

# THE DIVINE COVENANTS

by A. W. Pink

## *Introduction*

The Covenants occupy no subordinate place on the pages of Divine revelation as even a superficial perusal of the Scriptures will serve to show. The word "covenant" is found no fewer than twenty-five times in the very first book of the Bible, and occurs again scores of times in the remaining books of the Pentateuch, in the Psalms, and in the Prophets. Nor is it inconspicuous in the New Testament. When instituting the great memorial of His death, the Saviour said, "This cup is the *new covenant* in My blood" (Luke 22:20). When enumerating the special blessings which God had conferred upon the Israelites, Paul declared that unto them belonged "the covenants" (Rom. 9:4). To the Galatians he expounded "the two covenants" (4:24-31). The Ephesian saints were reminded that in their unregenerate days they were "strangers from the covenants of promise" (2:12). The entire Epistle to the Hebrews is an exposition of the "better covenant" of which Christ is the Mediator (8:6).

Salvation through Jesus Christ is according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23), and He was pleased to make known His eternal purpose of mercy, unto the fathers, in the form of a series of *covenants*, which were of different characters and revealed at various times. These covenants enter into the very nature, and pervade with their peculiar qualities the whole system of Divine truth. They have an intimate connection with each other and a common relation to a single purpose, being, in fact, so many successive stages in the unfolding of the scheme of Divine Grace. They treat of the *Divine* side of things, disclosing the source from which all blessings come to men, and making known the Channel (Christ) through which they flow to them. Each one reveals some new and fundamental aspect of truth, and in considering them in their Scriptural order we may clearly perceive the progress of revelation which they respectively indicated. They set forth the great design of God which was to be accomplished by the Redeemer of His people.

It has been well pointed out that "It is very obvious that because God is an intelligence He must have a plan. If He be an absolutely perfect intelligence, desiring and designing nothing but good; if He be an eternal and immutable intelligence, His plan must be one, eternal all-comprehensive, immutable; that is, all things from His point of view must constitute one system and sustain a perfect logical relation in all its parts. Nevertheless, like all other comprehensive systems, it must itself be composed of an infinite number of subordinate systems. In this respect it is like these heavens which He has made, and which He has hung before our eyes, as a type and pattern of His mode of thinking and planning in all providence.

"We know that in the solar system our earth is a satellite of one of the great suns, and of this particular system we have a knowledge because of our position, but we know that this system is only one of myriads, with variations, that have been launched in the great abyss of space. So we know that this great, all-comprehensive plan of God, considered as one system, must contain a great many subordinate systems which might be studied profitably if we were in the position to do so, as self-contained whole, separate from the rest" (Lectures by A.A. Hodge). That "one system" or the eternal "plan" of God was comprised in "the Everlasting Covenant," the many "subordinate systems" are the various "covenants" which God made with different ones from time to time.

The Everlasting Covenant, with its shadowings forth in His temporal covenants, forms the basis of all His dealings with His people. Many proofs of this are to be met with in Holy Writ. For example, when God heard the groanings of the Hebrews in Egypt, we are told that He "*remembered His*

*covenant* with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob” (Exo. 2:24 and cf. 6:2-8). When Israel was oppressed by the Syrians in the days of Jehoahaz, we read, “And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, *because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*” (2 Kings 13:23 and cf. Psa. 106:43-45). At a later period, when God determined to show mercy unto Israel, after He had sorely afflicted them for their sins, He expressed it thus, “Nevertheless I will *remember My covenant with thee* in the days of thy youth” (Eze. 16:60). As the Psalmist declared, “He hath given meat unto them that fear him: *He will ever be mindful of His covenant*” (111:5).

The same blessed truth is set forth in the New Testament that the Covenant is the foundation from which proceed all the gracious works of God. This is rendered as the reason *for sending Christ* into the world: “To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to *remember His holy covenant*” (Luke 1:72). Remarkable too is that word in Hebrews 13:20 “Now the God of peace, that *brought again from the dead* our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, *through the blood of the everlasting covenant.*” Another illustration of the same principle is found in Hebrews 10:15, 16, “Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: *for after that He had said before*, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them”-the words we have placed in italics supply proof that the good which God does unto His people is grounded on His covenant. Anything which in Scripture is said to be done unto us “for Christ’s sake” signifies it is done by virtue of that covenant which God made with Christ as the Head of His mystical body.

In like manner, when God is said to bind Himself by oath to the heirs of promise-“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath” (Heb. 6:17)-it is upon the ground of His covenant-engagement that He does so. In fact the one merges into the other, *for* in Scripture covenanting is often called by the name of swearing, and a covenant is called an oath. “That thou shouldest enter into *covenant* with the LORD thy God, and into His *oath*, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day . . . Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath” (Deut. 29:12, 14). “Be ye mindful always of His covenant; the word which He commanded to a thousand generations; Even of the covenant which He made with Abraham, and of His *oath* unto Isaac” (1 Chron. 16:15, 16). “And they entered into *a covenant* to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul . . . And they *sware* unto the LORD with a loud voice . . . And all Judah rejoiced at *the oath*” (2 Chron. 15:12, 14, 15).

Sufficient should have already been said to impress us with the weightiness of our present theme, and the great importance of arriving at a right understanding of the Divine covenants. A true knowledge of the covenants is indispensable to a correct presentation of the Gospel, for he who is ignorant of the fundamental difference which obtains between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace is utterly incompetent for evangelism. But by whom among us are the different covenants clearly understood? Refer unto them to the average preacher, and you at once perceive you are speaking to him in an unknown tongue. Few today discern what the covenants are in themselves, their relations to each other, and their consequent bearings upon the design of God in the Redeemer. Since the covenants pertain unto the very “rudiments of the doctrine of Christ,” ignorance of them must cause obscurity to rest upon the whole Gospel system.

During the palmy days of the Puritans considerable attention was given to the subject of the covenants, as their writings evince, particularly the works of Usher, Witsius, Blake and Boston. But alas, with the exception of a few high Calvinists, their massive volumes fell into general neglect, until a generation arose who had no light thereon. This made it easier for certain men to impose upon them their crudities and vagaries, and make their poor dupes believe a wonderful discovery had been

made in the “rightly dividing of the word of truth.” These men shuffled the Scriptures until they arranged the passages treating of the “covenants” to arbitrarily divide time into “seven dispensations” and partitioned off the Bible accordingly. How dreadfully superficial and faulty their “findings” are appear from the popular (far too “popular” to be of much value-Luke 16:15!) “Scofield Bible,” where no less than “eight covenants” are noticed, and yet *nothing* is said about the “Everlasting Covenant”!

If some think we have exaggerated the ignorance which now obtains upon this subject, let them put the following questions to their best-informed Christian friends, and see how many can give satisfactory answers. What did David mean when he said, “Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: *for this is all my salvation*” (2 Sam. 23:5)? What is meant by “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will *show them his covenant*” (Psa. 25:14)? What does the Lord mean when He speaks of those who “*taketh hold of My covenant*” (Isa. 56:6)? What does God intend when He says to the Mediator “As for Thee also, by the blood of Thy covenant I have sent forth Thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water” (Zech. 9:11)? To what does the Apostle refer when he says, “That the covenant, that was confirmed before *of God in* (or “to”) *Christ*” (Gal. 3:17)?

Before attempting to furnish any answers to these questions, let us point out the *nature* of a “covenant,” in what it consists. “An absolute complete covenant is a voluntary convention, pact, or agreement between distinct persons, about the ordering and dispensing of things in their power, unto their mutual concern and advantage” (John Owen). Blackstone, the great commentator upon English law, speaking of the parts of a deed, says, “After warrants, usually follow *covenants*, or conventions, which are clauses of agreement contained in a deed, whereby either party may stipulate for the truth of certain facts, or may bind himself to perform, or give something to the other” (Vol. 2, p. 20): so that he includes three things: the parties, the terms, the binding agreement. Reducing it to still simpler language, we may say that a covenant is the entering into of a mutual agreement, a benefit being assured on the fulfillment of certain conditions.

We read of Jonathan and David making a covenant (1 Sam. 18:3), which, in view of 1 Samuel 20:11-17, 42 evidently signified that they entered into a solemn compact (ratified by an oath: 1 Sam. 20:17) that in return for Jonathan’s kindness in informing him of his father’s plans-making possible his escape-David, when he ascended the throne, would show mercy to his descendants: cf. 2 Samuel 9:1. Again, in 1 Chronicles 11:3 we are told that all the elders of Israel (who had previously been opposed to him) came to David and he “made a covenant with them,” which, in the light of 2 Samuel 5:1-3 evidently means that, on the consideration of his captaining their armies against the common foe, they were willing to submit unto him as their king. Once more, in 2 Chronicles 23:16 we read of Jehoiada the priest making a covenant with the people and the king that they should be the Lord’s people, which, in the light of what immediately follows obviously denotes that he agreed to grant them certain religious privileges in return for their undertaking to destroy the system of Baal-worship. A careful consideration of these *human* examples will enable us to understand the better the covenants which *God* has been pleased to enter into.

Now as we pointed out in previous paragraphs, God’s dealings with men are all based upon His covenant-engagements with them-He promising certain blessings upon their fulfillment of certain conditions. This being so, as G.S. Bishop pointed out, “It is clear that there can be but two and only two covenants possible between God and men-a covenant founded upon what *man shall do* for salvation, a covenant founded upon what *God shall do for him* to save him: in other words, a Covenant of Works and a Covenant of Grace” (Grace in Gal. p. 72). Just as all the Divine promises in the Old Testament are summed up in two chief ones-the sending of Christ and the pouring out of the Spirit-so all the Divine covenants may be reduced unto two, the other subordinate ones being only

confirmations or adumbrations of them, or having to do with their economical administration.

We shall then, as the Lord enables, take up in the articles which follow, first, the Everlasting Covenant or Covenant of Grace, which God made with His elect in the person of their Head, and show how that is the sure foundation from which proceed all blessings unto them. Next, we shall consider the Covenant of Works, that compact into which the Creator entered with the whole race in the person of their human and federal head, and show how *that* had to be broken before the blessings agreed upon in the Covenant of Grace could be bestowed. Then we shall look briefly at the covenant God made with Noah, and more fully at the one with Abraham, in which the Everlasting Covenant was shadowed forth. Then we shall ponder the more difficult Siniatic covenant, viewing it both as a confirmation of the Covenant of Works, and in its peculiar relation to the national polity of Israel. Some consideration will also have to be given to the Davidic covenant, concerning which we feel greatly in need of more light. Finally, we shall point out how the Everlasting Covenant has been *administered* under the “old” and “new” covenants or economies. May the Holy Spirit graciously preserve us from all serious error, and enable us to write that which shall be to the glory of our covenant-God and the blessing of His covenant-people.

### *The Everlasting Covenant-Part 1*

The Word of God opens with a brief account of creation, the making of man, and his fall; but from later Scriptures we have no difficulty in ascertaining that the issue of the trial to which man was subjected in Eden had been Divinely foreseen. “The Lamb slain (in the purpose of God) from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8) makes it clear that, in view of the Fall, provision had been made by God for the recovery of His people, who had apostatised in Adam, and that the means whereby their recovery would be effected were consistent with the claims of the Divine holiness and justice. All the details and results of the Plan of Mercy had been arranged and settled from the beginning of Divine wisdom.

That provision of grace which God made for His people before the foundation of the world embraced the appointment of His own Son to become the Mediator, and of the work which, in that capacity, He should perform-involving His assumption of human nature, the offering of Himself as a sacrifice for sin, His exaltation in the nature He had assumed to the right hand of God in the heavenlies, His supremacy over His Church, and over all things for His Church, the blessings which He should be empowered to dispense, and the extent to which His work should be made effectual unto the salvation of souls. These were all matters of definite and certain arrangement, agreed upon between God and His Son in the terms of the Everlasting Covenant.

The first germinal publication of the Everlasting Covenant is found in Genesis 3:15, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Thus, immediately after the Fall, God announced to the Serpent his ultimate doom through the work of the Mediator, and revealed unto sinners the Channel through which alone salvation could flow to them. The continual additions which God subsequently made to the revelation He gave in Genesis 3:15, were, for a considerable time, largely through *covenants* which He made with the fathers, which covenants were both *the fruit of* His eternal Plan of Mercy, and the gradual *revealing of* the same unto the faithful. Only as those two facts are clearly recognized and held fast by us are we in any position to appreciate and perceive the force of those subordinate “covenants.”

God made covenants with Noah, Abraham, David; but were *they*, as fallen creatures, able to enter into covenant with their august and holy Maker? Were they able to stand for themselves, or be sureties for others? The very question answers itself. What, for instance, could Noah possibly do

which would insure that the earth should never again be destroyed by a flood? Those subordinate “covenants” were nothing more or less than the Lord’s *making manifest*, in an especial and public manner, the Grand Covenant: making known something of its glorious contents, confirming their own personal interest in it, and assuring them that Christ the great Covenant-Head should be of themselves and spring from their seed.

This it is which accounts for that singular expression which occurs so frequently in Scripture: “Behold, I establish My covenant with you, and with your seed after you” (Gen. 9:9) and yet there follows no mention of any *conditions*, or work to be done by them, only a promise of unconditional blessings. And why? Because the “conditions” were to be fulfilled and the “work” was to be done *by Christ*, and nothing remained but to bestow the blessings on His people. So that when David says, “He hath made with me an everlasting covenant” (2 Sam. 23:5) he simply means God had admitted him into an interest in the Everlasting Covenant and made him partaker of its privileges. Hence it is that when the Apostle Paul refers to the various “covenants” which God had made with men in Old Testament times, he styles them not “covenants of *stipulations*,” but “covenants of *promise*” (Eph. 2:12).

Above we have pointed out that the continual additions which God made to His original revelation of mercy in Genesis 3:15 were, for a while, given mainly through the “covenants” which He made with the fathers. It was a process of gradual development, issuing finally in the fulness of Gospel grace; the substance of those “covenants” indicated the outstanding stages in this process. They are the great landmarks of God’s dealings with men, points from which the disclosures of the Divine mind expanded into increased and established truths-revelations exhibiting in ever-augmented degrees of fulness and clearness of plan of salvation through the mediation and sacrifice of the Son of God; for each of those “covenants” consisted of gracious promises *ratified by sacrifice* (Gen. 8:20 and 9:9; 15:9-11 and 18). Thus, those “covenants” were so many intimations of that Method of Mercy which took its rise in the eternal counsels of the Divine mind.

Those Divine revelations and manifestations of the grace decreed in the Everlasting Covenant were given out at important epochs in the early history of the world. Just as Genesis 3:15 was given immediately after the Fall, so we find that immediately following the Flood God solemnly renewed the Covenant of Grace with Noah. In like manner, at the beginning of the third period of human history, following the Call of Abraham, God renewed it again, only then making a much fuller revelation of the same. It was now made known that the coming Deliverer of God’s people was to be of the Abrahamic stock and that all the families of the earth should be blessed in Him—a plain intimation of the calling of the Gentiles and the bringing of the elect from all nations into the family of God. In Genesis 15:5, 6, the great requirement of the covenant, namely, *faith*, was then more fully made known.

Unto Abraham God gave a remarkable pledge of the fulfillment of His covenant-promises in the striking victory which He granted him over the federated forces of Chedorlaomer, which was more than a hint of the victory of Christ and His seed over the world: carefully compare Isaiah 41:2, 3, 10, 15! Genesis 14:19, 20 supplies proof of what we have just said, for upon returning from his memorable victory, Abraham was met by Melchizedek (type of Christ) and was *blest* by him! A further revelation of the contents of the Covenant of Grace was granted unto Abraham in Genesis 15, where in the vision of the smoking furnace which passed through the midst of the sacrifice, an adumbration was made of the *sufferings* of Christ. In the miraculous birth of Isaac, intimation was given of the *supernatural birth* of Christ, the promised Seed. In the deliverance of Isaac from the altar representation was made of the *resurrection* of Christ (Heb. 11:19).

Thus we may see how fully the Covenant of Grace was revealed and confirmed unto the father of all them that believe, by the which he and his descendants obtained a clearer sight and

understanding of the great Redeemer and the things which were to be accomplished by Him. And therefore did Christ take notice of this when He said, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56)-the last words clearly intimating that Abraham had a definite spiritual apprehension of those things. Under the Sinaiic Covenant a yet fuller revelation was made by God to His people of the contents of the Everlasting Covenant: the tabernacle and all its holy vessels; the high priest, his vestments and service; and the whole system of sacrifices and ablutions, setting before them its blessed realities in typical forms, they being "patterns" of heavenly things.

Thus, before seeking to set forth the Everlasting Covenant itself in a specific way, we have first endeavoured to make clear *the relation borne to it* of the principal "covenants" which God was pleased to make with different men during the Old Testament era. Our sketch of them has necessarily been brief, for (D.V.) we shall take them up separately and consider them in fuller detail in the succeeding articles. Yet sufficient has been said, we trust, to demonstrate that, while the *terms* of the "covenants" which God made with Noah, with Abraham, with Israel at Sinai, and with David, are to be understood, first, in their plain and natural sense, yet that it should be clear to any anointed eye that they have a second and higher meaning, a *spiritual* content-the things of earth being employed to represent heavenly things. In other words, those subordinate "covenants" need to be contemplated *both* in their "letter" and in their "spirit."

Coming now more directly to the present aspect of our theme, let it be pointed out that, as there is no one verse in the Bible which expressly affirms there are three Divine persons in the Godhead, co-eternal, co-equal, co-glorious; nevertheless by carefully comparing Scripture with Scripture we know that such is the case. In like manner there is no one verse in the Bible which categorically states that the Father entered into a formal agreement with the Son: that on His executing a certain work, He should receive a certain reward; nevertheless, a careful study of different passages obliges us to arrive at this conclusion. The Holy Scriptures do not yield up their treasures to the indolent, and as long as the individual preacher is willing to let Dr. Scofield or Mr. Pink do his studying for him, he must not expect to make much progress in Divine things: ponder Proverbs 2:1-5!

There is no one plot of ground on earth on which will be found growing *all* varieties of flowers or trees, nor is there any part of the world in which may be secured representatives of every variety of butterflies: yet by expense, industry, and perseverance, the horticulturist and the natural-historian may gradually assemble together specimens of every variety until he possesses a complete collection. In like manner, there is no one chapter in the Bible in which *all* the truth is found on any subject: it is the part of the theologian to diligently attend unto the various hints and then the more definite contributions which he finds scattered throughout the Scriptures on any given theme, and carefully classify and co-ordinate them. Alas, that genuine and independent theologians (those unfettered by any human system) have well-nigh disappeared from the earth.

The language of the New Testament is very explicit in teaching us the true light in which the Plan of Mercy is to be viewed, and in showing the saint that he is to regard all his spiritual blessings and privileges as coming to him out of the Everlasting Covenant. It speaks of "The eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:11). Our covenant-oneness with Christ is clearly revealed in Ephesians 1:3-5, that marvelous declaration reaching its climax in 1:6 "to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." "Accepted *in* the Beloved" goes deeper and means far more than "accepted *through* Him": it denotes not merely a recommendatory passport from Christ, but a *real union with Him*, whereby we are incorporated into His mystical Body, and made as truly partakers of His righteousness as the members of the physical body partake of the life which animates its head.

In like manner, there are many, many statements in the New Testament concerning Christ Himself

which are only pertinent and intelligible in the light of His having acted in fulfillment of a covenant-agreement with the Father. For example, in Luke 22:22 we find Him saying, "And truly the Son of man goeth, *as it was determined*": "determined" when and where but in the Everlasting Covenant! Plainer still is the language in John 6:38, 39, "For I came down from Heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Three things are there to be seen. First, that Christ had received a certain *charge* or commission from the Father. Second, that He had solemnly engaged and undertaken to execute that charge. Third, that the end contemplated in that arrangement was, not merely the *announcement* of spiritual blessings, but the actual *bestowal* of them upon all who had been given to Him.

Again, from John 10:16 it is evident that a specific charge had been laid upon Christ: referring to His elect scattered among the Gentiles, He said, not "them also I *will* bring," but "them also I **MUST** bring." In His high priestly prayer we hear Him saying, "Father, I *will* that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am" (John 17:24): there Christ was claiming something that was *due* Him on account of or in return for the work He had done (v. 4)-which clearly presupposes both an arrangement and a promise on the part of the Father. It was the Surety putting in His claim, and a "claim" necessarily implies a preceding promise annexed to a condition to be performed by the party to whom the promise is made, which gives a right to demand the reward; this is one reason why Christ, immediately afterward, addressed God as "*righteous Father*," appealing to *His faithfulness* in the agreement.

Again, the parallel which is drawn between Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12-19 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 45-47 can only be satisfactorily interpreted on the principle that Adam and Christ were representative and federal heads of those whom the one involved in sin and death, and for whom the Other has secured righteousness and eternal life. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2): but how could God *promise* eternal life *before* the world began on any other hypothesis than of a compact with the Son acting in the behalf of and for the benefit of His people? In Hebrews 3:2 it is said that the Apostle and High Priest of our profession "*was faithful* to Him that appointed Him": now just as "obedience" implies a precept, so "faithfulness" presupposes a *trust*, that is, a pledge that a certain thing shall be done in accordance with the directions given him. But our present space is exhausted, and we must leave for our next article a further consideration of the Everlasting Covenant.

### *The Everlasting Covenant*

The Everlasting Covenant or Covenant of Grace is that mutual agreement into which the Father entered with His Son before the foundation of the world respecting the salvation of His elect, Christ being appointed the Mediator, He willingly consenting to be their Head and Representative. That there *is* a Divine covenant to which Christ stands related, and that the great Work which He performed here on earth was the discharge of His covenant-office, is very plain from many Scriptures, first of all, from the covenant-*titles* which He bears. In Isaiah 42:6 we hear the Father saying to the Son "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." As a covenantee in it, Christ is thus "given" unto His people, as the pledge of all its blessings (cf. Rom. 8:32). He is the Representative of His people in it. He is, in His own Person and Work, the sum and substance of it. He has fulfilled all its terms, and now dispenses its rewards.

In Malachi 3:1 Christ is designated "*the Messenger* of the covenant," because He came here to make known its contents and proclaim its glad tidings: He came forth from the Father to reveal and

publish His amazing grace for lost sinners. In Hebrews 7:22 Christ is denominated “the *Surety* of a better testament [covenant].” A “surety” is one who is legally constituted the representative of others, and thereby comes under an engagement to fulfill certain obligations in their name and for their benefit. There is not a single legal obligation which the elect owed unto God but what Christ has fully and perfectly discharged; He has paid the whole debt of His insolvent people, settling all their liabilities. In Hebrews 9:16 Christ is called “the *Testator*” of the covenant or testament, and this, because to Him belong its riches, to Him pertain its privileges; and because He has, in His unbounded goodness, bequeathed them as so many inestimable legacies unto His people.

Once more, in Hebrews 9:15 and 12:24 Christ is styled “the *Mediator* of the new covenant,” because it is by His efficacious satisfaction and prevailing intercession that all its blessings are now imparted to its beneficiaries. Christ now stands between God and His people, advocating their cause (1 John 2:1) and speaking a word in season to him that is weary (Isa. 50:4). But how could Christ sustain such offices as these unless the covenant had been made with Him (Gal. 3:17), and the execution of it had been undertaken by Him (Heb. 10:5-7)? “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, *through the blood of the everlasting covenant*” (Heb. 13:20): that one phrase is quite sufficient to establish the fact that an organic connection existed between the Covenant of Grace and the sacrifice of Christ. In response to Christ’s execution of its terms, the Father now says to Him, “by the blood of Thy covenant I have sent forth *Thy prisoners* (those given to Him before the foundation of the world, but in Adam fallen under condemnation) out of the pit wherein is no water” (Zech. 9:11).

The covenant-*relationship* which the God-man Mediator sustains unto God Himself is that which alone accounts for and explains the fact that He so frequently addressed Him as “My *God*.” Every time our blessed Redeemer uttered the words “*My God*” He gave expression to His *covenant* standing before the Godhead: it must be so, for considering Him as the second Person of the Trinity, He *was* God, equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit. We are well aware that we are now plunging into deep waters, yet if we hold fast to the every words of Scripture we shall be safely borne through them, even though our finite minds will never be able to sound their infinite depths. “Thou art My God from My mother’s belly” (Psa. 22:10) declared the Saviour. From the Cross He said “My God.” On the resurrection-morning He spoke of “My God” (John 20:17). While in the compass of a single verse (Rev. 3:12) we find the glorified Redeemer saying “My God” no less than four times.

