by the Scriptures of the prophets. Many are the Old Testament passages which might be cited in illustration of this fact. This covenant is expressly mentioned in Psalm 89:3-4, “I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations.” The direct and local reference is to David and his descendants, but without doubt a greater than David is here in view, viz. his illustrious Son and Lord, who is sometimes called by this very name (see Ezek. 37:24-25; Hos. 3:5), and in whom this promise

has been fulfilled (Luke 1:32-33; Acts 2:34-38). A careful reading of the whole psalm will show that its language is too sublime, and the things foretold are too great, to admit of being limited to any earthly monarch or succession of monarchs.

In Psalm 119:122, David prays, “Be *surety* for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.” In Isaiah 38:14, Hezekiah supplicates God thus, “O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake [Heb. “be surety”] for me.” When these men prayed thus, to be delivered from their enemies and afflictions, by addressing their Deliverer in *this* particular character, it is evident that they understood He had undertaken to be Surety for His people. The *mediatorial* work and character of Christ was well known to the Old Testament saints. In Isaiah 49, we have what may be called a *draft* of the covenant, or *deed* of gift, between Christ and His Father for us, wherein Christ first begins and shows His commission as the ground of the treaty between Them, intimating to His Father that He had called Him unto this great work, “Listen, O isles, unto me: and hearken, ye people, from far; the LORD hath called me from the womb: from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name” (Isa. 49:1). Then He refers to God’s having fitted Him for the work, “And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword: in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me” (Isa. 49:2). In what follows, the triune God has condescended to employ expressions taken from a human manner of speaking, that we may the better comprehend this mysterious transaction.

First, the Father offers, as it were, *only* “*Israel*” as Messiah’s portion, “Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified” (Isa. 49:3), to which Christ is represented as foreseeing how few of Israel would believe in Him, and that such sparse gleanings would be a poor recompense for all His toil. Yet He is prepared to leave the issue with the Lord, “Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God” (Isa. 49:4). God, therefore, answers Him again, and

enlarges the grant, “And now, saith the LORD, that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him. Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.” (Isa. 49:5) And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will *also* give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth....In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee *for a covenant* of the people (Isa. 49:6-8). Thus, we see that this covenant which God made with Christ was to save both Jews and Gentiles as the reward for His work.

That by divine agreement and covenant settlement, Christ had been set up as Mediator *before* He entered this world is plainly taught in the New Testament too. In John 6:27, we hear Christ saying, “Labour...for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father *sealed*.” So again in John 6:38, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” In John 10:18, He speaks of a “power” or “commandment” which He has received from the Father to lay down His life and take it again, so that He might answer the great end of redemption thereby. In John 10:36, He referred to Himself as Him “whom the Father hath *sanctified* [consecrated to a divine service], and sent into the world”—“sanctified” before “sent!” In Luke 22:29, He declared to His disciples, “I *appoint* unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath *appointed* unto me.”

The everlasting covenant of grace was typified, or more correctly speaking, adumbrated (shadowed forth in this lower or visible sphere), in the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham. This will be easier for us to grasp if we bear in mind the fact that the Gospel is a revelation of the Covenant of Grace. Now, in Acts 3:25, we read that Peter said, “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the *covenant* which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the

kindreds of the earth be blessed.” Now link up this with Galatians 3:8, “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.” Note well that what is called, “the covenant” in the former passage is called, “the gospel” in the latter, and that “all kindreds of the earth” in one becomes “all nations” in the other, while the “blessing” mentioned in both is explained to be the justification of the ungodly by faith.

The all-conclusive proof that the Abrahamic covenant shadowed forth in time the Covenant of Grace, which had been made in eternity, is found in Galatians 3:16, “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ,” not only Christ personal, but “Christ” *mystical*, i.e., the Head and His members. This is clear from Galatians 3:29, “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s *seed*, and heirs according to the promise.”