What has been pointed out in the above paragraph receives confirmation in many other Scriptures. When renewing His covenant with Abraham Jehovah said, “I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, *to be a God unto thee*, and to thy seed after thee” (Gen. 17:7). *That* is the great covenant promise: to be a “God” unto any one signifies that He will supply all their need (Phil. 4:19), spiritual, temporal, and eternal. It is true that God is the *God* of all men, inasmuch as He is their Creator, Governor and Judge; but He is the “God” of His people in a much more blessed sense. “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; 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). Here again we are shown that it is with respect unto *the covenant* that, in a special way, God is *the God* of His people. Before leaving Hebrews 8:10 let us note the blessed tenor of the covenant as expressed in the words immediately following: “And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (vv. 11, 12)-what *conditions* are there there? What terms of fulfillment are required from impotent men? None at all: it is all *promise* from beginning to end. So too in Acts 3:25

we find Peter saying, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers." Here *the* covenant (not "covenants") is referred to generally, then it is specified particularly: "saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth"-be laid under "conditions"? No; be required to perform certain works? No; but "*shall be* blessed," without any regard to qualifications or deeds of their own-entitled by virtue of their interest in what was performed for them by their Covenant-Head.

Let us consider now the various features of the Everlasting Covenant. 1. The Father covenanted with Christ that He should be the federal Head of His people, undertaking for them, freeing them from that dreadful condemnation wherein God foresaw from eternity they would fall in Adam: this alone explains why Christ is denominated the "last Adam," the "second Man" (1 Cor. 15:45, 47). Let it be very carefully noted that in Ephesians 5:23 we are expressly told "Christ is the *Head* of the Church: and He is the Saviour of the Body": He could not have been the "Saviour" unless He had *first* been the "Head," that is, unless He had voluntarily entered into the work of suretyship by Divine appointment, serving as the Representative of His people, taking upon Him all their responsibilities and agreeing to discharge all their legal obligations; putting Himself in the stead of His insolvent people, paying all their debts, working out for them a perfect righteousness, and legally meriting for them the reward or blessing of the fulfilled law.

It is to that Eternal Compact the Apostle makes reference when he speaks of a certain "covenant that was confirmed before of God in (or "to") Christ" in Galatians 3:17. There we behold the covenant *Parties*: on the one side, "God," in the Trinity of His Persons; and on the other side "Christ," that is, the Son viewed as the God-man Mediator. There we learn of an *agreement* between Them: a "covenant" or contract, and that "confirmed" or solemnly agreed upon and ratified. There too, in the immediate context, we are shown that Christ is here viewed not only as the *Executor* of a testament bequeathed to the saints by God, or that salvation was promised to us through Christ, but there twice over we are specifically told (v. 16) that the *promises* were made to Abraham's "Seed, which is *Christ*!" Thus we have the clearest possible Scriptural proof that the Everlasting Covenant contained something which is promised by God to Christ Himself.

Most blessedly were several features of the Everlasting Covenant typed out in Eden. First, Christ was "set up" (Prov. 8:23) in the eternal counsels of the three-one Jehovah as the Head over and Heir of all things: the figure of His headship is seen in the Creator's words to Adam, "have *dominion over* the fish of the sea," etc. (Gen. 1:28): there we behold him as the lord of all creation and head of all mankind. But, second, Adam was *alone*: among all the creatures he ruled, there was not found a help-meet for him. He was solitary in the world over which he was king: so Christ was alone when "set up" by God in a past eternity. Third, a help-meet was provided for Adam, who was one in nature with himself, as pure and holy as he was, in every way suitable to him: Eve became his wife and companion (Gen. 2:21-24). Beautifully did that set forth *the eternal marriage* between Christ and His Church (Eph. 5:29-32). Let it be carefully noted that Eve was married to Adam, and was pure and holy, *before* she fell; so it was with the Church (Eph. 1:3-6). For much in this paragraph we are indebted to a sermon by J.K. Popham.

2. In order to the execution of His covenant-engagement it was necessary for Christ to assume human nature and be made in all things like unto His brethren, so that He might enter their place, be made under the law, and serve in their stead. He must have a soul and body in which He was capable of suffering and being paid the just wages of His people's sins. This it is which explains to us that marvelous passage in Hebrews 10:5-9, the language of which is most obviously couched in covenant-terms: the whole displaying so blessedly the voluntary engagement of the Son, His perfect readiness and willingness in acquiescing to the Father's pleasure. It was at the incarnation Christ

fulfilled that precious type of Himself in Exodus 21:5: out of love to His Lord, the Father, and to His Spouse the Church, and His spiritual children, He subjected Himself to a place of perpetual servitude.

3. Having voluntarily undertaken the terms of the Everlasting Covenant a special economical *relationship* was now established between the Father and the Son-the Father considered as the Appointer of the Everlasting Covenant, the Son as the God-man Mediator, the Head and Surety of His people. Now it was that the Father became Christ's "Lord" (Psa. 16:2, as is evident from vv. 9, 11; Micah 5:4), and now it was that the Son became the Father's "Servant" (Isa. 42:1 and cf. Phil. 2:7), undertaking the work appointed-observe that the clause "took upon Him the form of a servant" *precedes* "and was made in the likeness of men"! This it is which explains His own utterance "as the Father *gave Me commandment*, even so I do" (John 14:31 and cf. 10:18, 12:49). This it is which accounts for His declaration "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28), wherein our Saviour was speaking with reference to the covenant-engagement which existed between the Father and Himself.

4. Christ died in fulfillment of the covenant's requirements. It was absolutely impossible that an innocent person, absolutely considered as such, should suffer under the sentence and curse of the law, for the law denounced no punishment on any such person. Guilt and punishment are related, and where the former is not, the latter cannot be. It was because the Holy One of God was *relatively* guilty, by the sins of the elect being imputed to Him, that He could righteously be smitten in their stead. Yet even that had not been possible unless the spotless Substitute had first assumed the office of the Suretyship; and that, in turn, was only legally valid because of Christ's federal Headship with His people. The sacrifice of Christ owes all its validity from the covenant: the holy and blessed Trinity, by counsel and oath, having appointed it to be the true and only propitiation for sin.

So too it is utterly impossible for us to form any clear and adequate idea of what the Lord of Glory died to achieve if we have no real knowledge of the Agreement in fulfillment of which His death took place. What is popularly taught upon the subject today is that the atonement of Christ has merely *provided an opportunity* for men to be saved, that it has opened the way for God to justly pardon any and all who avail themselves of His gracious provisions. But that is only a part of the truth, and by no means the most important and blessed part of it. The grand fact is that Christ's death was the *completion* of His agreement with the Father, which guarantees the salvation of all who were named in it-not one for whom He died can possibly miss Heaven: John 6:39. This leads us to consider:

5. That on the ground of Christ's willingness to perform the Work stipulated in the Covenant certain *promises* were made to Him by the Father: first, promises concerning Himself; and second, promises concerning His people. The promises which concerned the Mediator Himself may be summarized thus. First, He was assured of Divine enduement for this discharge of all the specifications of the covenant: Isaiah 11:1-3; 61:1 and cf. John 8:29. Second, He was guaranteed the Divine protection under the execution of His Work: Isaiah 42:6, Zechariah 3:8, 9 and cf. John 10:18. Third, He was promised the Divine assistance unto a successful conclusion: Isaiah. 42:4; 49:8-10 and cf. John 17:4. Fourth, those promises were given to Christ for the stay of His heart, to be pleaded by Him: Psalms 89:26; 2:8; and this He did: Isaiah 50:8-10 and cf. Hebrews 2:13. Fifth, Christ was assured of success of His undertaking and a reward for the same: Isaiah 53:10, 11, Psalms 89: 27-29, 110:1-3 and cf. Philippians 2:9-11. Christ also received promises concerning His people. First, that He should receive gifts for them: Psalm 68:18 and cf. Ephesians 4:10, 11. Second, that God would make them willing to receive Him as their Lord: Psalm 110:3 and cf. John 6:44. Third, that eternal life should be theirs: Psalm 133:3 and cf. Titus 1:2. Fourth, that a seed should serve Him, proclaim His righteousness and declare what He had done for them: Psalm 22:30, 31. Fifth, that kings and princes should worship Him: Isaiah 49:7.

Finally, let it be pointed out that this Compact made between the Father and the Son on behalf of

the whole Election of Grace is variously designated. It is called an “*everlasting* covenant” (Isa. 55:3) to denote the perpetuity of it, and because the blessings in it devised in eternity past will endure forever. It is called a “covenant of *peace*” (Ezek. 34:25; 37:26) because it secures reconciliation with God, for Adam’s transgression produced enmity, but by Christ the enmity has been removed (Eph. 2:16), and therefore He is denominated the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). It is called the “covenant of *life*” (Mal. 2:5), in contrast from the Covenant of Works which issued in death, and because life is the principal thing pledged in it: Titus 1:2. It is called the “*holy* covenant” (Luke 1:72) not only because it was made by and between the Persons of the Holy Trinity, but also because it secures the holiness of the Divine character and provides for the holiness of God’s people. It is called a “*better* testament” (Heb. 7:22) in contrast from the Siniatic arrangement, wherein the national prosperity of Israel was left contingent on *their own* works.

### *The Adamic-Part 1*

It is of vital importance for a right understanding of much in God’s Word to observe the relation which Adam sustained to his posterity. Adam was not only the common parent of mankind, but he was also their federal head and representative. The whole human race was placed on probation or trial in Eden. Adam acted not for himself alone, but he transacted for all who were to spring from him. Unless this basic fact be definitely apprehended, much that ought to be relatively clear to us will be shrouded in impenetrable mystery. Yea, we go further, and affirm that, until the Federal Headship of Adam and God’s covenant with him in that office be actually perceived, we are without the key to God’s dealings with the human race, we are unable to discern man’s relation to the Divine Law, and we appreciate not the fundamental principles upon which the Atonement of Christ proceeded.

“Federal Headship” is a term which has almost entirely disappeared from current religious literature—so much the worse for our moderns. It is true that the expression itself does not verbally occur in the Scriptures, yet like the words “Trinity” and “the Divine Incarnation,” it is a necessity in theological parlance and doctrinal exposition. The principle or fact which is embodied in the term “Federal Headship” is that of *representation*. There have been but two federal heads: Adam and Christ, with each of whom God entered into a “covenant.” Each of them acted on behalf of others, each legally represented a definite people, so much so that all whom they represented were regarded by God as being *in* them. Adam represented the whole human race; Christ represented all those whom the Father had, in His eternal counsels, given to Him.

When Adam stood in Eden as a responsible being before God, he stood there as a federal head, as the legal representative of all his posterity. Hence, when Adam sinned, all for whom he was standing are accounted as having sinned; when he fell, all whom he represented fell; when he died, they died. So too was it with Christ. When He came to this earth, He too, stood in a federal relationship to His own people, and when He became obedient unto death, all for whom He was acting were accounted righteous; when He rose again from the dead, all whom He represented rose with Him; when He ascended on high, they were regarded as ascending with Him. “For as *in* Adam all die, even so *in* Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22).

The relationship of our race to Adam or Christ divides men into two classes, each receiving nature and destiny from its respective Head. All the individuals who comprise these two classes are so identified with their Heads that it has justly been said, “There have been but two men in the world, and two facts in history.” These two men are Adam and Christ; the two facts are the disobedience of the former, by which many were made sinners, and the obedience of the latter, by which many were made righteous. By the former came *ruin*, by the latter came *redemption*; and neither ruin nor redemption can be Scripturally apprehended except as they are seen to be accomplished by those

Representatives, and except we understand the relationships expressed by being “*in Adam*” and “*in Christ*.”

Let it be expressly and emphatically affirmed that what we are here treating of is purely a matter of *Divine revelation*. Nowhere but in Holy Scripture do we know anything about Adam, or of our relation to him. If it be asked how the federal constitution of the race can be reconciled with the dictates of human reason, the first answer must be, it is not for us *to reconcile* them. The initial inquiry is not whether Federal Headship be reasonable or just, but, is it a fact revealed in the Word of God? If it is, then reason must bow to it and faith humbly receive it. To the child of God the question of its *justice* is easily settled: we know it to be just, because it is a part of the ways of the infinitely holy and righteous God.

Now the fact that Adam *was* the federal head of the human race, that he *did* act and transact in a representative capacity, and that the judicial consequences of his actings *were* imputed to all those for whom he stood, is clearly revealed in God’s Word. In Romans 5 we read “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (v. 12); “through the offence of one many be dead” (v. 15); “the judgment was by one to condemnation” (v. 16); “by one man’s offence death reigned” (v. 17); “by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation” (v. 18); “by one man’s disobedience many were made (legally constituted) sinners” (v. 19). The meaning of these declarations is far too plain for any unprejudiced mind to misunderstand. It pleased God to deal with the human race *as represented in and by Adam*.

Let us borrow a simple illustration. God did not deal with mankind as with a field of corn, where each stalk stands upon its own individual root; but He dealt with it as *a tree*, all the branches of which have one common root and trunk. If you strike with an axe at the root of a tree, the *whole* tree falls—not only the trunk, but also the branches, and even the twigs upon the branches: all wither and die. So it was when Adam fell. God permitted Satan to lay the axe at the root of the tree, and when Adam fell, all his posterity fell with him. At one fatal stroke Adam was severed from communion with his Maker, and as the result “death passed upon all men.”

Here, then, we learn what is the formal ground of man’s judicial condemnation before God. The popular idea of *what* it is which renders man a sinner in the sight of Heaven is altogether inadequate and false. The prevailing conception is that a sinner is one who commits and practices sin. It is true that this is the *character* of a sinner, but it certainly is not that which primarily *constitutes* him a sinner. The truth is that every member of our race enters this world a guilty sinner before he ever commits a single transgression. It is not only that he possesses a sinful nature, but he is directly “under condemnation.” We are legally-constituted sinners neither by what we are nor by what we are doing, but by the disobedience of our federal head, Adam. Adam acted not for himself alone, but for all who were to spring from him.

On this point the teaching of the Apostle Paul is plain and unambiguous. The terms of Romans 5:12-19, as we have shown above, are too varied and distinct to admit of any misconception: that it is on account of their sin in Adam, men, in the first instance, are accounted guilty and treated as such, as well as partake of a depraved nature. The language of 1 Corinthians 15:22 is equally unintelligible except on the supposition that both Adam and Christ sustained a *representative* character, in virtue of which the one involved the race in guilt and ruin, and the other, by His obedience unto death, secured the justification and salvation of all believe in Him. The actual condition of the human race, throughout its history, confirms the same: the Apostle’s doctrine supplies the only adequate explanation of the universal prevalence of sin.

The human race is suffering now for the sin of Adam, or it is suffering for nothing at all. This earth is the scene of a grim and awful tragedy. In it we see misery and wretchedness, pain and poverty,

decay and death, on every side. None escape. That “man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward” is an indisputable fact. But what is the explanation of it? Every effect must have a previous cause. If we *are not* being punished for Adam’s sin, then, coming into this world, we are “children of wrath” alienated from God, corrupt and depraved, and on the Broad Road which leadeth to destruction *for nothing at all!* Who would contend that this was better, more satisfactory, than the Scriptural explanation of our ruin?

But it will be said, It was unjust to make Adam our federal head. How so? Is not the principle of representation a fundamental one in human society? The father is the legal head of his children during their minority: what he does, binds the family. A business house is held responsible for the transactions of its agents. The heads of a state are vested with such authority that the treaties they make are binding upon the whole nation. This principle is so basic it cannot be set aside. Every popular election illustrates the fact that a constituency will act through a representative and be bound by his acts. Human affairs could not continue, nor society exist without it. Why, then, be staggered at finding it inaugurated in Eden?

Consider the alternative. “The race must have either stood in a full grown man, with a full-orbed intellect, or stood as babies, each entering his probation in the twilight of self-consciousness, each deciding his destiny before his eyes were half-opened to what it all meant. How much better would that have been? How much more just? But could it not have been some other way? There was no other way. It was either the baby or it was the perfect, well-equipped, all-calculating man—the man who saw and comprehended everything. That man was Adam” (G.S. Bishop). Yes, Adam, fresh from the hands of his Creator, with no sinful ancestry behind him, with no depraved nature within. A man made in the image and likeness of God, pronounced by Him “very good,” in fellowship with Heaven. Who could have been a more suitable representative for us?

This has been the principle on which and the method by which God has acted all through. The posterity of Canaan were cursed for the single transgression of their parent (Gen. 9). The Egyptians perished at the Red Sea as the result of Pharaoh’s wickedness. When Israel became God’s witness in the earth it was the same. The sins of the fathers were to be visited upon the children: in consequence of Achan’s one sin the whole of his family were stoned to death. The high priest acted on behalf of the whole nation. Later, the king was held accountable for the conduct of his subjects. One acting on the behalf of others, the one responsible for the many, is a basic principle both of human and Divine government. We cannot get away from it: wherever we look it stares us in the face.

Finally, let it be pointed out that the sinner’s salvation is made to depend upon the same principle. Beware, my reader, of quarreling with the justice of this law of representation. This principle wrecked us, and this principle alone can rescue us. The disobedience of the first Adam was the judicial ground of our condemnation; the obedience of the last Adam is the legal ground on which God alone can justify the sinner. The substitution of Christ in the place of His people, the imputation of their sins to Him and of His righteousness to them, is the cardinal fact of the Gospel. But the principle of being saved by what Another has done is only possible on the ground that we are lost through what another did. The two stand or fall together. If there had been no Covenant of Works there could have been no Covenant of Grace: if there had been no death *in* Adam, there could have been no life *in* Christ.

“By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners” (Rom. 5:19). Here is cause for humiliation which few think about. We are members of a cursed race, the fallen children of a fallen parent, and as such we enter this world “*alienated* from the life of God” (Eph. 4:18), with nothing in us to prompt unto holy living. O that God may reveal to you, dear reader, your connection with the first Adam, that you may realize your deep need of clinging to the last Adam. The world may deride this doctrine of representation and imputation, but that only evidences it to be of God. If the Gospel (the *genuine*

Gospel) were welcomed by all, that would prove it was of human manufacture; for only that is acceptable to fallen man which is invented by fallen man. That the wise of this world scoff at the truth of Federal Headship, when it is faithfully presented, only goes to manifest its Divine origin.

“By the offence of one judgment came upon all men *to condemnation*” (Rom. 5:18). In the day that Adam fell, the frown of God came upon all his children. The holy nature of God abhorred the apostate race. The curse of the broken law descended upon all Adam’s posterity. It is only thus we can account for the *universality* of depravity and suffering. The corruption which we inherit from our parents is a great evil, for it is the source of all personal sins. For God to allow this transmission of depravity, is to inflict a *punishment*. But how could God punish all, unless *all* were guilty? The fact that all *do* share in this common punishment proves that *all* sinned and fell in Adam. Our depravity and misery are not, as such, the appointment of the Creator, but are instead the retribution of the Judge.

“By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners” (Rom. 5:19). The word “made” in that verse calls for a definition and explanation. It does *not* refer directly and primarily to the fact that we inherit from Adam a corrupt and sinful nature—that we learn from other Scriptures. The term “were made sinners” is a forensic one, and refers to our being *constituted guilty* in the sight of God. A parallel case is found in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “He hath *made* Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.” Clearly those words “made Christ to be sin” cannot refer to any change which our Lord underwent in His nature or character. No, rather the blessed Saviour so took His people’s place before God that He was treated and dealt with as *guilty*: their sins were *not imparted*, but *imputed* to Him.

Again, in Galatians 3:13 we read that Christ was “*made* a curse for us”: as the Substitute of God’s elect, He was judicially regarded as beneath the condemnation of the law. Our guilt was legally transferred to Christ: the sins we committed, He was regarded as responsible for; what *we* deserved, He endured. In like manner, Adam’s offspring were “*made* sinners” by their head’s disobedience: the legal consequences of their representative’s transgression were charged to their account. They were judicially constituted guilty, because the guilt of Adam’s sin was charged to them. Hence we enter this world not only with the heritage of a corrupt nature, but “under condemnation.” We are by nature “children of *wrath*” (Eph. 2:3), for “the wicked are *estranged* from the womb” (Psa. 58:3)—separated from God and exposed to His judicial displeasure.

### *The Adamic-Part 2*

In the preceding article we pointed out at some length that when Adam stood in Eden as a responsible being before his Creator, he stood there as the *Federal Head* of our race, that he legally transacted on the behalf of all his posterity, that in the sight of the Divine Law we were all so absolutely identified with him as to be accounted “in Adam.” Hence what he did, all are regarded as having done; when he sinned, we sinned; when he fell, we fell; when he died, we died. The language of Romans 5:12-19 and 1 Corinthians 15:22 is so plain and positive on this point as to leave no valid room for any uncertainty. Having viewed, then, the *representative* office or position which Adam occupied, we turn to consider the Covenant which God made with him at that time. But before so doing, let us observe how admirably equipped Adam was to fill that eminent office and transact for all his race.

It is exceedingly difficult, if not altogether impossible in our present state for us to form any adequate conception of the most excellent and glorious endowment of man in his first estate. Negatively, he was entirely free from sin and misery: Adam had no evil ancestry behind him, no corruption within him, nothing in his body to distress him. Positively, he was made in the image and likeness of God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, endued with a wisdom and holiness to which Christians are as yet, in themselves, strangers. He was blest with unclouded communion with God, placed in the

fairest of environments, given dominion over all creatures here below, and graciously provided with a suitable helpmate. Fair as the morning was that blissful heritage into which Adam was estated. Made "upright" (Eccl. 7:29) and endowed with full ability to serve, delight in, and glorify his Creator.

Though pronounced by God Himself, "very good" (Gen. 1:31) on the day of his creation, Adam was, nevertheless, a *creature*, and as such, subject unto the authority of the One who had given him being. God governs all rational beings by law, as the rule of their obedience to Him. To that principle there is no exception, and in the very nature of things cannot be, for God must enforce His rights as Lord over all. Angels (Psa. 103:20), unfallen man, fallen men, redeemed men, are subject to the moral government of God. Even the beloved Son, when He became incarnate, was "made under the law" (Gal. 4:4). Moreover, in the case of Adam his character was not yet *confirmed*, and therefore, like the angels, he must be placed on probation, subjected to trial, to see whether or no he would render allegiance to the Lord his Maker.

Now the law which God gave to Adam, under which He placed him, was threefold: natural, moral, and positive. By the first we mean that subjection to his Creator-acting for His honour and glory-was constituted the very law of his being. Being created in the image and likeness of God, it was his very *nature* to delight himself in the Lord, and reproduce (in his creature measure) God's righteousness and holiness. Just as the animals are endowed with a nature of instinct which prompts them to choose and do that which makes for their well-being, so man in his pristine glory was endued with a nature which prompted him to do that which is pleasing unto God, and that which promoted his own highest interests-the remains of which appear in fallen man's rationality and conscience.

By the "moral" law which was given to Adam by God, we mean that he was placed under the requirements of the Ten Commandments, the summary of which is "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." Nothing less than that was due unto Adam's Maker, and nothing short of it became him as an upright creature. By "positive" law, we mean that God also placed certain restrictions upon Adam which had never occurred to him from either the light of nature or from any moral considerations; instead, they were sovereignly appointed by God and were designed as a special *test* of Adam's subjection to the imperial will of his King. The term "positive law" is employed by theologians not as antithetical to "negative," but in contrast from those laws which are addressed to our *moral* nature: prayer is a "moral" duty: baptism is a "positive" ordinance.

This threefold law under which Adam was placed may be clearly discerned in the brief records of Genesis 1 and 2. The marriage between Adam and Eve illustrates the first: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24): any infraction of the marital relationship is a violation of the very law of *nature*. The institution and consecration of the Sabbath exemplifies the second: "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work" (Gen. 2:3): a procedure that would be inexplicable except as furnishing the ground for a like procedure on the part of man, for otherwise the hallowing and benediction spoken of must have lacked both a proper subject and a definite aim-in every age man's observance of the holy Sabbath has been made the supreme test of his *moral* relation to the Lord. The command for Adam to care for the garden ("dress and keep it": Gen 2:15) demonstrates the third: even in the unfallen state man was not to be idle and shiftless.

From the above it is plainly evident that there was the distinct recognition of and outward revelation to Adam of those three great branches of duty which appertain to man in every possible condition of mortal existence, and which unitedly comprehend every obligation upon man in this life, namely, what he owes to God, what he owes to his neighbor, and what he owes to himself-those three embrace everything. The sanctification of the Sabbath, the institution of Marriage, and the

command to dress and keep the Garden were revealed as outward ordinances, covering the three classes of duties, each of supreme importance in its own sphere: the spiritual, the moral, and the natural. Those intrinsic elements of Divine Law are immutable: they preceded the Covenant of Works, and would have remained had the covenant been kept-as they have survived its breach.

But there was need for something of a still more specific kind to test man's adherence to the perfect rectitude incumbent upon him, for in Adam humanity was on trial, the whole race not only having been potentially created in him, but being federally represented by him. "The question, therefore, as to its proper decisiveness, must be made to turn on conformity to an ordinance at once reasonable in its nature and specific in its requirements-an ordinance which the simplest should understand and respecting which no uncertainty could exist whether it had been broken or not. Such in the highest degree was the appointment respecting the tree of knowledge of good and evil, forbidden of God to be eaten on pain of death-an appointment positive in its character, in a certain sense arbitrary, yet withal perfectly natural" (P. Fairbairn "The Revelation of Law in Scripture").

Adam was now subjected to a simple and specific test as to whether the will of God was sacred in his eyes. Nothing less than perfect conformity of heart and unremitting obedience in act to the whole revealed will of God could be required of man. The command not to eat of the fruit of a certain tree was now made the decisive test of his general obedience. The prohibitory statute was a "positive" precept. It was not sinful *per se* to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but only so because God had forbidden it. It was, therefore, a more suitable test of faith and obedience than a "moral" statute would have been, submission being required for no other reason than the sovereign will of God. At the same time let it be clearly observed that disobedience of that "positive" precept certainly involved defiance of the "moral" law, for it was a failure to love God with all the heart, it was contempt of Divine authority, it was coveting that which God had forbidden.

On the basis of the threefold constitution under which God had placed Adam-amenable to natural, moral, and positive law; on the basis of his threefold responsibility-to perform the duty which he owed unto God, unto his neighbour, unto himself; and on the basis of the threefold equipment with which he had been endowed-created in the image of God, pronounced "very good," indwelt by the Holy spirit, and thus fully furnished to discharge his responsibility, God entered into a solemn compact with him. Clothed in dignity, intelligence, and moral excellence, Adam was surrounded on every side by exquisite beauty and loveliness. The occupant of Eden was more a being of Heaven, than of earth: an embodiment of wisdom, purity, and uprightness. God Himself deigned to visit and cheer him with His presence and blessing. In body perfectly sound: in soul completely holy: in circumstances blissfully happy.

The ideal fitness of Adam to act as the head of his race, and the ideal circumstances under which the decisive test was to be made must forever shut every fair and honest mouth against objecting to the arrangement God proposed to Adam, and the fearful consequences which his sad failure have brought down upon us. It has been well said, "Had we been present-had we and all the human race been brought into existence at once-and had God proposed to us that we should choose one of our number to be our representative that he might enter into covenant with him on our behalf-should we not, with one voice, have chosen our first parent for this responsible office? Should we not have said, 'He is a perfect man and bears the image and likeness of God,-if any one is to stand for us let him be the man'; Now,-since the angels who stood for themselves, fell-why should we wish to stand for ourselves. And if it be reasonable that one stand for us-why should we complain, when God has chosen the same person for this office, that we would have chosen, had we been in existence, and capable of choosing ourselves?" (G.S. Bishop).

"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou

eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). The contracting parties in this covenant were God and Adam. First, God as supreme Lord, prescribing what was equitable: God as *goodness* itself, promising communion with Himself-in which man’s happiness principally lies-while treading the path of obedience and doing that which was well-pleasing to his Maker; but God also as *justice* itself, threatening death upon rebellion. Second, Adam considered both as man and as the head and representative of his posterity. As man, he was a rational and responsible being, endowed with sufficient powers to fulfill all righteousness, standing not as a feeble babe, but a fully developed man-a fit and fully qualified subject for God to enter into covenant with him. As head of the race, he was now called upon to transact in the nature and strength with which the Creator had so richly furnished him.

Yet it is clear that the Covenant of Works proceeded on the assumption that man in his original condition-though “made upright”-was *capable of* falling, just as the Covenant of Grace proceeds on the assumption that man, though fallen and depraved, is-through Christ-capable of being restored. “God made man male and female, with righteousness and true holiness, having the Law of God in their hearts, and power to fulfill it; and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their will, which was subject to change” (Westminster Confessions of Faith). In the closing words of that quotation some light is cast upon that mysterious question, How could a sinless creature *first sin*? How could one made “upright” fall? How could one whom God Himself had pronounced “very good” give ear to the Devil, apostatize, and drag down himself and his posterity to utter ruin?

While in our present state perhaps it is not possible for us to fully solve this profound problem, yet it is our conviction that we may perceive the direction in which the solution lies. In the first place, Adam was *mutable* or subject to change. Necessarily so, for mutability and creaturehood are correlative terms. There is only One “with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17). The essential attributes of God are incommunicable: for the Deity to bestow omniscience, omnipotence, or immutability on others would not be to bring into existence creatures, but would be raising up *Gods*, equal with Himself. Therefore, while Adam was a perfect creature, he was but a *creature*, mutable and not immutable; and being mutable, he was subject to change either for the better or for the worse; and hence, liable to fall.

In the second place, Adam was constituted a *responsible* being, a moral agent, being endowed with a free will, and therefore he was capable both of obedience and disobedience. Moreover, though the first man was endowed with both natural and spiritual wisdom amply sufficient for all his needs, leaving him entirely without excuse if he made a false and foolish choice, nevertheless, he was but *fallible*, for infallibility pertains unto God alone, as Job 4:18 more than hints; and therefore being fallible Adam was capable of erring, though to do so was culpable to the highest degree. Mutability and fallibility are the conditions of existence of every *creature*, and while they are not blemishes, yet they are potential dangers, which can only be prevented from working ruin by the creature constantly looking to the Creator for His upholding grace.

In the third place, as a responsible being, as a moral agent, as one who was endowed with free will, Adam had necessarily to be *placed on probation*, submitted to a real test of his fealty unto God, before he was *confirmed*, or given an abiding standing in his creature perfections. Because Adam was a *creature*, mutable and fallible, he was entirely *dependent* upon his Creator, and therefore he must be put upon trial to show whether or no he would assert his *independency*, which would be open revolt against his Maker and the repudiation of his creaturehood. Every creature must necessarily come under the moral government of God, and for free agents that necessarily implies and involves two possible alternatives-subjection or insubordination. The absolute dominion of God over the creature and the complete dependence and subjection of the creature to God, holds good in every

part of the universe and throughout all ages. The inherent poison in every error and evil is the rejection of God's dominion, of man's dependence upon his Maker, or the assertion of his independency.

Being but mutable, fallible and dependent, the noblest and highest creature of all is *liable* to fall from his fair estate, and can only be preserved therein by the sovereign power of his Creator. Being endowed with free will man was capable both of obedience and disobedience. Had He so pleased, God could have upheld Adam, and that *without* destroying his accountability or infringing upon his liberty; but unless Adam had been left to *his own* creature wisdom and strength there had been no *trial* of his responsibility and powers. Instead, God offered to man the opportunity of being confirmed as a holy and happy creature, secured on the condition of his own personal choice, so that his probation being successfully closed, he had been granted a firm standing before God. But God permitted Adam to disobey, to make way for the more glorious obedience of Christ; suffered the Covenant of Works to be broken that the far better Covenant of Grace might be administered.

### *The Adamic-Part 3*

Before entering into detail upon the nature and terms of the compact which God made with Adam, it may be well to obviate an objection which some are likely to make against the whole subject, namely, that since the mere *word* "covenant" is not to be found in the historical account of Genesis, therefore to speak of the Adamic Covenant is naught but a "theological invention." There is a certain class of people, posing as ultra orthodox, who imagine they have a reverence and respect for Holy Writ as the final court of appeal which surpasses that of their fellows. They say, Show me a passage which expressly states God made a "covenant" with Adam, and that will settle the matter; but until you can produce a verse with the exact term "Adamic Covenant" in it, I shall believe no such thing.

Our reason for referring to this paltry quibble is because it illustrates a very superficial approach to God's Word which is becoming more and more prevalent in certain quarters, and which stands badly in need of being corrected. Words are only counters or signs after all (different writers use them with varying latitude, as is sometimes the case in Scripture itself), and to be unduly occupied with the *shell* often results in a failure to obtain the kernel within. Some Unitarians refuse to believe in the tri-unity of God, merely because no verse be found which categorically affirms there are "three Persons in the Godhead" or where the *word* "Trinity" is used. But what matters the absence of the mere *word* itself, when three distinct Divine Persons are clearly delineated in the Word of Truth! For the same reason others repudiate the fact of the "total depravity" of fallen man, which is the height of absurdity when Scripture depicts him as corrupt in *all* the faculties of his being.

Surely I need not to be *told* that a certain person has been born again if all the evidences of regeneration are clearly discernible in his life; and if I am furnished with a full description of his immersion, the mere *word* "baptism" does not make it any more sure and definite to my mind. Our first search, then, in Genesis, is not for the term "covenant," but to see whether or not we can trace the outlines of a solemn and definite pact between God and Adam. We say this not because the word itself is never associated with our first parents-for elsewhere it is-but because we are anxious that certain of our readers may be delivered from the evil mentioned above. To dismiss from our minds all thoughts of an Adamic Covenant simply because the *term* itself occurs not in Genesis 1 to 5 is to read those chapters very superficially and miss much which lies only a little beneath their surface.

Let us now remind ourselves of the essential elements of a "covenant." Briefly stated, any covenant is a mutual agreement entered into by two or more parties, whereby they stand solemnly bound to each other to perform the conditions contracted for. Amplifying that definition, it may be pointed out that the terms of a covenant are: first, there is a stipulation of something to be done or

given by that party proposing the covenant. Second, there is a restipulation by the other party of some thing to be done or given in consideration. Third, those stipulations must be lawful and right, for it can never be right to engage to do wrong. Fourth there is a penalty included in the terms of agreement, some evil consequence to result to the party who may and shall violate his engagement; that penalty being added as a security.

A "covenant" then is a disposition of things, an arrangement concerning them, a mutual agreement about them. But again we would remind the reader that words are but arbitrary things, and we are never safe in trusting to a single term, as though from it *alone* we could collect the right knowledge of the thing. No, our inquiry is into the thing itself. What are the matters of *fact* to which these terms are applied? Was there any moral transaction between God and Adam wherein the above-mentioned four principles were involved? Was there any proposition made by God to man of something to be done by the latter? any stipulation of something to be given by the former? any agreement of both? any penal sanction? To such interrogations every accurate observer of the contents of Genesis 1 to 3 must answer affirmatively.

"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Here are all the constituent elements of a covenant. First, there are the contracting parties, the Lord God and man. Second, there is a stipulation enjoined, which man (as he was duty bound) engaged to perform. Third, there was a penalty prescribed, which would be incurred in case of failure. Fourth, there was by clear and necessary implication a reward promised, to which Adam would be entitled by his fulfillment of the condition. Finally, the "tree of life" was the Divine "*seal*" or ratification of the covenant, as the rainbow was the seal of the covenant which God made with Noah. Later, we shall endeavour to furnish clear proof of each of these statements.

"We here have, in the beginning of the world, distinctly placed before us, as the parties to the covenant, the Creator and the creature, the Governor and the governed. In the covenant itself, brief as it is, we have concentrated all those primary, anterior, and eternal principles of truth, righteousness, and justice, which enter necessarily into the nature of the great God, and which must always pervade His government, under whatever dispensation; we have a full recognition of His authority to govern His intelligent creatures, according to these principles, and we have a perfect acknowledgment on the part of man, that in all things he is subject, as a rational and accountable being, to the will and direction of the infinitely wise and benevolent Creator. No part of a covenant therefore, in its proper sense, is wanting" (R.B. Howell, "The Covenant," 1855).

There was, then, a formal compact between God and man concerning obedience and disobedience, reward and punishment, and where there is a binding law pertaining to such matters and an agreement upon them by both parties concerned, there is a "covenant"-compare Genesis 21:27 and what precedes Genesis 31:44 and what follows. In this covenant Adam acted not as a private person for himself only, but as the federal head and representative of the whole of his posterity. In that capacity he served alone, Eve not being a federal head jointly with him, but was included in it, she being (later, we believe) formed out of him. In this Adam was a type of Christ, with whom God made the Everlasting Covenant, and who at the appointed time acted as the Head and Representative of His people: as it is written, "over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come" (Rom. 5:14).

The most conclusive proof that Adam *did* enter into a covenant with God on the behalf of his posterity is found in the penal evils which came upon the race in consequence of its head's disobedience. From the awful curse which passed upon all his posterity we are compelled to infer the *legal relation* which existed between Adam and them, for the Judge of all the earth, being righteous,

will not punish where there is no crime. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that (or "in whom") all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Here is the fact, and from it we must infer the preceding cause of it: under the government of a righteous God the suffering of holy beings *unconnected* with sin, is an impossibility. It would be the very acme of injustice that Adam's sin should be the cause of death passing on all men, unless all men were morally and legally connected with him.

That Adam stood as the federal head of his race and transacted for them, and that all his posterity were contemplated by God as being morally and legally (as well as seminally) in Adam, is clear from almost everything that was said to him in the first three chapters of Genesis. The language there used plainly intimates that it was spoken to the whole human race, and not to Adam as a single individual, but spoken to *them* and of *them*. The first time "man" is mentioned it evidently signifies all mankind and not Adam alone: "And God said, Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let THEM have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and (not simply "the garden of Eden," but) *over all the earth*" (Gen. 1:26). All men bear the name of their representative (as the Church is designated after its Head: 1 Corinthians 12:12), for the Hebrew for "every man" in Psalm 39:6, 11 is "all Adam"-plain evidence of their being one in the eye of the law.

In like manner, what God said to Adam after he had sinned, was said *to* and *of* all mankind, and the evil to which he was doomed in this world, as the consequence of his transgression, equally falls upon his posterity: "cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:17, 19). As this sentence "unto dust shalt *thou* return" did not respect Adam only, but all his descendants, so the same language in the original threat had respect unto all mankind: "in the day that thou eatest thereof *thou* shalt surely die." This is reduced to a certainty by the unequivocal declarations of Romans 5:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:22. The curse came upon all, so the sin must have been committed by all.

The terms of the covenant are related in or clearly inferable from the language of Genesis 2:17. That covenant demanded as its condition, perfect obedience. Nor was that in any way difficult: one test only was instituted by which that obedience was to be formally expressed, namely, abstinence from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had endowed Adam, in his creation, with a perfect and universal rectitude (Eccl. 7:29), so that he was fully able to respond to all requirements of his Maker. He had a full knowledge of God's will concerning his duty. There was no bias in him toward evil: having been created in the image and likeness of God, his affections were pure and holy (cf. Eph. 4:24). How simple and easy was the observance of the obligation! How appalling the consequences of its violations!

"The tendency of such a Divine precept is to be considered. Man is thereby taught, 1. that God is Lord of all things; and that it is unlawful for man even to desire an apple, but with His leave. In all things therefore, from the greatest to the least the mouth of the Lord is to be consulted, as to what He would, or would not have done by us. 2. That man's true happiness is placed in God alone, and nothing is to be desired but with submission to God, and in order to employ it for Him. So that it is *He* only, on whose account all things appear good and desirable to man. 3. Readily to be satisfied without even the most delightful and desirable things, if God so command: and to think there is much more good in obedience to the Divine precept than in the enjoyment of the most delightful thing in the world. 4. That man was not yet arrived at the utmost pitch of happiness, but to expect a still greater good, after his course of obedience was over. This was hinted by the prohibition of the most delightful tree, whose fruit was, of any other, greatly to be desired; and this argued some degree of imperfection in that state in which man was forbid the enjoyment of some good" (The Economy of the

Covenants, H. Witsius, 1660).

Unto that prohibitive statute was annexed a promise. This is an essential element in a covenant: a reward being guaranteed upon its terms being fulfilled. So here: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" necessarily implies the converse-"If thou eatest not thereof thou shalt surely live." Just as "Thou shalt not steal" inevitably involves "thou shalt conduct thyself honestly and honourably," just as "rejoice in the Lord" includes "murmur not against Him," so according to the simplest laws of construction the threats of death as a consequence of eating, affirmed the promise of life to obedience. God will be no man's debtor: the general principle of "in keeping of them (the Divine commandments) there is great reward" (Psa. 19:11) admits of no exception.

A certain good, a spiritual blessing, *in addition to* what Adam and Eve (and their posterity in him) already possessed, was assured upon his obedience. Had Adam been *without* a promise, he had been without a well-grounded hope for the future, for the hope which maketh not ashamed is founded upon the promise (Rom. 4:18 etc.). As Romans 7:10 so plainly affirms "the commandment which was ordained *to life*," or more accurately (for the word "ordained" is supplied by the translators) "the commandment which was unto life"-having "life" as the reward for obedience. And again, "the law is not of faith: but, The man that *doeth* them *shall live* in them" (Gal. 3:12). But the law was "weak through the flesh" (Rom. 8:3), Adam being a mutable, fallible, mortal, creature.

Against what has been said above it is objected, Adam was *already* in possession of spiritual life; how, then, could "life" be the reward promised for his obedience? It is true that Adam was in the enjoyment of spiritual life, being completely holy and happy; but he was *on probation*, and his response to the test God gave him, his obedience or disobedience to His command, would determine whether that spiritual life should be *continued*, or whether it would be forfeited. Had Adam complied with the terms of the covenant, then he had been *confirmed* in his creature standing, in the favour of God toward him, in communion with his Maker, in the happy state of an earthly paradise; he would then have passed beyond the possibility of apostasy and misery. The reward, or additional good, which would have followed Adam's obedience, was a state of inalienable blessedness both for himself and his posterity.

The well-informed reader will observe from the above that we are not in accord with H. Witsius and some other prominent theologians of the Puritan period, who taught that the reward promised Adam upon his obedience was the Heavenly heritage. Their arguments upon this point do not seem to us at all conclusive, nor are we aware of anything in Scripture which may be cited in proof thereof. An inalienable title to the earthly paradise is, we think, what the promise denoted. Rather was it reserved for the incarnate Son of God, by the inestimable worth of His obedience unto death, to merit for His people everlasting bliss on High. Therefore we are told that He has ushered in a "better covenant" with "*better promises*" (Heb. 8:6). The last Adam has secured, both for God and for His people, *more* than was lost by the defection of the first Adam.

#### *The Adamic-Part 4*

In the previous papers upon the Covenant of Works we have seen that, at the beginning, man was "made upright" (Eccl. 7:29), which language necessarily implies a law to which he was conformed in his creation. When anything is made regular or according to rule, the rule itself is obviously presupposed. The Law of Adam's being was none other than the eternal and indispensable law of righteousness, the same which was afterwards summed up in the Ten Commandments. Man's "uprightness" consisted in the universal rectitude of his character, his entire conformity to the nature of his Maker. The very nature of man was then fully able to respond to the requirements of God's revealed will, and his response thereto was the righteousness in which he stood.

It was also shown that man was, in Eden, placed on probation: that as a moral being his responsibility was tried out. In other words, he was placed under the moral government of God, and being endowed with a free will, he was capable both of obedience or disobedience-his own free choice being the determining factor. As a creature, he was subject to his Creator; as one who was indebted to God for all he was and had, he was under the deepest obligation to love Him with all his heart, and serve Him with all his might; and perfectly was he fitted so to do. Thus created, and thus qualified, it pleased the Lord God to constitute Adam the federal head and legal representative of his race; and as occupying that character and office, God entered into a solemn covenant or agreement with him, promising a reward upon the fulfillment of certain conditions.

It is true that the actual "covenant" does not occur in the Genesis record, in connection with the primordial transaction between God and man, but the facts of the case present all the constituent elements of a covenant. Brief as is the statement furnished in Genesis 2:17, we may clearly discern concentrated in it those eternal principles of truth, righteousness and justice, which are the glory of God's character, and which necessarily regulate His government in all spheres and in all ages. There is an avowal of His authority to govern the creature of His hands, a revelation of His will as to what He requires from the creature, a solemn threat of what would surely follow upon his disobedience, with a clearly implied promise of reward for obedience. One test only was stipulated, by which obedience was to be formally expressed: abstinence from the fruit of the one forbidden tree.

"The covenant of works was in its nature fitted, and designed to give, and did give uninterrupted happiness, as long as its requisitions were observed. This is true throughout the whole moral universe of God, for man is not the only being under its government. It is the law of angels themselves. To their nature, no less than to man's while in a state of holiness, it is perfectly adapted. Those of them who 'have kept their first estate,' are conformed perfectly to all its demands. They meet and satisfy them fully by love; fervent love to God, and to all their celestial associates. Heaven is pervaded consequently with the unbroken harmonies of love. And how unspeakably happy! 'The man' said Paul, 'that doeth these things, shall *live* by them' (Rom. 10:5). His bliss is unfading" (R.B. Howell, 1855).

God, then, entered into a covenant with Adam, and all his posterity in him, to the effect that if he obeyed the one command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he should receive as his reward an indefectibility of holiness and righteousness. Nor was that transaction exceptional in the Divine dealings with our race, for God has made covenants with other men which have vitally effected their posterity: if we are spared, this will appear when we take up His covenant with Noah and Abraham. The compact which the Lord God entered into with Adam is appropriately termed "The Covenant of Works," not only to distinguish it from the Covenant of Grace, but also because under it life was promised *on condition of* perfect obedience, which obedience was to be performed by man *in his own creature strength*.

We come now to consider *the penal sanction* of the covenant. This is contained in the words, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Here was made known the terrible penalty which would most certainly follow upon Adam's disobedience, his violation of the covenant. All the blessings of the covenant would instantly cease. Transgression of God's righteous law would not only forfeit all blessings, but would convert them into so many fountains of wretchedness and woe. The covenant of works provided no Mediator, nor any other method of restoration to the purity and bliss which was lost. There was no place given for repentance. All was irrevocably lost. Between the blessing of obedience and the curse of disobedience there was no middle ground. So far as the terms of the covenant of works was concerned, its inexorable sentence was: "the soul that sinneth, it shall die."

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). It is to be duly noted what God here threatened was the direct consequence and immediate punishment of *sin*, to be inflicted only upon the rebellious and disobedient. That death which now seizes fallen man, is no mere natural calamity, but a penal infliction. It is not a “debt” which he owes to “nature,” but a judicial sentence which is passed upon him by the Divine Judge. Death has come in because our first parent, our federal head and representative, took of the forbidden fruit, and for no other reason. It was altogether meet to God’s authority and holy will that there should be an unmistakable connection between sin and its punishment, so that it is impossible for any sinner to escape the wages of sin, unless Another should be paid them in his stead-of which the covenant of works contained no hint.

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” or, as the margin renders it, “dying thou shalt die.” That dread threat was couched in general terms. It *was not* said, “thou shalt die physically,” nor “thou shalt die spiritually,” but simply “thou shalt surely *die*.” The absence of any modifying adverb shows that the term “death” is here taken in its widest scope, and is to be defined according to whatever the Scriptures elsewhere signify by that term. It is the very height of presumption for us to limit *what God has not limited*. Far be it from us to blunt the sharp point of the Divine threat. The “dying thou shalt die”-which expresses more accurately and forcibly the original Hebrew-shows the words are to be taken in their full emphasis.

First, *corporeal* death, the germs of which are in our bodies from the beginning of our existence, so that from the moment we draw our first breath, we begin to die. And how can it be otherwise, seeing that we are “shapen in iniquity” and “conceived in sin” (Psa. 51:5)! From birth our physical body is indisposed, and entirely unfitted for the soul to reside in eternally; so that there must yet be a separation from it. By that separation the good things of the body, the “pleasures of sin,” on which the soul so much dotes, are at once snatched away; so that it becomes equally true of each one, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb (the earth), and naked shall I *return thither*” (Job 1:21). God intimated this to Adam when He said, “Till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou *return*” (Gen. 3:19)!

Second, “by death is here understood all that lasting and hard labour, that great sorrow, all the tedious miseries of this life, by which life ceases to be *life*, and which are the sad harbingers of certain death. To these things man is condemned: see Genesis 3:16-19-the whole of that sentence is founded on the antecedent threat of Genesis 2:17. Such miseries Pharaoh called by the name ‘death’ (Exo. 10:17). David called his pain and anguish ‘the sorrows of death’ (Psa. 116:3): by those ‘sorrows’ death binds and fastens man that he may thrust them into and confine them in his dungeon. As ‘life’ is not barely to live, but to be happy; so ‘death’ is not to depart this life in a moment, but rather to languish in a long expectation, dread and foresight, of certain death, without knowing the time which God has foreordained” (H. Witsius).