The Abrahamic covenant was followed by the Sinaitic, which was the very antithesis of the other, the former being one of pure grace, the latter one of works. The Abrahamic was one of unconditional promise. The Sinaitic was conditional, blessing being determined by Israel’s obedience to the law. Now, as the Abrahamic adumbrated the everlasting covenant, so the Sinaitic exemplified the Adamic. The first man had been constituted by God the federal head of his race, and God entered into a covenant with him (see Hos. 6:6), and thus, he was “the figure of him that was to come” (Rom. 5:14). That covenant was one of works, blessing for Adam and his posterity being conditioned upon the obedience of the federal head.

It has been well said that, “God deals with men only by covenant. What is a covenant? It is a promise made upon conditions to be fulfilled. This being so, it is clear that there can be only two covenants possible between God and man—a covenant founded on what *man shall do*, and a covenant founded on what *God shall do for him*; in other words, a covenant of

works, and one of grace” (Dr. G. S. Bishop). The Covenant of Works was made with Adam, the Covenant of Grace with Christ. Israel, according to the flesh, was under the one, the spiritual “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16) are the beneficiaries of the other. The one was revealed by the Law, the other is made known by the Gospel, as the Law preceded the Gospel, the Covenant of Grace is termed, “the *new* covenant” (Heb. 8:8), not because it is “new” in its constitution, but because it is new in its *manifestation* and *proclamation* abroad.

Coming now to the *administration* of the covenant, we would observe, first, that the blessings of it are committed into the hands of the Saviour, that He may distribute them according to His own will, which in this, as in everything else, harmonizes perfectly with the will of the Father. This high honour has been conferred upon the Mediator that the blessings which were purchased, with His infinitely perfect satisfaction, should be at His own disposal, and that hell-deserving sinners should be reminded of their incalculable obligations to Him, by receiving every blessing immediately from His hands. His fulfilment of the conditions which the everlasting covenant had required of Him gave Him a right to the promises and the possession of their inestimable treasures. The scriptural proofs for these assertions are clear and convincing.

After His resurrection, the triumphant Surety declared to His disciples, “All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and earth” (Matt. 28:18), evidently meaning that such right of administration was bestowed upon Him in consequence of His obedience unto death. Centuries before, the Psalmist, moved by the spirit of prophecy, said, “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men: yea, for the rebellious also” (Psa. 68:18). Those words of David’s were explained by Peter to the Jews, who were amazed at the miracles of Pentecost, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the *promise* of the Holy Spirit, *he* hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Acts 2:32-33).

Three things are observable in these words. First, the gift of the Spirit to Christ was the performance of a “promise” that had been made to Him by the Father. Second, the Spirit was given to Christ that He might pour Him out upon men, like the refreshing rains which fall upon the earth. Third, the subjection of the Spirit to the Mediator in the economy of grace (Mark 1:8) demonstrates that “all authority” is Christ’s *in heaven* as well as upon earth (Matt. 28:18).

Anticipating His resurrection, our great High Priest declared to His disciples on the eve of His death, “As thou hast given him power [authority] over all flesh” (John 17:2). And for what purpose was that grant made unto Him? The same verse tells us, “that he should give eternal life to as many as thou *hast* given him.” That was the equivalent of saying that He would administer the promised blessings of the Covenant of Grace to those for whom He had covenanted, whose Surety and Mediator He was. Again, in Matthew 11:27, He declared, “All things are delivered unto me of my Father.” Now upon this donation or gift to Him (as Mediator) is founded the whole dispensation of grace, which was established by His authority and will be continued until the end. Hence, immediately after, comes the gracious promise of the Gospel, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). This important truth is more fully expressed in Ephesians 4:8, 11-16.

Now the administration of the covenant has taken the form of a will or “testament,” or deed, by which a person bequeaths his property to his heirs, to be enjoyed by them after his decease. Thus, the blessings of the covenant are conveyed to its beneficiaries in a testamentary form. The Greek word, *diatheks*, occurs forty times in the Authorized Version. It has been rendered “covenant” twenty times and “testament” twenty times. The Greek word has this double meaning, yet it is of great importance to distinguish between its two significations in order to a right understanding of each passage in which it is found. Unfortunately, our English translators have not always succeeded in doing this. For example, in Hebrews 7:22, Jesus is termed, “a surety of a

better testament,” or “will,” which is a quite meaningless expression. It should have been, “surety of a better covenant,” the more so as it is there contrasted with the Sinaitic covenant, which certainly was not a “testament.” So again, “The mediator of the new testament” (Heb. 9:15) conveys no intelligible concept. “Covenant” is the proper word there.