Third, “death” in Scripture also signifies spiritual death, or the separation of the soul from God. This is what the Apostle called “being alienated from the life of God” (Eph. 4:18), which “life of God” illuminates, sanctifies, and exhilarates the souls of the regenerate. The true life of the soul consists in wisdom, pure love, and the rejoicing of a good conscience. The spiritual death of the soul consists in folly, evil lustings, and the rackings of an evil conscience: therefore when speaking of those who were “alienated from the life of God,” the Apostle at once added, “through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness.” Thus, the unregenerate are totally incapacitated for communion with the holy and living God.

“But I would more fully explain the nature of this (spiritual) death. Both living and dead bodies have motion. But a living body moves by *vegetation*, while it is nourished, has the use of its senses, is delighted, and acts with pleasure. Whereas, the dead body moves by *putrification* to a state of dissolution, and to the production of loathsome animals. And so in the soul, spiritually alive, there is motion, while it is fed, repasted, and fattened with Divine delights, while it takes pleasure in God and true wisdom; while, by the strength of its love, it is carried to and fixed on that which can sustain the soul and give it a sweet repose. But a dead soul has no feeling; that is, it neither understands truth, nor loves righteousness, but wallows and is spent in the sink of concupiscence, and brings forth the worms of impure thoughts, reasonings and affections” (H. Witsius).

Fourth, *eternal* death is also included in Genesis 2:17. The preludes of this are the terrors of an evil conscience, the soul deprived of all Divine consolation, and often an anguished sense of God’s wrath, under which it is miserably pressed down. At physical dissolution the soul of the sinner is sent into a place of torments (Luke 16:23-25). At the end of the world, the bodies of the wicked are raised and their souls are united thereto, and after appearing before the great white throne they will be cast into the Lake of Fire, there to suffer for ever and ever the “due reward of their iniquities.” The wages of sin is *death*, and that “death” there involves and includes *eternal* death is unmistakably plain from the fact that it is placed in direct antithesis with “eternal life”: Romans 6:23. The same appears again in Romans 5:21 which verse is the summing up of verses 12-20.

Let us now pause for a moment and review the ground already covered. First, we have seen the favourable and happy state in which Adam was originally created. Second, we have contemplated the threefold law under which he was placed. Third, we have observed that he stood in Eden as the federal head and legal representative of all his posterity. Fourth, we have pointed out that all the constituent elements of a formal covenant are clearly observable in the Genesis record: there was the contracting parties—the Lord God and Adam; there was the stipulation enjoined—obedience; there was the penalty attached—death upon disobedience; there was the necessary implied promise of reward—an immutable establishment in holiness and an inalienable title to the earthly paradise.

In order to follow out the logical sequence, we should, properly, examine next, the “*seal*” of the covenant, that is, the formal symbol and stamp of its ratification; but as that would call for more space than is here available, we must postpone our consideration of that until our next article (D.V.), which will conclude what we have to say upon the Adamic covenant. Instead, we will pass on to *Adam’s consent* unto the compact which the Lord God set before him. This may be inferred, first of all, from the very law of his nature: having been made in the image and likeness of God, there was nothing in him contrary to His holy will, nothing to oppose His righteous requirements: so that he *must* have readily attended.

“Adam, being holy, would not refuse to enter into a righteous engagement with his Maker; and being intelligent, would not decline an improvement in his condition” (W. Sledd): an “improvement” which, upon his fulfillment of the terms of the covenant, would have issued in being made *immutably* holy and happy, so that he would then have had spiritual life as *indefectible*, passing beyond all point of apostasy and misery. The only other possible alternative to Adam’s freely consenting to be a party to the covenant, would be his *refusal*, which is unthinkable in a pure and sinless being. Eve’s words to the Serpent in Genesis 3:2, 3 make it plain that Adam had given his word not to disobey his Maker. We quote from another who has ably handled this point:

“The *voluntary assent* of the parties, which is in every covenant: one party must make the proposition: God proposed the terms as an expression of His will, which is an assent or agreement. God’s commanding man not to eat, is His consent. As to man, it has been already observed, he could not without unreasonable opposition to his Creator’s will, refuse any terms which the wisdom and

benevolence of God would allow Him to proffer. Hence we should conclude, Adam must most cheerfully accede to the terms. But this the more readily, when their nature is inspected-when he should see in them every thing adapted for his advantage, and nothing to his disadvantage.

“The same conclusion we deduce from an inspection of the Scripture history. For 1, there is not a hint at any thing like a refusal on the part of Adam, before the act of violation. The whole history is perfectly consistent with the supposition that he did cheerfully agree. 2. It is evident that Eve thought the command most reasonable and proper. She so expressed herself to the serpent, giving God’s command as a reason for her abstinence. This information she must have derived from her husband, for she was not created at the time the covenant was given to Adam. We hence infer Adam’s *consent*. 3. Adam was, after his sin, abundantly disposed to excuse himself: he cast the blame upon the woman, and indirectly upon God, for giving her to him. Now most assuredly, if Adam could in truth have said, I never *consented* to abstain-I never agreed to the *terms* proposed-I have broken no pledge-he would have presented this apology for justification. But he was dumb; he offered no such apology. Can any reasonable man want further evidence of his consent? Even this may be had, if he will. 4. Look at the consequences. The penal evils *did* result: sorrow and death *did* ensue; and hence, because God is righteous, we infer the legal relations. The Judge of all the earth would not punish where there is no crime” (George Junkin, 1839).

#### *The Adamic-Part 5*

We are now to consider the *seal* which the Lord God made upon the covenant into which He entered with the federal head of our race. This is admittedly the most difficult part of our subject, and for that reason, the least understood in most circles today. So widespread is the spiritual ignorance which now prevails that, in many quarters, to speak of “the seal” of a covenant is to employ an unintelligible term. And yet the “seal” is an intrinsic part and an essential feature in the various covenants which God made. Hence, our treatment of the Adamic covenant would be quite inadequate and incomplete did we fail to give attention to one of the objects which is given a central place in the brief Genesis record. Mysterious as that object appears, light is cast on it by other passages. O that the Holy Spirit may be pleased to guide us into the truth thereon.

“And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9). First of all, let it be said emphatically that we regard this verse as referring to two real and *literal* trees: the very fact that we are told they were “pleasant to the sight” obliges us to regard them as tangible and visible entities. In the second place, it is equally obvious from what is said of them that those two trees were *extraordinary* ones, peculiar to themselves. They were placed “in the midst of the garden,” and from what is recorded in connection with them in Genesis 3, it is clear that they differed radically from all the other trees in Eden. In the third place, we cannot escape the conclusion that those literal trees were vested with a *symbolical significance*, being designed by God to give instructions to Adam, in the same way as others of His positive institutions now do unto us.

“It hath pleased the blessed and almighty God, in every economy of His covenants, to confirm, by some sacred symbols, the certainty of His promises and at the same time to remind man in covenant with Him of his duty” (H. Witsius). Examples of that fact or illustrations of this principle may be seen in the *rainbow* by which God ratified the covenant into which He entered with Noah (Gen. 9:12, 13), and *circumcision* which was the outward sign of confirmation of the covenant entered into with Abraham (Gen. 17:9, 11). From these cases, then, we may perceive the propriety of the definition given by A.A. Hodge, “A seal of a covenant is an outward visible sign, appointed by God as a pledge of His faithfulness, and as an earnest of the blessings promised in the covenant.” In other words, the “seal”

of the covenant is an external symbol, ratifying the validity of its terms, as the signatures of two witnesses “seal” a man’s will.

Now as we have shown in previous articles, the language of Genesis 2:17 not only pronounced a curse upon the disobedient partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but by necessary implication it announced a blessing upon the obedient non-eating thereof. The curse was *death*, with all that that involved and entailed; the blessing was a continuance and confirmation in all the felicity which man in his pristine innocency enjoyed. In His infinite condescension the Lord God was pleased to *confirm* or “seal” the terms of His covenant with Adam-contained in Genesis 2:17-by a symbolic and visible emblem ratifying the same; as He did to Noah by the rainbow, and to Abraham by circumcision. With Adam, this confirmatory symbol consisted of “the tree of life” in the midst of the garden.

A “seal,” then, is a Divine institution of which it is the design *to signify the blessings* promised in the covenant, and to give assurance of them to those by whom its terms have been fulfilled. The very name of this symbolic (yet real) tree at once intimated its design: it was “the tree *of life*.” Not, as some have erroneously supposed, that its fruit had the virtue of communicating physical immortality-as though anything material could do *that*; such a gross and carnal conception is much more closely akin to the Jewish and Mahometan fables, than to a sober interpretation of spiritual things. No, just as its companion was to Adam “the tree of knowledge of good and evil”-of “good” while he preserved his integrity, and of “evil” as soon as he disobeyed his Maker; so this other tree was both the symbol and pledge of that spiritual life which was inseparably connected with his obedience.

“It was chiefly intended to be a sign and seal to Adam, assuring him of the continuance of life and happiness, even to immortality and everlasting bliss, through the grace and favour of his Maker, upon condition of his perseverance in his state of innocency and obedience” (M. Henry). So far from it being a natural means of prolonging Adam’s physical life, it was a sacramental pledge of endless life and felicity being secured to him as the unmerited reward of fidelity. It was therefore an object for *faith* to feed upon-the physical eating to adumbrate the spiritual. Like all other “signs” and “seals,” this one was *not* designed *to confer* the promised blessing, but was a Divine pledge given to Adam’s faith to encourage the expectation thereof. It was a visible emblem to bring to remembrance that which God had promised.

It is the fatal error of Romanists and other ritualists that “signs” and “seals” actually convey grace of themselves. Not so: only as faith is operative in the use of them are they means of blessing. Romans 4:11 helps us at this point: “And he received the *sign* of circumcision, a *seal* of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.” Unto Abraham circumcision was both a sign and a seal: a “sign” that he had previously been justified, and a “seal” (pledge) that God would make good the promises which He had addressed to his faith. The rite, instead of conferring anything, only confirmed what Abraham already had. Unto Abraham himself circumcision was the guarantee that the righteousness of faith which he had (before he was circumcised) should come upon or be imputed unto believing Gentiles.

Thus as the “rainbow” was the confirmatory sign and seal of the covenant-promises God had made to Noah, as “circumcision” was the sign and seal of the covenant-promises God made to Abraham, so the “tree of life” was the sign and seal of the covenant-promises He had made to Adam. It was appointed by God as the pledge of His faithfulness, and as an earnest of the blessings which continued fidelity would secure. Let it be expressly pointed out that, in keeping with the distinctive character of this present antitypical dispensation-when the Substance has replaced the shadows-that though baptism and the Lord’s Supper are Divinely appointed ordinances, yet they are *not* “seals”

unto the Christian. The “seal” of “the new covenant” is *the Holy Spirit Himself*: see 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30! The gift of the blessed Spirit is the earnest or guaranty of our future inheritance.

The references to the “tree of life” in the New Testament confirm what has been said in the above paragraphs. In revelation 2:7 we hear the Lord Jesus saying, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” Those words express a promise of *eternal life*-the perfection and consummation of holiness and happiness-couched in such terms as obviously allude to Genesis 2:9. This is the *first* of seven promises made by Christ to the overcomer of Revelation 2 and 3, showing this immutable gift (eternal life) is the foundation of all the other inestimable blessings which Christ’s victory has secured as the inheritance of those who by His grace are faithful unto death. Each victorious saint shall eat of “the tree of life”: that is, be unchangeably established in a state of eternal felicity and bliss.

“And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of Us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen. 3:22-24). This is the passage which carnal literalists have wrested to the perversion of the symbolical and spiritual significance of the “seal” of the covenant. By God’s words “lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever,” they conclude that the property of that tree was to bestow *physical* immortality. We trust the reader will bear with us for mentioning such an absurdity, yet, inasmuch as it has obtained a wide hearing, a few words exposing its fallacy seem called for.

It was not the mere eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which was able *of itself* to impart any knowledge; rather was it that by taking of its fruit contrary to God’s command, Adam and Eve obtained experimental acquaintance with the knowledge of evil *in themselves*, i.e., by experiencing the bitterness of God’s curse, as previously, through their obedient abstinence, they had a personal knowledge of good, i.e., by experiencing the sweetness of God’s blessing. In like manner, the mere eating of the tree of life could no more bestow physical immortality than feeding upon the heavenly manna immortalized the Israelites in the wilderness. Both of those trees were symbolical institutions, and by the sight of them Adam was reminded of the solemn yet blessed contents of the covenant of which they were the sign and the seal.

To suppose that the Lord God was apprehensive that our fallen parents would now eat of the tree of life and continue forever their earthly existence, is the very height of absurdity, for His sentence of death *had already* fallen upon them! What, then, did His words connote? First, had Adam remained obedient to God, he had been confirmed in a state of holiness and happiness-spiritual life would become his alienable possession; the Divine pledge of which was this sacramental tree. But now that he had broken the covenant, he had forfeited all right to its blessings. It must be carefully borne in mind that by his fall Adam lost far more than physical immortality. Second, God banished Adam from Eden “lest” the poor, blinded, deceived man, now open to every error, should suppose that by eating of the tree of life, he might regain what he had irrevocably lost.

“So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen. 3:24). Unspeakably solemn is this: thereby our first parent was prevented from profanely appropriating what did not belong to him, and thereby he was made the more conscious of the full extent of his wretchedness. His being *driven out from* the presence of the tree of life, and the guarding of the way thereto by the flaming sword, plainly intimated his irrevocable doom. Contrary to the prevailing idea, the writer

believes that Adam was eternally lost. He is mentioned only once again in Genesis, where we read "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in *his own* likeness" (Gen. 5:3). He is solemnly *missing* from the witnesses of faith in Hebrews 11! He is uniformly presented in the New Testament as the fountain-head of *death*, as Christ is of "life": Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:22.

In its deeper significance, the tree of life was an emblem and type of Christ. "The tree of life signified the Son of God, not indeed as He is Christ and Mediator (that consideration being peculiar to *another* covenant), but inasmuch as He is the life of man in every condition, and the fountain of all happiness. And how well was it spoken by one who said that it became God from the first to represent, by an outward sign, *that Person* whom He loves, and for whose glory He has made and does make all things; that man even then might acknowledge Him as such. Wherefore Christ is called 'the Tree of Life' (Rev. 22:2). What indeed He now is by His merit and efficacy, as Mediator, He would have always been as the Son of God; for, as *by Him* man was created and obtained an animal life, so, in like manner, he would have been transformed by Him and blessed with a heavenly life. Nor could He have been the life of the sinner, as Mediator, unless He had likewise been the life of man in his holy state, *as God*; having life in Himself, and being life itself" (H. Witsius).

Here, then, we believe was the first symbolical foreshadowment of Christ, set before the eyes of Adam and Eve in their sinless state; and a most suitable and significant emblem of Him was it. First, its very name obviously pointed to the Lord Jesus, of whom we read, "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). Those words are to be taken in their widest latitude, *all* life is resident in Christ-natural life, spiritual life, resurrection life, eternal life. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21) declares the saint: he lives *in* Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), he lives *on* Christ (John 6:50-57), he shall for all eternity live *with* Christ (1 Thess. 4:17). Second, the position it occupied: "in the midst of the garden" (Gen. 2:9). Note how this detail is emphasized in Revelation 2:7, "in the midst of the paradise of God," and "in the midst of the street" (Rev. 22:2), and compare "in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb" (Rev. 5:6). Christ is *the Centre* of Heaven's glory and blessedness.

Third, in its sacramental significance. In Eden the symbolic tree of life stood as the seal of the covenant, as the pledge of God's faithfulness, as the ratification of His promises to Adam. So of the Antitype we read, "For all the promises of God in Him (Christ) are yea, and in Him (Christ) Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Cor. 1:20). Yes, it is in Christ that all the promises of the everlasting covenant are sealed and secured. Fourth, its attractiveness: "pleasant to the sight, and good for food" (Gen. 2:9). Superlatively is that true of the Saviour: to the redeemed He is "Fairer than the children of men" (Psa. 45:2), yea, "altogether lovely" (Song. 5:16). And when the believer is favoured with a season of intimate communion with Him, what cause has he to say "His fruit was sweet to my taste" (Song. 2:3). Fifth, from the symbolic tree of life the apostate rebel was excluded (Gen. 3:24), likewise from the antitypical Tree of Life shall every finally impenitent sinner be separated: "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction *from the presence* of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Thess. 1:9).

"Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). Here is the final mention of the tree of life in Scripture-in marked and blessed contrast from what is recorded in Genesis 3:22-24. There we behold the disobedient rebel, under the curse of God, Divinely excluded from the tree of life; for under the old covenant no provision was made for man's restoration. But here we see a company under the new covenant, pronounced "blessed" by God, having been given the spirit of obedience, that they might have right to enjoy the Tree of Life (Christ) for all eternity. That "right" is threefold: the right which Divine promise has given them (Heb. 5:9), the right of personal meetness (Heb. 12:14), and the right of evidential credentials (James 2:21-25). None but those who, having been made new creatures in

Christ, *do* His commandments, will enter the heavenly Jerusalem and be eternally regaled by the Tree of Life.

### *The Adamic-Part 6- (Completed)*

We must now bring to a close our rather lengthy remarks upon the first covenant which the Lord made with man, the issues of which were so momentous. This primordial compact or "Covenant of Works," was that agreement into which the Lord God entered with Adam as the federal head and representative of the entire human family. It was made with him in a state of innocency, holiness and righteousness. The terms of that covenant were perfect and continuous obedience on man's part, and the promise of confirming him in immutable holiness and happiness on God's part. A test was given whereby his obedience or disobedience should be evidenced. That test consisted of a single positive ordinance: abstinence from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, so named because so long as Adam remained dutiful and faithful, he enjoyed that inestimable "good" which issued from communion with his Maker, and because as soon as he disobeyed he tasted the bitter "evil" which followed the loss of communion with Him.

As we have seen in the previous papers, all the essential elements of a formal covenant between God and Adam are clearly to be seen in the Genesis record. A requirement was made-obedience; a penal sanction was attached-death as the penalty of disobedience; a reward was promised upon his obedience-confirmation in life; Adam consented to its terms; the whole was Divinely sealed by the tree of life-so called because it was the outward sign of that life promised in the covenant, from which Adam was excluded because of his apostasy, and to which the redeemed are restored by the last Adam (Rev. 2:7). Thus Scripture presents all the prime features of a covenant as co-existing in that constitution under which our first parent was originally placed.

Adam wickedly presumed to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree, and incurred the awful guilt of violating the covenant. In his sin there was a complication of many crimes: in Romans 5 it is called the "offence, disobedience, transgression." Adam was put to the test of whether the will of God was sacred in his eyes, and he fell by preferring his own will and way. He failed to love God with all his heart; he had contempt of His high authority; he disbelieved His holy veracity; he deliberately and presumptuously defied Him. Hence, at a later date, in the history of Israel, God said, "But they *like Adam have transgressed the covenant*: they dealt treacherously against Me" (Hosea 6:7 margin). Even Mr. Darby (notes on Hosea, in "Synopsis" vol. 2, p. 472) acknowledged, "It should be rendered 'But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant.'"

It is to this Divine declaration in Hosea 6:7 the Apostle makes reference, when of Adam he declares that he was "the figure of Him that was to come." Let it be duly noted that Adam is not there viewed in his creation-state simply, but rather as he is related to an offspring whose case was included in his own. As the vicar of his race Adam disobeyed the Eden-statute in their room and stead, precisely as Christ, the "last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45), obeyed the moral law as the Representative of His people in their room and stead. "By *one man* sin entered into the world" (Rom 5:12). This is a remarkable statement, calling for the closest attention. *Eve* sinned too; she sinned *before* Adam did; then why are we not told that "by *one woman* sin entered into the world"?-the more so seeing that she is, equally with Adam, a root of propagation.

Only one answer is possible to the above question: because Adam was the one *public person* or federal head that represented us, and not she. Adam was the legal representative of Eve as well as of his posterity, for she was taken out of him. Remarkably is this confirmed by the historical record of Genesis 3: upon *Eve's* eating of the forbidden fruit no change was evidenced, but as soon as Adam partook "the eyes of them *both* were opened, and they knew that they were naked" (Gen. 3:7)!!-which

means that they were instantly conscious of *the loss of innocence*, and were ashamed of their woeful condition. The eyes of a convicted conscience were opened, and they perceived their sin and its awful consequences: the sense of their bodily nakedness only adumbrating their spiritual loss.

Not only was it by Adam (rather than by Eve) that sin entered into the world, “the judgment was by *one* (offence) to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification” (Rom. 5:16). The fact that Eve is entirely omitted from Romans 5:12-19 shows that it is the *guilt* of our federal head being imputed to us which is there in view, and not the pravity of nature which is imparted, for corruption has been directly derived through her as much as from Adam. The fact that it was by Adam’s one offence that condemnation has come upon all his posterity shows that his subsequent sins are not imputed to us; for by his original transgression he lost the high honour and privilege conferred upon him: in the covenant being broken, he ceased to be a public person, the federal head of the race.

Man’s defection from his primordial state was purely voluntary, and from the unconstrained choice of his own mutable and self-determining will. Adam was “without excuse.” By eating of the forbidden fruit, he broke, first, the law of his very being, violating his own *nature*, which bound him unto loving allegiance to his Maker: self now took the place of God. Second, he flouted the Law of God, which requires perfect and unremitting obedience to the moral Governor of the world: self had now usurped the throne of God in his heart. Third, in trampling upon the positive ordinance under which he was placed, he broke the covenant, preferring to take his stand alongside of his fallen wife.

“Every man at his best state is altogether vanity” (Psa. 39:5). Thus was Adam. In full-grown manhood, with every faculty perfect, amid ideal surroundings, he rejected the good and chose the evil. He was not deceived: the Scriptures declare he was not-1 Timothy 2:14. He knew well what he was doing. “Deliberately he wrecked himself and us. Deliberately he jumped the precipice. Deliberately he murdered unnumbered generations. Like many another who has loved ‘not wisely but too well,’ he would not lose his Eve. He chose her rather than God. He determined he would have her if he went to Hell with her” (G.S. Bishop). Direful were the consequences: the death-sentence fell upon Adam the day in which he sinned, though for the sake of his posterity, the full execution of it was delayed.

As Romans 5:12 declared, “Wherefore, as by one man (the first man, the father of our race) sin (guilt, criminality, condemnation) entered (as a solemn accuser in the witness-stand) into the world (not into “the universe,” for that had previously been defiled by the rebellion of Satan and his angels; but the world of fallen humanity), and death (as a judicial infliction) by sin (the original offence); and so death (as the Divine punishment) passed (as the penal sentence from the Judge of all the earth) upon all men (none, not even infants, being exempted), in whom (the correct rendering-see margin) all have sinned”-that is, sinned in the “one man,” the federal head of the race, the legal representative of the “all men”; note, not all now “sin,” nor all are inherently “sinful” (though sadly true), but “in whom all have sinned” in Eden.

Direful and dreadful as was the outcome of the Adamic covenant, yet we may, with awe, perceive and admire the Divine wisdom in the same. Had God permitted and enabled Adam to stand, all his posterity had been eternally happy. Adam had then been in a very real sense their Saviour, and while enjoying everlasting bliss, all his posterity would have exclaimed, “For all this we are indebted to our first parent.” Ah, what anointed eye can fail to discern that *that* would have been far too great a glory for any finite creature to have borne. Only the last Adam was entitled to and capable of sustaining such an honour. Thus, the first man, who was of the earth, earthy, *must* fall, so as to make way for the second Man, who is “the Lord from Heaven.”

It must also be pointed out that, in taking this way of staining human pride (involving the dreadful

fall of the king of our race), displaying His own infinite wisdom, and securing the glory of His beloved Son (so that in all things He has “the pre-eminence”) God made not the slightest infraction of His justice. In decreeing and permitting Adam’s fall, with the consequent imputation of the guilt of his offence unto all his posterity, God has wronged no man. This needs to be emphatically insisted upon and plainly pointed out, lest some in their blatant haughtiness should be guilty of charging the Most High with unfairness. God is inflexibly righteous, and *all* His ways are right and just. Nor is the one which we are now considering any exception, and this will be seen, once it is rightly understood.

In saying that the guilt of Adam’s offence is imputed to all his posterity, we do not mean the human race is now suffering for something in which *they* had no part, that innocent creatures are being condemned for the act of another which cannot rightly be laid to their account. Let it be clearly understood that God punishes none for Adam’s personal sin, but only for *his own* sin in Adam. The whole human race had a federal standing in Adam. Not only was each of us seminally in his loins in the day God created him, but each of us was legally represented by him when God instituted the Covenant of Works. Adam acted and transacted in that covenant not merely as a private being, but as a *public* person; not merely as a single individual, but as the surety and sponsor of his race. Nor is it lawful for us to call into question the meetness of that arrangement: all God’s works are perfect, all His ways are ordered by infinite wisdom and righteousness.

Of necessity the creature is subject to the Creator, and his loyalty and fealty must be put to the proof. In the nature of the case only two alternatives were possible: the human family must either be placed on probation in the person of a responsible and suitable head and representative, or each individual member must enter upon his probation for himself. Once again we quote the words of Mr. Bishop, “The race must have either stood in a full grown man, with a full-orbed intellect, or stood as babies, each entering his probation in the twilight of self-consciousness, each deciding his destiny before his eyes were half-opened to what it all meant. How much better would that have been? How much more just? But could it not have been some other way? There was no other way. It was either the baby or it was the perfect, well-equipped, all-calculating man—the man who saw and comprehended everything. That man was Adam.”

The simplest and most satisfactory way of reconciling with human reason the federal constitution which was given to Adam, is to recognize it was of *Divine* appointment. God cannot do that which is wrong. It must therefore have been right. The principle of representation is inseparable from the very constitution of human society. The father is the legal representative of his children during their minority, so that what he does binds his family. The political heads of a nation represent the people, so that their declarations of war or treaties of peace bind the whole commonwealth. This principle is so fundamental that it cannot be set aside: human affairs could not move nor society exist without it. Founded in man’s nature by the wisdom of God, we are compelled to recognize it, and being of *His* appointment we dare not call into question its rightness. If it was unjust for God to impute to us Adam’s guilt, it must equally have been so to impart to us his depravity; but seeing God *has* righteously done the latter, we must vindicate Him for doing the former.

The very fact that *we* go on breaking the Covenant of Works and disobeying the Law of God, show our oneness with Adam under that covenant. Let that fact be duly weighed by those who are inclined to be captious. Our complicity with Adam in *his* rebellion is evidenced every time that *we* sin against God. Instead of challenging the justice which has charged to our account the guilt of the first human transgression, let us seek grace to repudiate Adam’s example, standing out in opposition to his insubordination by gladly taking upon us the easy yoke of God’s commandments. Finally, let it again be pointed out that if *we* were ruined *by another*, Christians are redeemed *by Another*. By the principle of representation we were lost, and by the same principle of representation—Christ

transacting for us as our Surety and Sponsor-we are saved.

In what sense is the Covenant of Works abrogated? and in what sense is it still in force? We cannot do better than subjoin the answers of one of the ablest theologians of the last century. "This Covenant having been broken by Adam, not one of his natural descendants is ever able to fulfill its conditions, and Christ having fulfilled all of its conditions in behalf of all His own people, salvation is offered now on the condition of faith. In *this* sense the Covenant of Works having been fulfilled by the second Adam is henceforth abrogated under the Gospel.

"Nevertheless, since it is founded upon the principles of immutable justice, it still binds all men who have not fled to the refuge offered in the righteousness of Christ. It is still true that 'he that doeth these things shall live by them,' and 'the soul that sinneth it shall die.' This law in *this* sense remains, and in consequence of the unrighteousness of men condemns them, and in consequence of their absolute inability to fulfill it, it acts as a school-master to bring them to Christ. For He having fulfilled alike its condition wherein Adam failed, and its penalty which Adam incurred, He has become the end of this covenant for righteousness to every one that believeth, who in Him is regarded and treated as having fulfilled the covenant, and merited its promised reward" (A.A. Hodge).

It only remains for us now to point out wherein the Adamic Covenant adumbrated [foreshadowed] the Everlasting Covenant. While it be true that the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace are diametrically opposed in their character-the one being based upon the principle of Do and live, the other on Live and do-yet there are some striking points of agreement between them. That engagement into which the Father entered into with the Mediator before the foundation of the world was foreshadowed in Eden in the following respects. First, Adam, the one with whom the covenant was made, entered this world in a manner none other ever did: without being begotten by a human father, he was miraculously produced by God: so with Christ. Second, none but Adam of the human family entered this world with a pure constitution and holy nature; so was it with Christ.

Third, his wife was taken out of him, so that he could say, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23): of Christ's Wife it is declared, "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. 5:30). Fourth, Adam voluntarily took his place alongside of his fallen wife: he was not deceived, but had such a love for Eve that he could not see her perish alone: compare Ephesians 5:25. Fifth, in consequence of this, Adam fell beneath the curse of God: compare Galatians 3:13. Sixth, the father of the human family was their federal head; so is Christ the federal Head of His people, the "last Adam." Seventh, what Adam did is imputed to the account of all those whom he represented: the same is true of Christ, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19).

### *The Noahic-Part 1*

Noah is the connecting link between "the world that then was" which "being overflowed with water, perished," and the earth which now is "reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:6, 7). He lived upon both, was preserved from the awful judgment which swallowed up the former, and given dominion over the latter in its pristine state. A period of sixteen centuries intervened between the covenant of works which God entered into with Adam, and the covenant of grace which He made with Noah. So far as the Scriptures inform us, no other covenant was instituted by the Lord during that interval. There were Divine revelations, Divine promises and precepts, in fact the antediluvians enjoyed very much more light from Heaven than they are commonly credited with. But during those early centuries, where grace abounded, sin did much more abound, until "God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Gen. 6:12).

“The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing” (1 Peter 3:20), and “space” was granted the ungodly to turn from their wickedness. Enoch prophesied “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” (Jude 14, 15). Noah too was “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5), and therefore must have warned his hearers that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18). But it was all to no avail: “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Eccl. 8:11). The evil continued to increase, till the Divine patience was thoroughly exhausted. The threatened punishment came, and the ungodly were swept from the earth, and the first great period in the world’s history closed in judgment.

The facts briefly stated above require to be carefully kept in mind, for they throw not a little light upon the covenant which the Lord God made with Noah. They explain the reason for the transaction itself, and impart at least some aid towards a right conception of the particular form it took. The background of that covenant was Divine judgment: drastic, unsparing, effectual. Every individual of the ungodly race perished: the great deluge completely relieved the earth of their presence and crimes. In due time the water subsided, and Noah and his family came from their place of refuge to people the earth afresh. It is scarcely possible for us to form any adequate conception of the feelings of Noah on this occasion. The terrible and destructive visitation in which the hand of God was so manifest, must have given him an impression of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and of the ineffable holiness and righteousness of God such as he had not previously entertained.

“In one respect the world seemed to have suffered material loss by the visitation of the deluge. Along with the agents and instruments of evil there had also been swept away by it the emblems of grace and hope-paradise with its tree of life and its cherubim of glory. We can conceive Noah and his household, when they first left the ark, looking around with melancholy feelings on the position they now occupied, not only as being the sole survivors of a numerous offspring, but also as being themselves bereft of the sacred memorials which bore evidence of a happy past, and exhibited the pledge of a yet happier future. An important link of communion with Heaven, it might well have seemed was broken by the change thus brought through the deluge on the world” (P. Fairbairn).

As we pointed out many years ago in our “Gleanings in Genesis,” the contents of Genesis 4, though exceedingly terse, intimate that from the time of Adam onwards, there was a specific place where God was to be worshipped. When we are told in verses 3 and 4 that Cain and Abel “brought an offering unto the Lord,” the implication is clear that they came to some particular location of His appointing. When we read that Abel brought “the firstling of his flock *and the fat thereof*” we cannot escape the conclusion that there was an *altar* where the victim must be offered and upon which its fat must be burned. These necessary inferences receive clear corroboration in the words of verse 16, “And Cain *went out* from the presence of the LORD,” which can hardly mean less than that he was formally prohibited from the place where the presence of Jehovah was symbolically manifest. That place of worship appears to have been located at the east of the Garden of Eden.

In their commentary on Genesis, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown translate the last verse of Genesis 3 as follows, “And He (God) dwelt at the east of the Garden of Eden between the Cherubim, as a Shekinah (a fire tongue or fire-sword) to keep open the way to the tree of life.” The same thought is presented in the Jerusalem Targum. Thus it would seem that when man was excluded from the Garden, God established a mercy-seat, protected by cherubim, the fire tongue or sword being the emblem of His presence, and whosoever would worship Him must approach that mercy-seat with a

bloody sacrifice. We may add that the Hebrew word "shaken" which in Genesis 3:24 is rendered "placed," is defined in Young's concordance "to tabernacle"; eighty-three times in the Old Testament it is translated "to dwell," as in Exodus 25:8, etc.

The signal and sovereign mercy which God had displayed toward Noah must also have deeply affected him. He would be strongly constrained to give some sweet expression to the overwhelming emotions of his heart. Accordingly, his very first act on taking possession of the new earth was to engage in a service of solemn worship: "And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar" (Gen. 8:20). Nothing could have been more becoming and appropriate: it was an acknowledgment of his deep obligations to the Lord, an expression of gratitude for the rich grace shown him, an intimation of his sense of personal unworthiness, an exercise of faith in the promised Seed through whom alone Divine blessings were conferred, and an avowal of his determination to consecrate himself to God and walk before Him in humble obedience.

It was in connection with this act of worship that the Lord God now entered into a covenant with the new head of the race; but before examining its terms, let us further ponder the circumstances in which Noah now found himself, and try to form some idea of the thoughts which must then have exercised his mind. "However remarkable the deliverance he had experienced, whatever the conclusions he might have been warranted to draw from it in regard to the certainty of the Divine favour towards himself, and however ardent his gratitude in the view of the great mercy of which he had been the recipient, he was still a man, and his novel situation could hardly fail to awaken anxiety and apprehension on several distinct grounds. He and his family were few in number, and with very slender means of shelter and defense in their reach. His condition was far from secure.

"Although the natural disposition of the animals preserved with him in the ark had been by Divine power brought under restraint, he could not be ignorant that, when again left at large, their natural tempers and the instinctive ferocity of some of them would be resumed and multiplying, in a more rapid ratio than his own family, he might probably have distrusted his ability to cope with them, and might have anticipated the likelihood of perishing before their destructive violence. He knew, too, that the heart of man was full of evil, and that however his naturally bad propensities may have been awed by the fearful catastrophe from which he had recently escaped, the effect of it was not likely to be lasting; the time he might well fear would come-and that at no distant period-when the sinful tendencies of the heart would acquire strength, would be excited by temptation, and soon issue in the most disastrous consequences.

"He must have had a distinct and painful remembrance of those sins of lawlessness and violence with which he had been familiar in the old world. He might reasonably dread their repetition, and look forward to times when human life would be held cheap, and when wanton passion would not scruple to sacrifice it in the furtherance of its selfish purposes, unrestrained by any competent authority, and only feebly checked by the dread of revenge. The prospect would have been anything but cheering, and it cannot be thought surprising that he should have contemplated it with feelings of concern and dismay. He could form his views of the future simply from what he knew of the past, and his memory could recall little but what was painful and distressing" (John Kelly, 1861).

But more; Noah had not only witnessed the outbreakings of human depravity in its worst forms, but he had also seen the failure of all the religious means employed to restrain the same. Outside of his own little family, the worship of God had entirely ceased, the preaching of His servants was completely disregarded, and profligacy and violence universally prevailed. Even his building of the ark-"by the which he condemned the world" (Heb. 11:7)-had no effect upon the wicked. The Divine warnings were openly flouted until the flood came and swept them all away. Nor had Noah any

reason now to believe that human nature had undergone any radical change for the better, or that sin had been eradicated from the hearts of the few survivors of the deluge. As Noah reflected upon the past, his anticipations of the future must have been anxious and gloomy.

What assurance could he have that the evil propensities of fallen men would not again break out in works just as heinous as any performed by those who had found a watery grave? Would not men still be impatient against Divine restraints and treat the Divine warnings with reckless contempt? Were such fears realized, should the corruption of the human heart once more develop in enormities and unlimited crimes, then what else could be expected than a repetition of the judgment which he had just survived? And where could such a recurrence of crime and punishment end? Did there not seem but one likely answer: the Almighty, in His righteous indignation, would utterly exterminate a guilty race which refused to be reclaimed. Such fears would not be the bogies of unwarranted pessimism, but the natural and logical conclusions to be drawn from what had already transpired upon the theatre of this earth. It is only by thus entering into the exercises of Noah's heart that we can really appreciate the *pertinency* of that assurance which Jehovah now gave him.

But as we endeavour to follow the thoughts which must have presented themselves to our patriarch's mind, we must not overlook one bright ray of comfort which doubtless did much to relieve the darkness of his trepidations. When God had declared unto Noah, "And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die," He also added, "*But with thee will I establish My covenant*" (Gen. 6:17, 18). That gracious promise provided a resting place for his poor heart during the dreary days and months when he had been shut up in the ark, and must also have imparted some cheer as he now stood upon the judgment-swept and desolate earth. Yet, who that has any personal experience of the fierce assaults made by carnal reasonings (unbelief), can doubt but what Noah's faith now met with a painful conflict as it sought to withstand the influence of gloom and anxiety.

Some readers may consider that we have gone beyond due bounds in what has been said above, and that we have drawn too much upon our own imagination. But Scripture says, "As in water face answereth to face, *so the heart of man to man*" (Prov. 27:19). How had you felt, dear reader, had *you* been in Noah's place? What had been my thoughts, had I been circumstanced as he was? Would we had no such fears as those we have sought to describe? Had we anticipated the unknown future without any such dark forebodings? Could we have passed through such a fearful ordeal and have returned to an earth from which the last of our former companions had been swept away, without wondering if the next storm of Divine judgment would not quite complete its awful work? Would we, only eight all told, have been quite confident that the wild beasts would leave us unmolested? Why, it is *just this very mental background* which enables us to appreciate the tender mercy in what God now said unto Noah.

"And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you (why such repetition, but for the sake of emphasis?) shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; *into your hand are they delivered*. Every moving thing that liveth shall be *meat for you*; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat...And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish My covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish My covenant with you; *neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood*; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen. 9:1-4, 8-11). What does such language *imply*?

What fears were such gracious declarations designed to calm? What other conclusions can logically be drawn from these verses than those that we have sketched in the preceding paragraphs? To the writer at least, an endeavour to place ourselves in Noah's position and follow out the thoughts most likely to engage his mind, has caused us to admire as never before *the suitability* of the Divine revelation then given to Noah.

That which we have assayed to do in this first article upon the Noahic covenant has been to indicate its background, the occasion of it, and *why* it took the particular form it did. Just as the various Messianic prophecies, given by God at different times and at wide intervals, *were suited* to the local occasions when they were first made, so it was in the different renewals of His Covenant of Grace. Each of those renewals-unto Abraham, Moses, David, etc.-adumbrated some special feature of the Everlasting Covenant into which God had entered with the Mediator; but the immediate circumstances of each of those favoured men *molded*, or gave form to, each particular feature of the Eternal Agreement which was severally shadowed forth unto them. We trust that the reader will now the better perceive *the reasons why* God gave unto Noah the particular statements recorded in Genesis 9.

### *The Noahic-Part 2*

Having contemplated the *occasion* when the Lord God entered into covenant with Noah, the unspeakably solemn circumstances which formed its background, we are now almost ready to turn our attention unto the covenant itself, and examine its terms. The covenants which the Lord established at successive intervals with different parties were substantially one, embracing in the main the same promises, and receiving similar confirmation. The Sinaitic Covenant-although it possessed peculiar features which distinguished it from all others-was no exception. They were all of them revelations of God's gracious purpose, exhibited at first in an obscure form, but unfolding according to an obvious law of progress: each renewal adding something to what was previously known, so that the path of the just was as the shining light, which shone "more and more" unto the perfect day, when the shadows were displaced by the substance itself.

We are not to suppose that the Divine promises, of which the covenant was the expression and confirmation, were not previously known. The antecedent history shows otherwise. The declaration made by Jehovah unto the Serpent in Genesis 3:15, while it announced his doom, clearly intimated mercy and deliverance unto the woman's "seed"-an expression which is by no means to be restricted unto Christ personally, but which pertains to Christ mystical, that is, to the Head *and* His body, the Church. The Divine institution of sacrifices opened a wide door of hope unto those who were convicted of their sinful and lost condition by nature, as the recorded case of Abel clearly shows (Heb. 11:4). The spiritual history of Enoch, who walked with God and before his translation received testimony that he pleased Him (Heb. 11:5), is a further evidence that the very earliest of the saints were blest with considerable spiritual light, and were granted an insight into God's eternal counsels of grace.

There is a word in Genesis 5:28, 29 which requires to be carefully pondered in this connection. There we read that "Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son: and he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed." This is the first mention of Noah in Scripture, and there is no doubt he had his name prophetically given him. His name signifies "Rest," and was bestowed upon him by his father in the confident expectation that he would prove more than an ordinary blessing to his generation: he would be the instrument of bringing in that which would speak peace and inspire hope in the hearts of the elect-for the "us" and "our" (spoken by a *believer*)

obviously refer to the godly line.

The words of the believing Lamech had respect unto what had been said in Genesis 3:15, and were also undoubtedly a prophecy which looked forward to Christ Himself, in whom it was to receive its antitypical fulfillment, for *He* is the true Rest-giver (Matt. 11:28) and Deliverer from the curse (Gal. 3:13). The full scope and intent of Lamech's prophetic language is to be understood in the light of those blessings which were pronounced on Noah by God *after* the flood-blessings which, as we shall see, were infinitely more precious than that which their mere letter conveys. They were blessings to proceed through the channel of the Everlasting Covenant of Grace and by means of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. The proof of this is found in the fact that they were pronounced *after* sacrifice had been offered. This requires us to glance again at Genesis 8:20-22.

"And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings *on the altar*" (v. 20). The typical teaching of this carries us much further than that which was foreshadowed by Abel's offering. Here, for the first time in Scripture, mention is made of the "altar": the key which unlocks the meaning of this is found in Matthew 23:19—"the altar that sanctifieth the gift." And what was *the* "Altar" which sanctified the supreme "Gift?" Why, *the Person* of Christ Himself: it was *who* He was that rendered acceptable and efficacious *what* He did. Thus, while the offering of Abel pointed forward to the sacrifice of Christ, the altar of Noah adumbrated the One who offered that sacrifice; His Person being that which gave infinite value unto the blood which He shed.

"And the LORD smelled a sweet savour" (Gen. 8:21). Here again our present type rises much higher than that of Abel's: in the former case it was the *manward* aspect which was in view; but here it is the *Godward* that is brought before us. Blessed indeed is it to learn what the sacrifice of Christ obtained for His people—deliverance from the wrath to come, securing an inheritance in Heaven forever; but far more blessed is it to know what that Sacrifice meant unto Him to whom it was offered. In the sacrifice of Christ God Himself found that which was "a sweet savour," with which *He* was well pleased, that which not only met every requirement of His righteousness and holiness, but also which satisfied His heart.

"And the LORD said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done" (Gen. 8:21). The unusual words, "The LORD said in His heart" emphasises the effect which the "sweet savour" of the sacrifice had upon Him. The remainder of the verse appears, at first sight, to mar the unity of the passage, for it seems to bear no direct relation unto what immediately precedes or follows. But a more careful pondering of it reveals its pertinency. The reference to human depravity comes in here with a solemn significance, intimating that the waters of judgment had in nowise changed the corruption of fallen man's nature, and announcing that it was not because of any change in the flesh for the better that the Lord now made known His thoughts of peace and blessing. No, it was solely on the ground of the sweet-smelling sacrifice that He dealt in grace.

The blessings which were included in the benedictions which God pronounced upon Noah and his sons were granted on a *new foundation*, on the basis of a grant quite different from any revelation or promise which the Lord gave to Adam in his *unfallen* condition, even on the ground of that Covenant of Grace which He had established with the Mediator before ever the earth was. That eternal Charter anticipated Adam's offence, and provided for the deliverance of God's elect from the curse which came in upon our first parent's sin: yea, secured for them far greater blessings than any which pertained to the earthly paradise. It is of great importance that this fact should be clearly grasped, namely, that it was on the sure foundation of the Everlasting Covenant of Grace that God here

pronounced blessing upon Noah and his sons-as He did later on Abraham and his seed.

What has just been pointed out had been more easily grasped by the average reader had the chapter-break between Genesis 8 and 9 been made at a different point. Genesis 8 should close with the 19th verse. The last three verses of Genesis 8, as they stand in our Bibles, should begin chapter 9, and then *the immediate connection between* Noah's sacrifice and the covenant which the Lord made with him would be more apparent. The covenant was *Jehovah's response to* the offering upon the altar. That offering was "a sweet savour" to Him, clearly pointing to the offering of Christ. Christ's sacrifice was not then to be offered for over two thousand years, so the satisfaction which Noah's typical offering gave unto Jehovah must have pointed back to the Everlasting Covenant, in which the great Sacrifice was agreed upon.

Noah's passing safely through the Flood, in the ark, was a type of *salvation* itself. For this statement we have the authority of Holy Writ: see 1 Peter 3:20, 21. Noah and his sons were delivered from the wrath of God which had destroyed the rest of the world, and they now stepped out on to what was, typically, *resurrection* ground. Yes, the earth having been swept clean by the besom of Divine judgment, and a fresh start now being made in its history, it was virtually *new-creation* ground on to which the saved family came as they emerged from the ark. Here is another point in which our present type looked unto higher truths than did the types which had preceded it. It is in connection with the *new creation* that the inheritance of the saints is found (1 Peter 1:3, 4). We are therefore ready now to consider the blessing of the typical heirs.

"And God blessed Noah and his sons" (Gen. 9:1). This is the first time that we read of God *blessing* any since the Fall had occurred. Before sin entered the world we read that "male and female created He them: and God blessed them," (Gen. 1:27, 28). No doubt there is both a comparison and a contrast suggested in these two verses. First, and from the natural viewpoint, God's "blessing" of Noah and his sons was the formal announcement that the same Divine favour which the Creator had extended to our first parents should now rest upon the new progenitors of the human race. But secondly, and more deeply, this blessing of Noah and his sons *after* the offering upon the altar, and in connection with the *covenant*, denoted their "blessing" upon a new basis. Adam and Eve received blessing on the ground of their creature purity; Noah and his sons (as the representatives of the entire Election of Grace) received blessing on the ground of their acceptance and perfection *in Christ*.

"And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things" (Gen. 9:1-3). These verses (together with the closing ones of chapter 8) introduce us to the beginning of a new world. In several respects it resembles the first beginning: there was the Divine blessing upon the heads of the human family; there was the renewed command for the propagation of the human species-the earth having been depopulated; and there was the promise of the subjection of the lower creatures to man. But there was one great and vital difference, which has escaped the notice of most of the commentators: *all now rested on the Covenant of Grace*.

This difference is indeed radical and fundamental. Adam was placed as lord over the earth on the ground of the Covenant of Works. His tenure was entirely a conditional one, his retention thereof depending wholly upon his own conduct. Consequently, when he sinned, he not only forfeited the blessing and favour of his Creator, but lost his dominion over the creature, and as a discrowned monarch he was sent forth to play the part of a common labourer in the earth (Gen. 3:17-19). But here we see man re-instated over the lost inheritance, not on the basis of creature responsibility and human merits, but on the basis of Divine grace-for Noah "found *grace* in the eyes of the LORD" (Gen.

6:8); not on the foundation of creature doings, but on the foundation of the excellency of that Sacrifice which satisfied the heart of God. Consequently it was as the children *of faith* the heirship of the new world was given to Noah and his seed.

“Man now rises, in the person of Noah, to a higher place in the world: yet not simply as man, but as a child of God, standing in faith. His faith had saved him amid the general wreck of the old world, to become in the new a second head of mankind, and an inheritor of earth’s domain, as now purged and rescued from the pollution of evil. ‘He is made heir,’ as it is written in Hebrews, ‘of the righteousness which is by faith,’-heir, that is, of all that properly belongs to such righteousness, not merely of the righteousness itself, but also of the world, which in the Divine purpose it was destined to possess and occupy. Hence, as if there had been a new creation, and a new head brought in to exercise over it the right of sovereignty, the original blessing and grant to Adam was substantially renewed to Noah and his family: Genesis 9:1-3. Here, then, the righteousness of faith received direct from the grace of God the dowry that had been originally bestowed upon the righteousness of nature-not a blessing merely, but a blessing coupled with the heirship and dominion of the world” (P. Fairbairn).

“Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual” (1 Cor. 15:46). Though these words have reference immediately to the bodies of the saints, yet they enunciate a cardinal principle in the ways of God in the outworking of His eternal purpose. Divine grace cannot clearly appear as *grace* until it shines forth from the dark background of man’s sin and ruin. It was therefore requisite that the Covenant of Works with Adam should precede the Covenant of Grace with Noah. The failure of the first man did but make way and provide a suitable foil for the triumph of the Second Man-whom Noah clearly foreshadowed, as his name and the prophetic utterance of his father concerning him plainly announced. The more clearly this be grasped the easier will it be to perceive the deeper meaning of the Noahic Covenant.