But in Hebrews 9:16-17, it should be observed that “testament” is the proper rendition, “For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.” This idea of a “testament” naturally follows after mention of the “eternal *inheritance*” in the previous verse. “As an inheritance is conveyed from one person to another by testament, this designation may be given to the Covenant of Grace, because it conveys to us the inheritance of eternal life, and conveys it in virtue of the death of the Surety. It was with the Covenant of Grace as it was with a testament. As the death of the testator is necessary to render a testament valid, so the death of Christ was necessary to ratify the covenant, and to make its promises sure to His spiritual seed. It is the necessity of the death of Christ which the apostle intended to establish, and the notice of a testament is incidentally introduced, solely for the purpose of illustrating this death, as an inheritance comes to the legatee through the death of a testator” (Dr. John Dick, 1764-1833).

In treating of the *administration* of the Covenant of Grace, it is essential that we should consider it, severally, under *two distinct economies*, of which the one preceded, the other succeeded, the coming of Christ in the flesh. That there *was* a dispensation of grace prior to the divine incarnation should be evident to every careful reader of the Old Testament. It commenced immediately after the fall, when the first intimation of mercy was made (Gen. 3:15), and it continued till the death of the Saviour, when it was formally abolished. That it was virtually and vitally the same with the present dispensation, and differed from it only in form, may be proved from a number of considerations. Abel’s offering of a bleeding lamb “by faith” (Heb. 11:4), which necessarily

presupposes a revelation of the divine will (Rom. 10:17), evidences that the Gospel of divine grace was made known at a very early date. The same blessed evangel was preached to the patriarchs, and later to Israel, by their typical institutions and the voices of their prophets. Therefore is the mission of Christ said to be the fulfilment of the ancient predictions, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David: *as* he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began” (Luke 1:68-70).

When before Agrippa, Paul declared, “Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying *none other* things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:22-23). To the Hebrews, he declared that the Gospel had been preached to Israel in the wilderness (Heb. 4:2). To the Galatians, he insisted (when rebutting the errors of Judaizers) that the Gospel he proclaimed had, long before, been preached to Abraham, and that those who believed it were admitted to a participation in the same privileges with the patriarchs, “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed *with* faithful Abraham” (Gal. 3:8-9).

There are at least two passages in the New Testament which expressly affirm that the dispensation of grace, under which the Old Testament saints lived, was founded upon that atonement of Christ by which the covenant was ratified. First, Romans 3:25, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.” Note carefully the expression “for the remission of sins that are past.” Here, the apostle is obviously referring to the sins of the Old Testament saints, which God had remitted prior to the manifestation of

Christ. But how had it been consistent with His justice to do so, seeing that no expiatory sacrifice of efficacy had been offered for them? The answer is—the satisfaction of the Redeemer was of such infinite value that its virtue reaches back to the beginning of time, as well as forward to the end of it. God acted like a creditor who lets his debtor go free, although the payment had not been made by the surety, because he has full confidence in him that he *will* fulfil his engagement.

The second passage is in Hebrews 9:15, “And for this cause he is the mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” The “transgressions which were under the first covenant” has reference to the sins of God’s (spiritual) elect who lived, dispensationally, under the Sinaitic covenant, the typical sacrifices for which were then offered up, delivering *only* from the *temporal* penalties of the law. Yet some of them obtained the full and eternal forgiveness of their sins, namely, the “called” of Israel; and that, too, was on the ground of the great sacrifice which was to be offered in the fullness of time. Christ was the Mediator of the new covenant for the redemption of *their* sins, as well as for the sins of His saints who have lived since the cross. Thus, we see that the elect of God who lived under the Law of Moses were saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as they who are saved under the Gospel.