Everything was now clearly placed on a fresh footing and established upon a new basis. This fact throws light upon or brings out the significance of several details which, otherwise, are likely to be passed by unappreciated. For example, that “*eight* souls were saved by water” (1 Peter 3:20), for in the language of Bible numerics eight speaks of a *new beginning*. Hence, too, the reverent student of Holy Writ, who delights to see the finger of God in its minutest details, will regard as something more than a coincidence the fact that the word “covenant” is found in connection with Noah just *eight* times: Genesis 6:18, 9:9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17. It is to be carefully noted that the entire emphasis is upon the Lord’s making a covenant with Noah, and not Noah with God: He was the initiator and sole compactor. In it there were no conditions stipulated, no “ifs” interposed; all was of grace-free, pure, unchangeable.

There is only space now left for us to call attention unto how the blessed promises recorded in Genesis 8:22 and 9:2, 3 were all well calculated to still the fears of Noah’s heart-see the previous article-and establish his confidence. Therein he was graciously assured that in God’s full view of the evil which still remained in the heart of man, a similar judgment, at least to the same extent, would never again be repeated; that not only would man be preserved on the earth, but that also the whole animal creation should be in subserviency to his use. By these Divine assurances his fears were effectually relieved-adumbrating the fact that God delights to bring His children, sooner or later, into the full assurance of faith, and of confidence and joy in His presence.

### *The Noahic-Part 3*

In last month’s article, we intimated that the blessings contained in the benediction which the Lord pronounced upon Noah and his sons were infinitely more precious than the mere letter conveys. In

order to a right understanding of the various covenants which God made with different men, it is highly essential that we carefully distinguish between the literal and the figurative, or the outward form and its inner meaning. Only thus shall we be able to separate between what was merely local and evanescent, and that which was more comprehensive and enduring. There was connected with each covenant that which was literal or material, and also that which was mystical or spiritual, and unless this be duly noted, confusion is bound to ensue. Yea, it is at *this* very point that many have erred-particularly so with the Abrahamic and Sinaiic Covenants.

Literalists and futurists have been so occupied with the shell or letter that they have quite missed the spirit or kernel. Allegorizers have been so much engaged with the figurative allusions, they have often failed to discern the historical fulfillment. Still others have so arbitrarily juggled with the two that they have carried out and applied neither consistently. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we use the best possible care in seeking to distinguish between the carnal and the spiritual, the transient and the eternal, what pertains to the earthly and what adumbrated the heavenly in the several covenants. The reader should already have been prepared, in some measure at least, to follow us in what we are now saying, by that which was brought out in our examination of the Adamic Covenant.

When studying the Adamic Covenant we discovered the need for throwing upon the Genesis record the light of the later Scriptures, finding in the Prophets and the Epistles that which helped to open the meaning of the historical narrative. We saw the necessity of regarding Adam as something more than a private individual, namely, as a public head or federal representative. We learned that the language of Genesis 2:17 conveyed not only a solemn threat, but, by necessary implication, also contained a blessed promise. We also perceived that the "death" there threatened was something far more dreadful than physical dissolution. We ascertained from other passages that while the "tree of life" in the centre of the Garden was a real and tangible one, yet it also possessed an emblematic significance, being the *seal* of the covenant. Let us seek to keep in mind these principles as we proceed to our consideration of the other covenants.

Each covenant that God made with men shadowed forth some element of the Everlasting Covenant which He entered into with Christ before the foundation of the world on the behalf of His elect. The covenants which God made with Noah, Abraham, and David, as truly exhibited different aspects of the Compact of Grace as did the several vessels in the tabernacle typify certain characteristics of the Person and work of Christ. Yet, just as those vessels also had an immediate and local use, so the covenants respected that which was earthly and carnal, as well as what was spiritual and heavenly. This dual fact receives illustration and exemplification in the covenant which is now before us. That in it which was literal and external is so obvious and well known that it needs no enlarging upon by us here. The sign and seal of the covenant-the rainbow-and the promise connected therewith were tangible and visible things, which the senses of men have verified for themselves from then till now. But is that *all* there was to the Noahic Covenant?

The note made upon the Noahic Covenant in the "Scofield" Bible reads as follows: "The elements of: (1) The relation of man to earth under the Adamic Covenant is confirmed (Gen. 8:21). (2) The order of nature is confirmed (Gen. 8:22). (3) Human government is established (Gen. 9:1-6). (4) Earth is secured against another universal judgment by water (Gen. 8:21; 9:11). (5) A prophetic declaration is made that Ham will descend an inferior and servile posterity (Gen. 9:24, 25). (6) A prophetic declaration is made that Shem will have a peculiar relation to Jehovah (Gen. 9:26, 27). All Divine revelation is made through Semitic men, and Christ, after the flesh, descends from Shem. (7) A prophetic declaration is made that from Japheth will descend the 'enlarged' races (Gen. 9:27). Government, science, and art, speaking broadly, are and have been Japhetic, so that history is the

indisputable record of the exact fulfillment of these declarations.” This is a fair sample of the superficial contents to be found in this popular catch-penny, and we strongly advise our readers not to waste their money in purchasing or their time in perusing the same.

Asking our readers’ pardon for so doing, let us glance for a moment at the above summary. The last three items in Mr. Scofield’s “Elements” do not belong at all to the Noahic Covenant, having no more connection with it than does that which is recorded in Genesis 9:20-23. The first four elements Mr. S. mentions all concern that which is mundane and political. The whole is a lifeless analysis of the letter of the passage. There is absolutely nothing helpful in it. No effort is attempted at interpretation: no mention is made of the significant and blessed connection there is between the offering on the altar (8:20) and the Lord’s covenant with Noah; no notice is taken of the new foundation upon which the Divine grant is made: no hint is given of the precious typical instruction of the whole: and the thought does not seem to have entered the editor’s mind that there was anything mystical or spiritual in the covenant.

Was there no deeper meaning in the promises than that the earth should never again be destroyed by a flood, that so long as it existed its seasons and harvests were guaranteed, that the fear of man should be upon all the lower creatures? Had those things no spiritual import? Assuredly they have, and in them may be clearly discerned, by those favoured with anointed eyes, that which adumbrated the contents of the Everlasting Covenant. Noah and his family had been wondrously saved from the wrath of God, which had destroyed the rest of the race. Now that the world was to be restored from its ruined state, what more suitable occasion than that for a fuller revelation of various aspects of the believer’s so-great salvation! It was ever God’s way in Old Testament times to employ the event of some *temporal* deliverance of His people, to renew His intimation of the great *spiritual* deliverance and restoration by Christ’s redemption. Who can doubt that it was so here, immediately after the flood?

It seems pitiable that at this late date it should be necessary to labour a point which ought to be obvious to all God’s people. And obvious it would be, at least when pointed out to them, were it not that so many have had dust thrown into their eyes by carnal “dispensationalists” and hucksters of “prophecy.” Alas, that the writer himself once had his own vision dimmed by them, and even now he often has to exert himself in order to refuse looking at things through their coloured spectacles. That there were *temporal* benefits bestowed upon Noah and his seed in Jehovah’s covenant-grant, is just as sure as that Noah built a tangible altar and offered real sacrifices thereon. But to confine those benefits to the temporal, and ignore (or deny) their *spiritual* import, is as excuseless as would be a failure to discern Christ and His sacrifice in what Noah presented and which was a “sweet savour” unto God.

Yet so dull of spiritual comprehension are many of God’s own people, so prejudiced and stupefied are they by the opiates which false teachers have ministered to them, we must perforce proceed slowly, and take nothing for granted. Therefore, before we seek to point out the various typical, mystical, and spiritual features of the Noahic Covenant, we must first establish the fact that something more than the temporary interests of this earth or the material well-being of its inhabitants was involved in what God said to our patriarch in Genesis 9. Nor is this at all a difficult matter. Leaving for our closing paper the contemplation of the later Scriptures which cast a radiant glow upon the seal of the covenant, the rainbow, we turn to one passage in the Prophets which clearly contains all that can be required by us.

In Isaiah 54:4-9 we read, “Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thine Husband; the LORD of

hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall He be called. For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.”

The connection of Isaiah 54 with the preceding chapter (on the Atonement) suggests that Gospel times are there in view, which is confirmed by the use Paul makes of it in Galatians 4:27, etc. The Church, under the form of the Israelitish theocracy, is pictured as a married woman, who (like Sarah) had long continued barren. Comparatively few of the real children of God had been raised up among the Jews. At the time of Christ’s advent Pharisaical formality and Sadducean infidelity were wellnigh universal, and this was a sore grief unto the little remnant of genuine saints. But the death of Christ was to introduce better times, for many from among the Gentiles would then be saved. Accordingly, the barren woman is exhorted to break forth into singing, faith being called upon to joyfully anticipate the promised blessings. Gracious assurances were given that her hope should not be confounded.

True, the Church was then at a low ebb, and seemingly deserted by the Lord Himself, but the hiding of His face was only temporary, and He would yet gather an increasing number of children into His family, and that with “great mercy” and with “everlasting kindness.” God’s engagements to this effect were irrevocable, as His covenant testified. In the days of that patriarch the Lord had contended with the world in great wrath for a whole year, the “waters of Noah” having completely destroyed it. Nevertheless, He returned in “great mercy,” yea, with “everlasting kindness,” as His covenant with Noah attested. Though the world has often been highly provoking to God since then, yet He has faithfully kept His promise, and will continue doing so unto the end. In like manner there is often much in His people to displease and try God’s patience, but He *will not* utterly cast them off (Psa. 89:34).

Here in Isaiah 54 the Noahic Covenant is appealed to in proof of the perpetuity of God’s gracious purpose in the midst of His sore chastenings. There we find definite interpretation of its original import, confirming what we said in the earlier paragraphs. The Prophet Isaiah was announcing God’s mercy to the Church in future times, and he adduces His oath unto Noah as a sure pledge of the promised grace—an assurance of its certain bestowment notwithstanding the afflictions which the people of God were then enduring and of the low condition to which they had been reduced. The unalterableness of the one is appealed to in proof of the unalterableness of the other. How plainly this shows that the covenant with Noah not only afforded a practical demonstration of the unfailing faithfulness of God in fulfilling its temporal promise to the world, but also that the *Church* was the chief object and subject concerned in it.

Why did the Lord promise to preserve the earth until the end of time, so that it should not again be destroyed by a flood? The answer is, *Because of the Church*, for when the full number of the elect have been gathered out of every clime, and brought (manifestatively) into the Body of Christ, the world will come to an end. That the Noahic Covenant has a clear connection with the Everlasting Covenant (called in Isaiah 54 “the Covenant of Peace” because based upon *reconciliation effected*), and that it has a special relation to the Church, is abundantly evident from what the Prophet there says of it: “For this (namely, ‘with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee’) is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth *with thee*”—the Church.

From all that has been said it should now be abundantly clear that, while the *literal* aspect of the promises made to Noah concerned the *temporal* welfare of the earth and its inhabitants, yet their

*mystical* import had respect unto the *spiritual* well-being of the Church and its members. This same twofoldedness will come before us again yet more plainly, when we consider the “rainbow,” which was the sign and the seal of the Noahic Covenant. It seems strange that those who perceived that the laws which God gave unto Israel respecting the eating only of fishes with scales and fins and animals which divided the hoof and chewed the cud, had not only a temporal or hygienic value, but a mystical or spiritual meaning as well, should have failed to discern that the same dual feature holds good in respect to all the details of the Noahic Covenant.

Once this key is firmly grasped by us, it is not difficult to reach the inner contents contained in the benediction which the Lord pronounced after He had smelled the sweet savour of Noah’s offering. The guarantee that the earth should not again be destroyed by a flood (as the Adamic earth had been), pointed to *the eternal security* of the saints—a security assured by the vastly superior position which is now theirs from what they had in Adam, namely, their inalienable portion *in Christ*. The promise that while the earth remained, seedtime and harvest should not fail, contained as its inner kernel the Divine pledge that as long as the saints were left below, God would *supply all their need* “according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” The fact that those blessings were promised after Noah and his family had come on to resurrection and new-creation ground, foreshadowed the blessed truth that the believer’s standing is no longer “in the flesh.”

Noah is the figure of Christ. First, as the remover of the curse from a corrupted earth, and as the rest-giver to those who, with sorrow of heart and sweat of the brow, had to till and eat of it (Gen. 5:29, Matt. 11:28). Second, as the heir of the new earth, wherein there shall be “no more curse” (Gen. 8:21, Rev. 22:3). Third, as the one into whose hands all things were now delivered (Gen. 9:2, John 17:2 and Heb. 1:2). Noah’s sons or seed were the figure of the Church. With him they were “blessed” (Gen. 9:1, and cf. Eph. 1:3). With him they were given dominion over all the lower creatures: so the saints have been made “*kings and priests unto God*” (Rev. 1:6) and shall “reign with Him” (2 Tim. 2:12). With him they were bidden to be “fruitful” and “bring forth abundantly” (Gen. 9:7), so Christians are to abound in fruit and in every good work. The fact that this covenant was an absolute or unconditional one, tells us of the immutability of our blessings in Christ.

#### *The Noahic-Part 4-(Completed)*

“While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Gen. 8:22). These promises were made by God upwards of four thousands of years ago, and the unfailing fulfillment of them annually, all through the centuries, affords a striking demonstration of His faithfulness. Moreover, in their fulfillment we have exemplified a fact which is generally lost sight of by the world today, namely, that behind Nature’s “laws” is Nature’s *Lord*. Scepticism would now shut God out of His own creation. A casual observance of Nature’s “laws” reveals the fact that they are not uniform in their operation, and therefore if we had not the Scriptures, we would be without any assurance that the seasons might not radically change and the whole earth again be inundated. Nature’s “laws” did not prevent the deluge in Noah’s days, how then should they hinder a recurrence of it in ours? How blessed for the child of God to listen to this guarantee of his Father!

See here also the aboundings of God’s mercy in proceeding with us by way of a *covenant*, binding Himself with a solemn oath that He would never again destroy the earth by water. He might well have exempted the world from this calamity, and yet never have *told* men that He would thus act. Had He not granted such assurance, the remembrance of the deluge would have been like a sword of terror suspended over their heads. But in His great goodness, the Lord sets the mind of His creatures at rest upon this score, by promising not to repeat the flood. Thus does He deal with His people: “That

by two immutable things (His revealed purpose of grace, and His covenant oath), in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a *strong consolation*, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Heb. 6:18).

"I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake' (Gen. 8:21), was the word of God to Noah, when accepting the first offering presented to Him on the purified earth. It is, no doubt, to be understood relatively; not as indicating a *total* repeal of the evil, but only a mitigation of it; yet such a mitigation as would render the earth a much less afflicted and more fertile region than it had been before. This again indicated that, in the estimation of Heaven, the earth had now assumed a new position; that by the action of God's judgment upon it, it had become hallowed in His sight, and was in a condition to receive tokens of the Divine favour, which had formerly been withheld from it" (P. Fairbairn). We pointed out the mystical significance of Genesis 8:21 in last month's article.

"And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish My covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish My covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant (literally, "My bow I have set in the cloud, and it shall be for a covenant-sign") between Me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh" (Gen. 9:8-15).

The above words contain the fulfillment of the promise which the Lord had given to Noah in Genesis 6:18, and amplify what He had said in Genesis 8:21, 22. That in them which we shall now concentrate upon is the "token" or "sign" of the covenant. There is no doubt whatever in our own mind it was now that the rainbow appeared for the first time in the lower heavens, for the purpose of allaying man's fears against the calamity of another universal flood, and to provide them with a visible pledge in Nature for the performance of her existing order and constitution: for had this Divine marvel appeared before unto the antediluvians, it had possessed no special and distinctive meaning and message after the flood. The fact that the rainbow was an entirely new phenomenon, something which was quite unknown to Noah previously, supplies a striking demonstration of *the silent harmony* of Scripture, for it is clear from Genesis 2:6 that no rain had fallen before the flood!

The first rain was sent in Divine judgment; but now God turns it into a blessing. The sunshine of Heaven falls upon the rain on earth, and lo, the beautiful rainbow! How blessedly suited, then, was the rainbow to serve as the sign of the covenant which God had made with Noah! "There is an exact correspondence between the natural phenomenon it presents, and the moral use to which it is applied. The promise in the covenant was not that there should be no future visitations of judgment upon the earth, but that they should not proceed to the extent of again destroying the world. In the moral, as in the natural sphere, there might still be congregating vapours and descending torrents; indeed, the terms of the covenant imply that there should be such, and that by means of them God would not fail to testify His displeasure against sin, and keep in awe the workers of iniquity. But there should be no second deluge to diffuse universal ruin; mercy should always so far rejoice against judgment.

"Such in the field of nature is the assurance given by the rainbow, which is formed by the lustre of the sun's rays shining on the dark cloud as it recedes; so that it may be termed, as into the somewhat poetical description of Lange, 'the sun's triumph over the floods; the glitter of his beams imprinted on

the rain-cloud as a mark of subjection! How appropriate an emblem of that grace which should always show itself ready to return after wrath! Grace still sparing and preserving, even when storms of judgment have been bursting forth upon the guilty! And as the rainbow throws its radiant arch over the expanse between Heaven and earth, uniting the two together again as with a wreath of beauty, after they have been engaged in an elemental war, what a fitting image does it present to the thoughtful eye of the essential harmony that still subsists between the higher and the lower spheres! Such undoubtedly is its symbolic import, as the sign peculiarly connected with the covenant of Noah; it holds out, by means of its very form and nature, an assurance of God's mercy, as engaged to keep perpetually in check the floods of deserved wrath, and continue to the world the manifestation of His grace and goodness" (P. Fairbairn).

But God's bow in the clouds was not only an assurance unto men at large that no more would the world be destroyed by a flood, it was also the seal of confirmation of the covenant which God had made with the elect seed, the children of faith. Blessed is it to know that, not only our eyes, but *His* too, are upon the bow, and thus this gives us fellowship with Himself in that which tells of the storm being over, of peace displacing turmoil, of the dark gloom now being irradiated by the shining of the sun. It was the rain which broke up the light into its separate rays, now reflected in the bow: the blue or heavenly ray, the yellow or golden ray, the crimson ray of atonement. Thus it is in the Everlasting Covenant that God is fully revealed as light and as love, as righteous yet merciful, merciful yet righteous. The Covenant of Grace is beautifully expressed in the rainbow.

First, it is of *God's* ordering: "I have set My bow in the clouds." So the Covenant of Grace is of God's ordering: "I have made a covenant with My Chosen" (Psa. 89:3). Though it be our duty to "take hold of" the covenant (Isa. 56:4), and to come under engagements through the grace thereof, yet we have no part in appointing or ordering it. The Covenant of Grace could no more have been made by man, than he can form a bow in the clouds. Second, the bow was set in the clouds upon God's smelling a sweet savour in Noah's sacrifice: so that Covenant of Grace is founded upon and sealed with the blood of the Lamb—a reminder thereof being set before us every time we sit down to partake of the Lord's Supper. Third, the rainbow is a Divine security that the waters should return no more to destroy the earth; so the Covenant of Grace [Everlasting Covenant] guarantees against the deluge of God's wrath, so that it shall never return again to destroy any soul that by faith flees to Christ: Isaiah 54:9.

Fourth, it is the sun which gives being to the rainbow: remove it from the firmament and there could not be its glorious reflection in the clouds. So Christ, the Sun of righteousness, gives being to our Covenant of Grace: He is its very life and substance: "I will preserve Thee, and give *Thee* for a covenant of the people" (Isa. 49:8). Fifth, although the arch of the bow is high above us, reaching to the heaven, yet the ends of it stoop down and reach to the earth. Just so it is with the Covenant of Grace: although the great Covenant-Head be in Heaven, yet, through the Gospel, He stoops down to men upon earth—"The Word is nigh thee" (Rom. 10:8). Sixth, God's bow in the clouds is very extensive, reaching from one end of Heaven to the other; so His Covenant of Grace is wide in its reach, stretching back to eternity past and reaching forward to eternity future, embracing some out of every nation and kindred, and tribe and tongue.

Seventh, as the rainbow is a security against an universal deluge, so it is also a prognostic of refreshing showers of rain to the thirsty earth; so the bow of the Covenant which encircles the Throne of God, Revelation 4:3, not only secures against vindictive wrath, but gives assurance of the rain—the Spirit's influences. Eighth, the visible appearance of the rainbow is but of a short continuance, for usually it appears only for a few minutes, and then vanishes. So the sensible and lively views which the believer gets of the Covenant of Grace are usually of brief duration. Ninth,

although the rainbow disappears, and that for a long while together, yet we do not conclude therefrom that God's covenant is broken or that a flood will come and destroy the earth. So too the saint may not now be favoured with a sensible sight of the Covenant of Grace, yet the remembrance of former views thereof will keep the soul from fears of wrath. For these nine points we are indebted to a sermon by Eben. Erskine, preached about 1730.

The following paragraph is quoted from our work "Gleanings in Genesis," written nearly twenty years ago. "There are many parallels between the rainbow and God's grace. As the rainbow is the joint-product of storm and sunshine, so grace is the unmerited favour of God appearing on the dark background of the creature's sin. As the rainbow is the effect of the sun shining on the drops of rain in a cloud, so Divine grace is manifested by God's love shining through the blood shed by our blessed Redeemer. As the rainbow is the telling out of the varied hues of the white light, so the '*manifold* grace of God' (1 Peter 4:10) is the ultimate expression of God's heart. As nature knows nothing more exquisitely beautiful than the rainbow, so Heaven itself knows nothing that surpasses in loveliness the wondrous grace of God. As the rainbow is the union of Heaven and earth-spanning the sky and reaching down to the ground-so grace in the one Mediator has brought together God and man. As the rainbow is a public sign of God hung out in the heavens that all may see it, so 'the grace of God that bringeth salvation *hath appeared to all men*' (Titus 2:11). Finally, as the rainbow has been displayed throughout all the past forty centuries, so *in the ages to come* God will show forth 'the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2:7)."

The later references in Scripture to the "rainbow" are inexpressibly blessed. Thus, in the visions of the glory of God which Ezekiel was favoured with at the beginning of his ministry, we find part of the imagery thus described, "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about" (Ezek. 1:28). It is to be duly noted that this verse comes in at the close of one of the most awe-inspiring representations of heavenly things to be found in Scripture. It is a vision of the ineffable holiness of God, hence the presence of the cherubim. There is then the fervid appearance of metallic brightness and flashes of liquid flame, which shone forth from all parts of the vision. The wheels of vast proportion are added to the cherubim: wheels full of eyes, speaking of the terrible energy which was going to characterise the Divine providences. Above all was the Throne of God, on which He Himself sat in human form.

It is well known that at the time of this vision the people of Israel were in a most distressed condition. Those amongst whom Ezekiel prophesied were in captivity, and the ruin of their country was nigh at hand. How blessed, then, was the introduction here of the sign of the rainbow into this vision! It intimated that the purpose and promises of Divine grace were sure. Though God's judgment would fall heavily upon the guilty nation, yet because of the elect remnant therein, it would not be utterly cast off, and after the storm had passed, times of restoration and peace would follow. It was the Divine assurance, for faith to rest upon and enjoy, that what Jehovah had pledged *in the covenant* would be made good.

"And there was a rainbow round about the Throne, in sight like unto an emerald" (Rev. 4:3). The canopy of God's Throne is a rainbow. We understand this vision in Revelation 4 to have immediate reference unto the glorious exercise of Divine grace under the New Testament economy. There is a manifest allusion in it to Genesis 9: it signifies that God deals with His people according to *His covenant engagements*. Its emerald or green colour denotes that, because of the faithfulness of Him who sits upon the Throne of Grace, His covenant is ever the same, ever fresh, without any shadow of turning. "Its surrounding the throne denoted that the holiness, and justice of God, and all His dispensations as the Sovereign of all worlds, had respect to His covenant of peace and engagements of love, which He had ratified to His believing people, and harmonized with them" (T. Scott).

Thus the Noahic Covenant served to bring out in a new light, and establish on a firmer basis, the unflinching faithfulness of Jehovah and the immutability of His purpose. An assurance to that effect was specially needed just after the flood, for it was over that basic truth the judgment of the deluge had seemed to cast a shadow. But the promises made to Noah, solemnly given in covenant form, and sealed by the token of the rainbow, effectually re-established confidence, and stands out still, after all these many centuries, as one of the grand events in God's dealings with men; assuring us that, however the sins of the world may provoke the justice of God, the purpose of His grace unto His chosen people stands unalterably sure.

### *The Abrahamic-Part 1*

We are now to be engaged with one of the most illustrious characters set before us in the pages of Holy Writ, one who is expressly designated "the Friend of God" (James 2:23), and from whom Christ Himself derives one of His titles, "the Son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). Not only was he the one from whom the favoured nation of Israel sprang, but he is also "the father of all them that believe" (Rom. 4:11). It is scarcely consonant with our present design to review here the remarkable life of this man, yet the history of Abraham-in its broad outlines, at least-is so closely bound up with the covenant which Jehovah made with him, that it is hardly possible to give any exposition of the latter without paying more or less attention to the former: nevertheless, we shall be obliged to pass by many interesting episodes in his varied experience if our discussion of the Abrahamic Covenant is to be kept within anything like reasonable bounds.

A period of more than three hundred years passed from the time that the Lord made the covenant with Noah and the appearing of Abraham upon the stage of sacred history. We may here note briefly two things which occurred in that period, and we do so because of the bearing which they have and the light they throw upon our present subject. The first of these is the remarkable prophecy uttered by Noah: Genesis 9:25-27. Passing by the sad incidents which immediately preceded and gave rise to the prediction, we would observe particularly its pronouncements as they intimated the future development of God's purpose of grace. This comes out first in the "Blessed be the LORD God of Shem," or as it should more properly be rendered, "Blessed be (or "Praised be") Jehovah, the God of Shem." This is the first time in Scripture that we find God calling Himself the "God" of any particular person; moreover, it was *as Jehovah* He should be related to Shem.

Jehovah is God made known in *covenant* relationship: it is God in His *manifested* personality as taking subjects into His free *favour*; it is God granting a revelation of His institutions for redemption. These were to be the specific portion of Shem-in sharp contrast from the "curse" pronounced upon Ham; not of Shem simply as an individual, but as the head of a distinct section of the human race. It was with *that* section God was to stand in the nearest relation: it was a spiritual distinction which they were to enjoy: a covenant relation, a priestly nearness; a special interest in the Divine favour is what was denoted in this primitive prediction concerning Shem. His descendants were to be the line through which the Divine blessing was to flow: it was among them that Jehovah was to be known, and where His kingdom was to be set up and established.

"God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant" (Gen. 9:27). The obvious meaning of the first clause is, God would give Japheth a numerous posterity, with widely extended territories, which has been fulfilled in the fact that they have not only gained possession of all Europe, North and South America, and Australia, but likewise a large portion of Asia. The stock of Japheth was to be the most energetic and ambitious of Noah's descendants, giving themselves to colonization and diffusive operations, pushing their way and establishing themselves far and wide. But it is the second clause of Genesis 9:27 we are now more concerned

with: "and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem"-he was to enjoy *fellowship* in the high spiritual privileges of Shem. Japheth was to come under the Divine protection and be admitted to the blessings which were the peculiar but not exclusive portion of Shem.

Throwing the light of the New Testament upon this ancient prophecy, we find it clearly announced that it was through the line of Shem the gifts of grace and the blessings of salvation were more immediately to flow; yet so far from them being confined unto that section of the human family, the larger portion of it (Japheth) would also share their good. The Shemites were to have them first hand, but the descendants of Japheth were also to participate in them. "The exaltation of Shem's progeny into the nearest relationship to God, was not that they might keep the privilege to themselves, but that first getting it, they should admit the sons of Japheth, the inhabitants of the isles, to share with them in the boon, and spread it as wide as their scattered race should extend" (P. Fairbairn).

Here, then, in this early prediction through Noah we have the germ of what is more fully developed in the later Scriptures. Though couched in so few words, it was marvellously comprehensive in its scope. It was only by entering the tents of Shem that Japheth could enter the place where Divine blessing was to be found, which, in the language of the New Testament, is only another way of saying that *from the Jews would salvation flow forth unto the Gentiles*. But before we develop that thought a little further, we would mention a very striking point brought out by E. W. Hengstenberg in his most suggestive three-volume work on "The Christology of the Old Testament." Amid his dry and technical notes on the Hebrew text, he shows how that "as the reaction against Ham's sin had *originated with Shem* (Gen. 9:23), Japheth only joining himself in it, so in the future, the rich home of salvation and piety would be with Shem, to whom Japheth, in the felt need of salvation, should come near."

"And he (Japheth) shall dwell in the tents of Shem." The earth was to be possessed and peopled by the three sons of Noah; of them Shem was the one selected to be the peculiar channel of Divine gifts and communications, but these were to be not for his own exclusive benefit, but rather to the end that others might share in the blessing. The kingdom of God was to be established in Shem, but Japheth should be received into its community. Therein was intimated not only that "salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22), but also the mystery of Romans 11:11, etc. Though "salvation is of the Jews," nevertheless, Gentiles should be partakers of it. Though Shem alone be the real *root* and trunk, yet into their tree the Gentiles should be "grafted"! Though he appeared to speak dark words, yet, by the Holy Spirit, Noah was granted amazing light and was given a deep insight into the secret councils of the Most High.

The connection between what we have briefly dwelt upon above with our present subject is so obvious that few words are called for in connection therewith. The remarkable prophecy of Noah began to receive its historical unfolding when the Lord announced to the patriarch, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). Abraham was of the stock of *Shem* (Gen. 11:1, 23, 26), and he was now made the depository of the Divine promises (Gal. 3:16); yet God's blessing was to be confined neither to himself nor to his lineal descendants, but "all families of the earth" were to be the gainers thereby. Yet, notwithstanding, it was only through Abraham that the Gentiles were to be advantaged: "*In thee* shall all families of the earth be blessed"-the central promise in the Abrahamic Covenant. What was that but re-affirming, in more specific detail, "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell *in the tents of Shem*"? How perfect is the harmony of God's wondrous Word!

The second thing to be noted, which happened during the interval between the Noahic and the Abrahamic Covenants, and which clearly had a bearing upon the latter, is the incident recorded in Genesis 11, namely, the building and overthrow of the Tower of Babel. It is a great mistake to regard

that event as an isolated occurrence, rather is it to be considered as the heading up of an evil course and movement. Of the events which transpired from the Deluge to the call of Abraham-embracing an interval of over four centuries-the information we possess is brief and summary, yet enough is recorded to show that the character of man is unchanged, the same in principle and practice as it had been before the Flood. It might perhaps have been expected that so terrible a judgment would have left upon the survivors and their descendants for many generations a deep and salutary impression, which would have acted as a powerful restraint upon their evil propensities. Alas, what is man!

Even in the family of Noah, and while the remembrance of the awful visitation of God's wrath was still fresh in their minds, there were indications which testified to both the existence and exercise of sinful dispositions, which the recent judgment had failed to eradicate or even curb. The sad failure of Noah himself, and the wicked behaviour of his son on beholding the fall of his father, afforded awful proof that the evil which is in the heart of fallen man is so deeply rooted and so powerful that nothing external, no matter how frightful, can subdue it; and supplied a distinct foreboding of what was soon made manifest on a wider scale and in a much worse form. Idolatry itself quickly found an entrance and speedily established itself among the inhabitants of the earth in their dispersion. Joshua 24:2 gives more than a hint of this, while Romans 1:21-23 casts a flood of light upon that dark situation.

Within a short time after the Deluge human depravity resumed its old course, and manifested itself in open defiance of Heaven. As the population of the earth increased, evil schemes of ambition began to be entertained, and soon there appeared on the scene one who took the lead in wickedness. He is first brought before us in Genesis 10:8: "Nimrod: who began to be a mighty one in the earth." It is to be noted that he belonged to the line of Ham, upon which the Divine curse had been pronounced, and significantly enough "Nimrod" means "*the Rebel*"-suitable title for the one who headed a great confederacy in open revolt against God. This confederacy is described in Genesis 11, and that it was an organized revolt against Jehovah is clear from the language of Genesis 10:9, "Nimrod, the mighty hunter *before the Lord*." If that expression be compared with "The earth also (in the days of Noah) was corrupt *before God*" (Gen. 6:1), the impression conveyed is, that this "Rebel" pursued his impious and ambitious designs in brazen defiance of the Almighty

Four times over we find the word "mighty" connected with Nimrod. First, in Genesis 10:8 it is said "he *began to be* a mighty one in the earth," which suggests that he struggled for the pre-eminence, and by force of will and ability obtained it; the "mighty one *in the earth*" intimates conquest and subjection, becoming a leader and ruler over men. This is confirmed by "the beginning of his kingdom was Babel" (Gen. 10:10), so that he reigned as a king. In the previous verse we are told, "He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD"-the reference probably is to his being a hunter *of men*. In so brief a description the *repetition* of those words "mighty hunter before the LORD" are significant. The word for "mighty" is "gibbor" and is translated in the Old Testament "chief" and "chieftain." In 1 Chronicles 1:10 we are told, "And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be mighty upon the earth." The Chaldee paraphrase of this verse says, "Cush begat Nimrod, who began to prevail in wickedness, for he slew innocent blood and rebelled against Jehovah."

"And the beginning of his kingdom was *Babel*" (Gen. 10:10). Here is the key to the first nine verses of the 11th chapter. In the language of that time "Babel" meant "the gate *of God*" (see Young's Concordance), but afterwards, because of the Divine judgment inflicted there, it came to mean "Confusion." By coupling together the various hints which the Holy Spirit has here given us, it seems quite clear that Nimrod organized not only an imperial government over which he presided as king, but that he also introduced a new and idolatrous worship, most probably demanding, under pain of death, that Divine honours be paid his own person. As such he was an ominous and striking type of

the Antichrist. "Out of that land he went forth into Assyria (margin) and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah" etc. (vv. 11, 12): from these statements we gather the impression that Nimrod's ambition was to establish a *world empire*.

Though Nimrod is not mentioned by name in Genesis 11, it is clear from 10:10 that *he* was the "chief" and "king" who organized and headed the movement and rebellion there described. "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:4). Here is discovered a concerted effort in most blatant defiance of God. He had said "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen. 9:1), but Nimrod and his followers deliberately refused to obey that Divine command, given through Noah, saying, "Let us make us a name, *lest we be scattered abroad* upon the face of the whole earth" (11:4).

It is clear from Genesis 10 that Nimrod's ambition was to establish a *world empire*. To accomplish this two things were necessary. First, a *centre* of unity, a city-headquarters; and second, a  *motive* for the inspiration and encouragement of his fellows. The first was secured in "the beginning of his kingdom was Babel" (10:9); the second was supplied in the "let us make us a name" (11:4), which intimated an inordinate desire for fame. Nimrod's aim was to keep mankind together under *his* leadership—"lest we be scattered abroad." The idea suggested by the "Tower"—considered in the light of its whole setting—was that of *strength*, a stronghold; while its name "*the gate of God*" tells us that Nimrod was arrogating to himself Divine honours. In it all, we may discern Satan's initial attempt to forestall the purpose of God concerning His Christ, by setting up a universal ruler of men of *his* providing.

The response of Heaven was swift and drastic. "And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let Us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth" (Gen. 11:6-9). Once again the human race had been guilty of open apostasy, therefore did God intervene in judgment, bringing to naught the ambitious scheme of Nimrod, confounding the speech of his subjects, and scattering them abroad on the face of the earth.

The effect of God's intervention was the origination of the different nations, and the formation of "the world" as it continued up to the time of Christ. Then it was that men were abandoned to their own devices, when God "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16). Then was executed that terrible judicial hardening, when "God also gave them up to uncleanness," when "God gave them up unto vile affections," when "God gave them over to a reprobate mind" (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). Then and thus it was that the way was cleared for the next stage in the outworking of the Divine plan of mercy, for where sin had abounded, grace was now to superabound. Having abandoned (temporarily) the nations, God now singled out one man, Abraham, from whom the Chosen Nation was to spring.

### *The Abrahamic-Part 2*

"And therefore will the LORD *wait*, that he may be gracious" (Isa. 30:18)—wait until the most suited time, wait until the stage is prepared for action, wait until there is a fit background for Him to act from; wait, very often, until man's extremity has been reached. "When the *fullness of the time* was come, God sent forth His Son" (Gal. 4:4). Winter's frost and snows must do their work before

vegetation is ready to bud and blossom. As it is in the material creation so it is in the realm of Divine providence. There is a wonderful *order* in all God's works, an all-wise *timing* of the Divine actions. Not that the Almighty is hampered or hindered by finite creatures of the dust, but that His wondrous "ways" may be the more admired by those who are granted spirituality to discern them. "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways" (Rev. 15:3).

Having dealt in *judgment* at Babel, God was then pleased to manifest His *grace*. This has ever been, and will ever be, true of all God's dealings. According to His infinite wisdom, judgment (which is God's "strange" work) only serves to prepare the way for a greater and grander outflow of His redeeming love. Having abandoned (temporarily) the nations, God now singled out the man from whom the Chosen Nation was to spring. Later, God's rejection of Israel resulted in the enriching of the Gentiles. And we may add, that the judgment of the Great White Throne will be followed by the new Heaven and new earth, wherein righteousness "shall dwell" and upon which the tabernacle of God shall be with men. Thus it was of old: the overthrow of the Tower of Babel and the dispersion of Nimrod's impious followers was succeeded by the call of Abraham, through whom, ultimately, the Divine blessing should flow to all the families of the earth.

The lesson to be learned here is a deeply important one: the *connection* between Genesis 11 and 12 is highly significant. The Lord God determined to have a people of His own by the calling of grace, a people which should be taken into privileged nearness unto Himself, and which should show forth His praises; but it was not until all the claims of the natural man had been repudiated by his own wickedness, not until his utter worthlessness had been clearly exhibited, that Divine clemency was free to flow forth on an enlarged scale. Sin was suffered to abound in all its hideousness, before grace super-abounded in all its blessedness. In other words, it was not until the total depravity of men had been fully demonstrated, first by the antediluvians and then again by the concerted apostasy at Babel, that God now dealt with Abraham in sovereign grace and infinite mercy.

That it was grace, grace alone, sovereign grace, which called Abraham to be the friend of God, appears clearly from his natural state and circumstances when the Lord first appeared to him. Abraham belonged not to a pious family, where Jehovah was acknowledged and honoured; instead his progenitors were idolaters. It seems that once more "*all* flesh had corrupted his way in the earth." The house from which Abraham sprang was certainly no exception to the rule, for we read, "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they *served other gods*" (Josh. 24:2). There was nothing whatever, then, in the object of the Divine choice to commend him unto God, nothing in Abraham that merited His esteem. No, the *cause* of election is always to be traced unto the discriminating will of God, for election itself is "*of grace*" (Rom. 11:5), and therefore it depends in no wise upon any worthiness in the object, either present or foreseen; if it did it *would not be* "of grace."

That it was not at all a matter of any goodness or fitness in Abraham which moved the Lord to single him out to be the special object of His high favour is further seen from Isaiah 51:1, 2, "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you." While it be true that God never acts capriciously or at random, nor arbitrarily, that is, without some wise and good reason for what He does, yet the *spring* of all His actions is His own sovereign pleasure. The moment we ascribe any of God's exercises unto aught *outside* of Himself, we are guilty not only of impiety, but of affirming a gross absurdity. The Almighty is infinitely self-sufficient, and can no more be swayed by the creatures of His own hand, than an entity can be influenced by non-entities. O how vastly different is the Deity of Holy Writ from the "God" which present-day Christendom dreams about!

"The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he

dwelt in Haran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee" (Acts 7:2, 3). The Divine title employed here is a remarkable one, for we regard it is intimating that the Shekinah itself was manifested before Abraham's wondering gaze. God always suits the revelation which He makes of Himself according to the effect which is to be produced. Here was a man in the midst of a heathen city, brought up in an idolatrous home. Something vivid and striking, supernatural and unmistakable, was required, in order to suddenly change the whole course of his life. "The God of glory"-in blessed and awesome contrast from the "other gods" of his sires-"*appeared* unto our father Abraham." It was probably the first of the Theophanic manifestations, for we never read of God "appearing" to Abel or Noah.

If our conclusion be correct, and this was the earliest of all the Theophanic manifestations (God appearing in *human* form: cf. Genesis 32:24, Joshua 5:13, 14, etc.) that we read in the Old Testament, which anticipated the Incarnation itself, as well as marked the successive revelations of God to men; and if this Theophany was accompanied by the resplendent glory and majesty of the Shekinah, then great indeed was the privilege now conferred upon the son of Terah. Nothing in him could possibly have merited such an amazing display of Divine grace. The Lord was here "found" of one that "sought Him not" (Isa. 65:1), as is the case with each of all those who are made the recipients of His everlasting blessing, for "there is *none that seeketh after God*" (Rom. 3:11). It is not the lost sheep which seeks the Shepherd, but the Shepherd who goes after it, and reveals Himself unto it in all His love and grace.

God said unto Abraham, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee" (Acts 7:3). Those were the terms of the Divine communication originally received by our patriarch. This command from the Most High came to Abraham in Mesopotamia, in the city of Ur of the Chaldeans, which was situated near the Persian Gulf. It was a call which demanded absolute confidence in and full obedience to the word of Jehovah. It was a call for definite separation from the world. But it was far more than a bare command issuing from the Divine authority: it was an *effectual* call which demonstrated the efficacy of Divine grace; in other words, it was a call accompanied by the Divine power, which wrought mightily in the object of it. This is a distinction which is generally lost sight of today: there are two kinds of the Divine call mentioned in Scripture, the one which falls only on the outward ear and produces no definite effect; the other which reaches the heart, and moves unto a real response.

The first of these calls is found in such passages as, "Unto you, O men, I call; and My voice is to the sons of man" (Prov. 8:4), and "For many be called" (Matt. 20:16). It reaches all who come under the sound of God's Word. It is a call which is addressed to the hearer's responsibility. It is the call of the law, which presses upon the creature the claims of God, and the call of the Gospel which reveals the requirements of the Mediator. This call is universally unheeded: it is unpalatable to fallen human nature, and is rejected by the unregenerate: "I have called, and ye refused" (Prov. 1:24); "And they all with one consent began to make excuse" (Luke 14:18). The second of these calls is found in such passages as "Whom He called, them He also justified" (Rom. 8:30), "Called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

The first call is general; the second particular. The first is to all who come under the sound of the Word; the second is made only to the elect, bringing them from death unto life. The first makes manifest the enmity of the carnal mind against God; the second reveals the grace of God toward His own. It is *by the effect produced* that we are able to distinguish between them. "He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice" (John 10:3, 4)-"follow" the "example" which He hath left them (1 Peter 2:21). They "follow Him" along the path of self-denial, of obedience, of

living to the glory of God. Here, then, is the grand effect wrought upon the soul when it receives the effectual call of God: the understanding is illuminated, the conscience is convicted, the hard heart is melted, the stubborn will is conquered, the affections are drawn out unto Him who before was despised.

Such an effect as we have just described is supernatural: it is a miracle of Divine grace. The proud Pharisees humbled into the dust; the stout-hearted rebel is brought into subjection; the lover of pleasure is now made a lover of God. He who before kicked defiantly against the pricks, bows submissively and cries, "Lord, what wouldest *Thou* have me to do?" But let it be said emphatically, nothing but the immediate power of God working upon the heart can produce such a blessed transformation. Neither financial losses, family bereavements, nor a dangerous illness, can effect it. *Nothing external* will suffice to change the depraved heart of fallen man. He may listen to the most faithful sermons, the most solemn warnings, the most winsome invitations, and he will remain unmoved, untouched, unless the Spirit of God is pleased to first quicken him into newness of life. Those who are spiritually dead can neither hear, see, nor feel *spiritually*.

Now it is this *effectual* call that Abraham was the subject of when Jehovah suddenly appeared to him in Ur of Chaldea. This is evident from the effect produced in him. He was bidden to "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee" (Acts 7:3). Think of what *that* involved: to forsake the land of his birth, to sever the nearest and dearest of all natural ties, to make a complete break with his old manner of life, and to step out on what appeared unto carnal reason to be an uncertain venture. What was his response? This, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11:8). Ah, my reader, *that* can only be satisfactorily accounted for in one way: all-mighty power had wrought within him, invincible grace had conquered his heart.

Before proceeding further let us pause and take stock of our own souls. Have we experienced anything which at all corresponds to this radical change in the life of Abraham? Have you, have I, been made the subjects of a Divine call which has produced a right-about-face in our lives? Have we been the subjects of a Divine miracle, so that grace has wrought effectually upon our hearts? Have we heard something more than the language of Scripture falling upon our outward ears? have we heard God Himself speaking in the most secret recesses of our souls, so that it may be said, "The Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also *in power*, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. 1:5)? Can it be said of us, "The Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thess. 2:13)? Is the Word working "effectually" in us, so as to *govern* our inner and outer man, so as to produce an obedient walk, and issue in fruit to God's glory?

Though the response made by Abraham to the call which he had received from the Lord clearly demonstrated that a miracle of Divine grace had been wrought within him, nevertheless, God suffered sufficient of the "flesh" to appear in him so as to evidence that he was still a sinful and failing creature. While regeneration be indeed a wonderful and blessed experience, yet it is only *the beginning* of God's "good work" in the soul (Phil. 1:6), and requires His further operations of sanctification to carry it forward to completion. Though a new "nature" is imparted when the soul is brought from death unto life, the old "nature" is not removed; though the principle of holiness be communicated, the principle of sin is neither annihilated nor exterminated. Consequently, there is not only a continual conflict produced by these contrary principles, but their presence and exercise prevents the soul from fully attaining its desires and doing as it would (Gal. 5:17).

Abraham's obedience to the Divine command was both partial and tardy. God had bidden him to leave his own country, separate from his kindred, and "come into the land" which He would show

him (Acts 7:3). His failure is recorded in Genesis 11:31, "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there." He left Chaldea, but instead of leaving behind his kindred, his father and nephew accompanied him. This was the more excuseless because Isaiah 51:2 expressly declares that God had called Abraham "alone." It is significant to note that the word "Terah" means "*delay*," and such his presence occasioned Abraham, for instead of entering the land of Canaan at once, he stopped short at Haran, and there he remained for five years until Terah died (Gen. 11:32; 12:4, 5).

And why did the Lord suffer the "flesh" in Abraham to mar his obedience? To indicate to his spiritual "children" that absolute perfection of character and conduct is not attainable in this life. We do not call attention to this fact so as to encourage loose living or to lower the exalted standard at which we must ever aim, but to cheer those who are discouraged because their honest and ardent efforts after godliness so often fall below that standard. Again; there is only One who has walked this earth in *perfect* obedience to God in thought and word and deed, and that not occasionally, but constantly and uninterruptedly, and He *must* "have the pre-eminence in all things"; therefore God will not suffer Christ's glory to be reduced by fashioning others to honour Him as *He* did. Finally, God's permitting the flesh to exist and be active in Abraham further magnified the Divine grace, by making it still further manifest that it was through no excellency in him that he had been called.

"Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Haran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land" (Acts 7:4). Though God had suffered the flesh in Abraham to mar his obedience, yet He would not allow it to completely triumph. Divine grace is not only magnified by the unworthiness of its object, but it is glorified in triumphing over the flesh and producing that which is contrary thereto. The hindrance to Abraham's obedience was removed, and now we see him actually entering the place to which God had called him. And there, for the present, we must stop.

### *The Abrahamic-Part 3*

The first thing recorded of Abraham after he had actually entered the land of Canaan is the Lord's appearing unto him and his building an altar: "And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD" (Gen. 12:6, 7). There are several details here which claim our attention. First, Abraham did not settle down and enter into possession of the land, but "passed through it": as Acts 7:5 tells us, "And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on." Second, the presence there of "the Canaanite"-to challenge and contest the possession of it. So it is with the believer: the flesh, the devil, and the world unite in opposing his *present* enjoyment of the Inheritance unto which he has been begotten; while hosts of wicked spirits in the heavenlies wrestle with those who are partakers of the heavenly calling (Eph. 6:12).

Third, "the LORD appeared unto Abram." He had done so originally as the "God of glory," when He revealed Himself to the patriarch in Chaldea. There is no intimation of Abraham receiving any further revelation from God during his delay at Haran; but now that God's call had been fully obeyed, he was favoured with a fresh manifestation of Him. And now Abraham's obedience is rewarded: at the beginning the Lord had said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will *show* thee" (Gen. 12:1); now He declared, "Unto thy seed will I *give* this land" (v 7). This brings before us a most important principle in the "ways" of God, which has often been lost sight of by men who only stress one side of the Truth. That principle is that

Divine *grace* never sets aside the requirements of Divine *righteousness*. God never shows mercy at the expense of His holiness.