Christ, in fact, sustained the office and performed the duties of Mediator *before* His incarnation. “It was not a vain opinion of the Jews that it was the second Person of the Trinity who gave the promise of mercy to our first parents in paradise, appeared to the patriarchs, published the Law from Sinai, conducted the church in the wilderness, and managed its affairs during the ages which followed. It is certain that a divine Person *did* often appear under the ancient economy, and as there is no reason to think it was the Father, whom no man has seen, we conclude it was the Son, who assumed the form of that nature in which He was after to sojourn upon earth. He was the Angel of God’s presence, and the Angel

of the covenant, concerning whom these three particulars are worthy of attention: That He was a divine Person, for the name of God was in Him, and the power of pardoning or not pardoning sin belonged to Him. That He acted in an official capacity, for He was an angel or messenger. And that His office was connected with the gracious dispensation which was then established, for He was the Messenger of the covenant. As far as that dispensation was carried on by the revelation of the divine will, we are expressly assured that it was under His direction and superintendence. It was the Spirit of the Messiah, Peter says, who ‘testified beforehand’ in the prophets ‘the suffering of Christ, and the glory that should follow’—1 Peter 1:11” (Dr. John Dick, 1764-1833).

Concerning the administration of the everlasting covenant *since* the coming of Christ, it is the Gospel which makes known to us the eternal council between the Father and the Son, which displays the richness and freeness of divine grace, which proclaims salvation to all who believe, and comforts its recipients by its promises of present and future refuge. The present dispensation is distinguished from the past by the superior clearness of its manifestation. What was formerly exhibited under the veil of types is now openly revealed, “The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth” (1 John 2:8). It is distinguished, too, by the more abundant supply of the Spirit.

The great *design* in the administration of the covenant of Grace is to impart its benefits to those for whom they were intended. This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit who works faith in the hearts of those who were chosen in Christ to eternal life. It is only by faith that we can learn our individual interest in that covenant, and that God-given faith causes its recipient to “take hold of his covenant” (Isa. 56:6), yea, to enter into covenant with God. Where God acts, there is a reciprocal action from those in whom He works. Does God love His people? They love Him in return. Has He called them? They too dedicate themselves to a covenant God, with a real sense of their binding obligations to render Him that obedience which they are thereby engaged to.

It concerns each person, therefore, to inquire whether God has made with *him* a covenant, “ordered in all things and sure.” It is an inquiry intimately connected with his eternal welfare, for salvation comes to any sinner only on the basis of this covenant. How then shall the point be ascertained? First, he who has entered into a covenant with God is an awakened and convicted sinner. None others feel their need of God’s great salvation. Peace with God is prized only by those who have been made conscious of death, and of the divine displeasure and vengeance. Careless worldlings are unconcerned about reconciliation with God. The Spirit’s application of the law to the heart and conscience is the first step by which men are led to take hold of God’s covenant and “make peace with God” (Isa. 27:5).

Second, he who has entered into this covenant has “fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him” (Heb. 6:18). That “hope” is set before him in the Gospel. The word “refuge” looks back to the cities of refuge in Israel (Num. 33; Josh. 20), entry into which secured from the avenger of blood. The awakened and convicted sinner, aroused and terrified by his sins and the wrath of God, *flees* for refuge to Christ, and by a God-given faith, lays hold of, believes in, appropriates the Saviour as his.

Third, he who has entered into this covenant rests his hope of salvation upon the righteousness of Christ, by which it was fulfilled, and on that alone. He has no confidence in the flesh. He repudiates his own righteousness as filthy rags. He relies not on any works, performances, or acts of his own. The language of his heart and lips is, “My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day...I will go in the strength of the LORD God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of *thine only*” (Psa. 71:15-16).

Lastly, he who is in covenant with a holy God is a holy person. God’s promise to Christ concerning His people is, “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people” (Heb. 8:10). The effects of this are clearly and unmistakably manifested in their daily lives. True, while they are left in this world, the flesh is still

there, and it annoys and hinders them, so that they are prevented from fully realizing the desires of their hearts. Nevertheless, their faith overcomes the world (1 John 5:4). The Spirit in them, which is mightier than Satan (1 John 4:4), subdues the flesh, and produces in and through them *His* “fruit.” They are taught that they have no strength of their own, and so they look to the Lord for enablement. They depend upon His grace, and He works in them (notwithstanding all the opposition of the flesh, which is as nothing to Him) “both to will *and to do* of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). Thus, they ascribe *to Him* all the praise of their success.