God is “light” as well as “love,” and each of these Divine perfections is exemplified in all His dealings with His people. Moreover, in the exercise of His *sovereignty* God ever enforces the *responsibility* of the creature, and unless we keep *both* of these steadily in view, we not only become lopsided, but lapse into real error. The grace of God must not be magnified to the beclouding of His righteousness, nor His sovereignty pressed to the exclusion of human accountability. The balance can only be preserved by our faithfully adhering to the Scriptures. If we single out “favourite” verses and ignore those which are unpalatable to the flesh, we are guilty of handling the Word of God deceitfully, and fall under the condemnation of “according as ye have not kept My ways, but have been *partial* in the law” (Mal. 2:9). The principles of Law and Gospel are not contradictory, but supplementary, and neither can be dispensed with except to our irreparable loss.

What has been pointed out above supplies the keys to a right understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant, and unless those dual principles be steadily kept before us in our contemplation of the same, we are certain to err. Some writers when referring to the Abrahamic Covenant speak of it as “a covenant of pure grace,” and such it truly was; for what was there about Abraham to move the God of glory to so much as notice him? Nevertheless, it would be equally correct to designate the Abrahamic Covenant “a covenant of righteousness,” for it exemplified the principles of the Divine *government* as actually as it made manifest the benignity of the Divine *character*. Other writers have referred to the Abrahamic Covenant as an “unconditional one,” but in this they erred, for to talk of “an unconditional *covenant*” is a flat contradiction in terms. Suffer us to quote here from our first article on the Covenants:

“Let us point out the *nature* of a ‘covenant,’ in what it consists. ‘An absolute complete covenant is a voluntary convention, pact, or agreement between distinct persons, about the ordering and dispensing of things in their power, unto the mutual concern and advantage’ (J. Owen). Blackstone, the great commentator upon English law, speaking of the parts of a deed, says, ‘After warrants, usually follow *covenants*, or conventions, which are clauses of agreement, contained in a deed, whereby either party may stipulate for the truth of certain facts, or may bind himself to perform, or give something to the other’ (Vol. 2, p. 20); so that he includes three things: the parties, the terms, the binding agreement. Reducing it to still simpler language, we may say that a covenant is the entering into of a mutual agreement a benefit being assured on the fulfillment of certain conditions.”

We supplement by a quotation from H. Witsuis, “The covenant does, on the part of God, comprise three things in general. 1st. A *promise* of consummate happiness in eternal life. 2nd. A designation or *prescription* of the condition, by the performance of which man acquires a right to the promise. 3rd. A *penal sanction* against those who do not come up to the prescribed condition . . . . Man becomes the other party when he consents thereto: embracing the good promised by God, engaging to an exact observance of the condition required; and upon the violation thereof, voluntarily owning himself obnoxious to the threatened curse.”

Let it now be pointed out that in *this* article we are turning to another side of the subject from what we have mainly dwelt upon in the previous ones. In those we amplified what we said in the fourth and fifth paragraphs of the second article. Having dwelt so largely upon the Divine sovereignty and Divine grace aspects, we need to weigh carefully the Divine righteousness and human responsibility elements. Having shown how the various covenants which God made with men adumbrated the central features in the Everlasting Covenant which He made with Christ, we are now required to consider how that in them God maintained the claims of His righteousness by what He required from the responsible agents with whom He dealt. It was not until *after* Noah did “according to

all that God commanded him" (Gen. 6:22) by preparing an ark "to the saving of his house" (Heb. 11:7), that God confirmed His "with thee *will* I establish My covenant" (Gen. 6:18) by "I establish My covenant" (9:9)-"Noah having fulfilled the Divine stipulations, God was now prepared to fulfill His promises.

The same thing is clearly seen again in connection with Abraham. There is no hint in Scripture that the Lord entered into any covenant with him while he was in Ur of Chaldea: instead, the land of Canaan was then set before him *provisionally*: "The LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land *that I will* show thee" (Gen. 12:1). The *order* there is unmistakably plain. First, God acted in *grace*, sovereign grace, by singling out Abraham from his idolatrous neighbours, and by calling him to something far better. Second, God made known the requirements of His *righteousness* and enforced Abraham's *responsibility* by the demand there made upon him. Third, the promised *reward* was to follow Abraham's response to God's call. These three things are conjoined in Hebrews 11:8: "By faith Abraham, when he was called (by Divine grace) to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance (the reward), obeyed (the discharge of his responsibility); and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

Nor does what has just been said in anywise conflict with what was pointed out in previous articles. The above elements just as truly shadowed forth another fundamental aspect of the Everlasting Covenant as did the different features singled out from the Adamic and Noahaic. In the Everlasting Covenant, God promised a certain reward unto Christ upon His fulfilling certain conditions-"executing the appointed work. The inseparable principles of Law and Gospel, grace and reward, faith and works, were most expressly conjoined in that compact which God entered into with the Mediator before the foundation of the world. Therein we may behold the "manifold wisdom of God" in combining such apparent opposites; and instead of carping at their seeming hostility, we should admire the omniscience which has made the one the handmaid of the other. Only then are we prepared to discern and recognise the exercise of this dual principle in each of the subordinate covenants.

Not a few writers supposed they magnified the grace of God and honoured the Mediator when affirming that Christ Himself so fulfilled the conditions of the Covenant and so met every requirement of God's righteousness that His people have been entirely freed of all legal obligations, and that nothing whatever is left for them to do but express their gratitude in lives well-pleasing to Him. It is far easier to make this mistake than it is to expose it. It is true, blessedly true, gloriously true, that Christ *did* perfectly discharge His covenant-engagements, magnified the Law and made it honourable, that God received from Him a full satisfaction for all the sins of His people. Yet that does not mean that the Law has been repealed, that God rescinds His righteous claims upon the creature, or that believers are placed in a position of privilege from which obligation is excluded; nor does it involve the idea that saints are freed from covenant duties. Grace reigns, but it reigns "through righteousness" (Rom. 5:21), and not at the expense of it.

Christ's obedience has not rendered ours unnecessary: rather has it rendered ours acceptable. In that sentence lies the solution to the difficulty. The Law of God will accept nothing short of perfect and perpetual obedience, and such obedience the Surety of God's people rendered, so that He brought in an everlasting righteousness which is reckoned to their account. Yet that is only one half of the truth on this subject. The other half is not that Christ's atonement has inaugurated a regime of lawlessness or license, but rather has it placed its beneficiaries under additional obligations. But more: it has procured the needed grace to enable those beneficiaries to discharge their obligations-"not perfectly; nevertheless, acceptably to God. And how? By securing that the Holy Spirit should bring them from death unto life, impart to them a nature which delights in the Law, and work in

them both to will and to do of God's good pleasure. And *what is* God's "good pleasure" for His people? The same as it was for His incarnate Son: to be perfectly conformed to the Law in thought word and deed.

God has one and the same standard for the Head and the members of His Church, and therefore we are told, "he that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6). In 1 Peter 2:21 we read, "Christ also suffered for us": with what end in view? that we might be relieved from all obligation to God? that we might pursue a course of lawlessness under the pretence of magnifying "grace"? No, indeed; but rather "leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." And what is the nature of that "example" which Christ has left us? What, but "fulfilling the law" (Matt. 5:17), loving the Lord His God with all His heart and mind and strength, and His neighbour as Himself? But in order to this there must be a *nature* in harmony with the Law and not enmity against it. As Christ could declare, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart" (Psa. 40:8), so can each of His redeemed and regenerated people say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom. 7:22). And were there nothing else in them but the new man, they would render perfect obedience to the Law. Such *is* their honest desire, but the presence of the old man thwarts them.

The Everlasting Covenant was, in its nature and contents, a *mixed* one, for the principles of both law and grace were operative therein. It was grace pure and simple which ordained that any from Adam's fallen race should be saved, as it was amazing and infinite grace that provided the Son of God should become incarnate and serve as their Surety. But it was law pure and simple that the Surety should earn and purchase their salvation by His rendering unto God a perfect satisfaction on their behalf. Christ was "made under the law" (Gal. 4:4). His whole life was perfectly conformed to the precepts of the law, and His death was an enduring the penalty of the law; and all of this was in fulfillment of His covenant-engagements. In like manner, these two principles of grace and law are operative in connection with the *administration* of the Everlasting Covenant, that is, in the *application* of its benefits to those on whose behalf Christ transacted. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31).

The work of Christ has released the believer from the law as a procuring cause of his justification, but it has in nowise abolished it as his rule of life. Divine grace does not set aside its recipient's responsibility, nor does the believer's obedience render grace any the less necessary. God requires obedience (conformity to His Law) from the Christian as truly as He does from the non-Christian. True, we are not saved *for* (because of) our obedience, yet it is equally true that we cannot be saved *without* it. Unless Noah had heeded God and built the ark, he had perished in the Flood, yet it was by the goodness and power of God that the ark was preserved. It is through Christ, and Christ alone, that the believer's obedience is acceptable to God. But it may be asked, Will God accept an imperfect obedience from us? The answer is, Yes, if it be sincere; just as He is pleased to answer our poor prayers when presented in the all-meritorious name of His Son.

Once again we would point out that any "covenant" necessarily signifies a *mutual* agreement, *with terms to be carried out* by both parties. A vivid but most solemn example of this is found in the case of Judas and the chief priests of the Jews, concerning whom we read "they *covenanted* with him for thirty pieces of silver" (Matt. 26:15). That is to say, in return for his fulfilling the contract to betray his Master into their hands, they would pay him this sum of money, which, in Acts 1:18, is denominated "the *reward* of iniquity." It is only by paying close attention to *all* the expressions used in Scripture of God's covenant and of our relation thereto, that we can obtain a right and full conception thereof. We read of those "that *take hold of My covenant*" (Isa. 56:4, 6), "that thou shouldest *enter into covenant* with the LORD thy God" (Deut. 29:12), "those that have *made a covenant* with Me by

sacrifice” (Psa. 50:5), “mercy and truth unto such as *keep* His covenant and His testimonies” (Psa. 25:10), “be ye *mindful* always of His covenant” (1 Chron. 16:15), “Ye *break* My covenant” (Lev. 26:15), “them that *forsake* the holy covenant” (Dan. 11:30).

Against what has been said above it may be objected, But this reduces the Covenant of Grace to one and the same level with the Covenant of Works. Not so, we reply: for though those covenants have something in common, yet there is a real and radical difference between them. Each of them maintains the claims of God’s righteousness by enforcing the requirements of the law, but the Covenant of Works had no “Mediator,” nor was any provision made for those who failed under it; whereas the Covenant of Grace supplies both. Moreover, under the Covenant of Works obedience was rendered unto an absolute God, whereas under the Covenant of Grace it is given to God in Christ, and there is a world of difference between these two things. The application of these principles to the case of Abraham.

#### *The Abrahamic-Part 4*

In the application unto Abraham of those Divine principles considered in last month’s article, it should be quite obvious that the law of his obedience was attended with both promises and threatenings, rewards and punishments, suited unto the goodness and holiness of God, and fitted for the discharge of his moral responsibility. It may be asked, Where is there any hint in Scripture of any provisos and terms attached to the Abrahamic Covenant, or any clear statement that God stipulated any terms to him? Such a question is capable of several answers. In the first place, unless there *were* such provisos and terms, no “*covenant*” had been made at all. Second, the extreme brevity of the Genesis account must be borne in mind, and instead of expecting a full categorical statement, its fragmentary details need to be carefully pieced together. Third, Genesis 12:1 shows plainly that Canaan was first set before him *provisionally*.

In addition to what has just been said, we would point out what the Lord declared in connection with the sign and seal of this covenant: “the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath *broken* My covenant” (Gen. 17:14). Here, then, it is clear that a “condition” *was* stipulated, the failure to meet which “broke the covenant.” Again, in Genesis 18:19 we find God saying, “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; *that* (in order that) the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him.” Abraham had to “*keep* the way of the LORD,” which is defined as “to *do* justice and judgment,” that is, walk *obediently*, in subjection to God’s revealed will, if he was to receive the fulfillment of the Divine promises. Once more, we read “Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws” (Gen. 26:5). Thus, while God dealt with Abraham in pure grace, it is plain that he was also placed under the law.

Some readers are likely to object, This is a wretched subversion of the glorious Covenant of Grace: by your “conditions,” “terms,” and “provisos” you reduce it to a contingency and uncertainty, instead of its being “ordered in all things and *sure*.” Our first rejoinder is that, *We* have not introduced the “conditions” and “provisos” into the covenant; instead, they are so stated in the Scriptures. God did not make an absolute grant of Canaan unto Abraham when He first revealed Himself to him in Chaldea: rather was he required to tread the path of obedience unto that land “which he should *after* receive for an inheritance.” Nor does God make an absolute (or unconditional) grant of Heaven when the sinner first believes in Christ; instead, He requires him to walk the narrow way which alone leadeth unto Life, and faithfully warns him that it is to his imminent peril if he converges therefrom.

It may be replied, But this is to leave all at an uncertainty. It all depends upon the angle from

which you view it. Considered as the object of God's everlasting love, as chosen in Christ, as redeemed by Him, as indwelt and sealed by the Spirit, the believer's safely reaching Heaven is placed beyond all peradventure. But consider the believer as a responsible agent, as still having the "flesh" in him, living in a world where he is beset by temptation on every side, called upon to "fight the good fight of faith" and to "lay hold on eternal life," and the matter appears in quite another light; and the one viewpoint is just as *real and actual* as is the other! The difficulty here as to whether or not the believer's "keeping" or "breaking" the covenant renders all insecure, is precisely the same as showing the consistency between Divine *preservation* and Christian *perseverance*. Though the "ifs" of John 8:31 and Colossians 1:23 do *not* annul the promise of Philippians 1:6, nevertheless, they are *there*, and must be taken into account by us.

From the Divine side, the Covenant of Grace *is* "ordered in all things and *sure*": there is not the slightest possibility of anything in it failing: Christ *will* "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied," and not one of those given to Him by the Father before the foundation of the world will be lost. But that does not alter the fact that while the elect are left here in this world they are bidden to "*make* their calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10), "*if* they may apprehend (lay hold of) that for which also they were apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12). The Covenant has provided for the communication of *effectual* grace to secure the saints' obedience and perseverance, yet that does not alter the fact that God still enforces His righteous claims upon them and deals with them as moral agents, who are required to heed His warnings, obey His precepts, and *use the means* He has appointed for their preservation.

Some experience difficulty in fitting together those Scriptures which present "eternal life" as the present and inalienable possession of the believer, with other passages that place it in the future and as only being attained unto by following a course of self-denial: such verses as John 5:24 and Romans 6:23 are quite simple to them, but Romans 6:22; 8:13; Galatians 6:8; Jude 21, they are at a loss to know what to do with. But there is nothing inconsistent between a believer acting from a principle of grace and life *already* communicated to him by the Holy Spirit, and his so acting that he *may* live. A man must be alive before he can eat, yet he must eat in order that he may live: were he to cease entirely from the taking of food would there be any life for him in a month's time? Neither would the Christian enter Heaven if he entirely neglected the means of grace appointed for his spiritual preservation.

Of old Moses said unto Israel, "The LORD thy God *will* circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live" (Deut. 30:6). Was he, then, "inconsistent" when, at the close of the same address, he declared, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed *may* live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey His voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto Him: for he *is* thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them" (vv. 19, 20). Was Moses there setting before them a "yea and nay Gospel?" Emphatically, No; for he was the mouthpiece of Jehovah Himself. Nor was this appeal a "legal" one, but a strictly "evangelical" one. Alas, that so many today err "not knowing the Scriptures." "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him *and keep his commandments* to a thousand generations"-not merely from Moses till Christ! (Deut. 7:9); yes, and with no others. This verse is just as much a part of the Holy and inspired Word of God as is Ephesians 2:8, 9, and the one is needed by us as much as the other.

Should it be objected, This is bringing in a legalistic inducement and inculcating a mercenary spirit

to put the believer upon using means in order to his preservation, and setting before him Heaven or eternal life as a “reward” for his faithfulness. In reply, let us quote from the renowned and evangelical Dutch theologian: “A mercenary baseness is certainly unworthy of the highborn sons of God, but their heavenly Father does not forbid them to have any regard to *their own* advantage in the exercise of holiness. David himself confesseth that, the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether . . . ‘by them is Thy servant warned, and *in keeping of them* there is great *reward*’ (Psa. 19:9, 11). And the faith of Moses is commended because ‘he had respect unto the recompense *of the reward*’ (Heb. 11:26). Yea, *that* faith is required of all who come to God, that they ‘*must* believe that He is a *Rewarder* of them that diligently seek Him’-Hebrews 11:6” (from “Irenicon” by H. Witsius, 1696).

To anticipate one more objection-not with any expectation of convincing the carping critic, but rather in the hope of helping some who are in a state of bewilderment from the one-sided teaching of our unhappy day:-But does not all of the above inculcate the principle of human *merit*? No, for it is due alone to Divine *grace* that the believer has had communicated to him a principle of obedience-a heart or nature which desires to please God. Furthermore, it is solely for *Christ’s* sake that God so liberally rewards the sincere endeavours of His people, for apart from the Mediator and *His* merits, they could not be accepted by Him. Finally, there is no proportion whatever between the Christian’s obedience and the “reward” he receives-the Inheritance infinitely exceeding his poor efforts; any more than there was in God’s giving Canaan to Abraham and his seed because he left Chaldea.

Coming closer now to our immediate theme, it should be pointed out that the Abrahamic Covenant is *not* to be regarded as a thing apart, having no direct connection with what went before or what followed it; but rather is it to be viewed as a part of and a further step in the unfolding unto God’s people of His eternal counsels. The call of Abraham was a most important step in the outworking of God’s purpose. It was one of those remarkable epochs in the history of the Church which produced a new order of things, in perfect keeping with, yet greatly in advance of, what had previously been communicated. The work of preparation for the appearance of the Messiah now assumed a more tangible form and entered on a phase bearing more visibly upon the attainment of the ultimate result. The line from which the promised Seed was to spring was now more definitely defined, while the scope of Diving grace was more clearly revealed.

The declaration made by the Lord God in Eden after Adam’s transgression, that the “Seed” of the woman should triumph over and destroy the Serpent, had been the ground of the saints’ faith and the object of their hope during the first two thousand years’ history of the world. Until the time of Abraham, nothing more had been revealed concerning the person of the coming Deliverer (so far as Scripture records) than that He was to be of the human race; but of what particular family, or even of which nation, no one was informed. Where men were to look for Him, whether in Egypt, in Babylon, or in some other land, did not yet transpire. But in the covenant which God made with Abraham, not only was the promise of a Saviour renewed, but His family and place was now made known. For this great honour the “friend of God” was selected: to him it was revealed that the Messiah should spring from *his* stock, and that the land of *Canaan* would be the scene of His glorious mission.

Not only should the Abrahamic Covenant be regarded as part of a greater whole rather than an isolated transaction, but attention must not be restricted to any single episode in the patriarch’s life or God’s dealings with him. We fully agree with John Kelly when he said, “If we would form an accurate estimate of that covenant, and of the truth which it was the means of revealing, we must not confine ourselves to any one particular transaction in which allusion is made to it, however important that transaction may have been. Our examination must embrace all the incidents recorded. We must bear in mind that everything that occurred to Abraham, from his call to the close of his life, was intended to explain and illustrate the nature of the Covenant.”

It was not by one specific communication that the mind of God was fully disclosed unto Abraham. Several were made at different times, all relating to the same subject, and unfolding the import of the covenant; while the character of Abraham himself-shaped by the various trials through which he was called to pass and molded by grace though faith-throws important light upon the conceptions which he entertained of what had been revealed to him. All these form one homogeneous whole, and from them, thus considered, we are to form our views of the covenant. When Abraham was first called by the Lord, a bare hint was given him of the Divine purpose, which, under the Spirit's blessing, was the means of quickening his faith and producing the decision which he made. Yet only a *glimpse* was then afforded him of what God designed; it was not the formal establishment of the covenant-that event took place subsequently, after an interval of some years.

What has just been said appears to receive confirmation from Galatians 3:16, 17, "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. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." "Four hundred and thirty years" prior to the giving of the Law at Sinai takes us back to *the beginning* of God's dealings with Abraham, recorded in Genesis 12, though the actual *term* "covenant" is not found in that chapter. It is not until we reach Genesis 15:18 that we find the transaction itself: "In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land." Then in Genesis 17 we find the sign and seal of the covenant-circumcision-given. To the covenant there are other references in the chapters which follow: in Genesis 22 the covenant is confirmed. Thus, in fact, the covenant received important and successive enlargements during the intercourse which God, in infinite condescension, continued to have with His servant. Hebrews 6:13-18 links together the great "promise" of Genesis 12:3 and the "oath" of Genesis 22:15-18.

In our endeavour, then, to obtain a correct and comprehensive view of the Divine transaction in the Abrahamic Covenant, we are required to carefully examine *all* the information which the Genesis narrative supplies, the leading events in Abraham's own life (which are designed as a contribution for imparting an explanation), and the light which the New Testament casts upon them both, and regard all in its entire unity as illustrative of the covenant. To confine ourselves to one passage, however important it may seem to be, would be doing injustice to the subject. It is failure at *this* point which has resulted in so many superficial, inadequate, and one-sided discussions of the same by various writers. Those who approach the examination and consideration of the Abrahamic Covenant (or any other Scriptural theme) with a single pet theory or idea in their minds, which they are determined to establish at all costs, cannot expect to obtain a right and full view of the covenant as a whole.

We shall, then, regard the Abrahamic Covenant as a striking advance in the development of God's gracious purpose toward men, and yet as only a part of a greater and grander whole. In so doing that which will claim our special attention is, What was the particular nature and what the amount of the Truth, which it was the means of revealing? Upon these points a very wide diversity of opinion obtains, both among the older and more recent writers. Exactly *what* did the Abrahamic Covenant make manifest to the minds and hearts of God's people of old? and *how far* does the same apply to us now? The proper answers to these questions must be drawn from Holy Writ itself, fairly interpreted. Perhaps our best course (God Willing) is to single out the leading particulars, and then comment thereon as each may seem to require.

#### *Abrahamic-Part 5*

"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from

thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3). In this simple narrative we have *the original promise* made to Abraham that the Messiah should come of his family. This Divine pledge was made to the patriarch when he was only a little short of seventy-five years of age. It was given at a point in human history half way between the creation of the first Adam and the incarnation of the last Adam: that is, two thousand years after the entrance of sin into the world, and two thousand years before the advent of the Saviour.

The first great purpose of the Abrahamic Covenant was to make known *the stock* from which the Messiah was to spring. This was the most prominent aspect of Truth revealed in it: the appearing of the promised Seed in Abraham's own line. The primary intimation of this was given to the patriarch when God first appeared to him: "in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Two things are to be noted in the language there used. First, the "all families *of the earth* be blessed" obviously looks back to Genesis 3:15, for the "*all families*" was sufficiently definite to announce the international scope of the blessing. It is indeed very striking to observe that in Genesis 12:3 God did not use the word "eretz" (as in Gen. 1:1; 14:19; 18:25, etc.), but "adamah" as in Genesis 3:17. The manifest link between "*Cursed is the ground*" (Gen. 3:17) had been made more evident had Genesis 12:3 been rendered "in thee all families of the *ground be blessed*"-the Curse was to be removed by Christ!

Second, the terms of this Messianic intimation were quite *general* in their character: later, this original promise was repeated in more specific form: the "*in thee* shall all the families of the ground be blessed" being defined as "*in thy seed* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." This illustrates an important principle which may be discerned throughout the Divine revelation, namely, that of progressive unfolding: "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear" (Mark 4:28). This is evident here by a comparison of the far-reaching promises made to Abraham with the prophecies of Noah concerning his three sons. Jehovah was the God of Shem, yet Japheth should dwell in his tents (Gen. 9:26, 27); now He becomes known as "the God of Abraham," but *all families of the ground* should be blessed in him and his seed. What a striking advance was here made in the Divine plan, by revealing the breadth of its meaning and the explicitness of its purpose!

"By his call Abraham was raised to a very singular pre-eminence and constituted in a manner the root and centre of the world's future history, as concerned the attainment of real blessing. Still, even in that respect, not exclusively. The blessing was to come chiefly to Abraham, and through him; but, as already indicated in the prophecy on Shem, others were to stand, though in a subordinate rank, on the same line-since those also were to be blessed who blessed him; that is, who held substantially the same faith, and occupied the same friendly relation to God. The cases of such persons in the patriarch's own day, as his kinsman Lot, who was not formally admitted into Abraham's covenant, and still more of Melchizedek, who was not even of Abraham's line and yet individually stood in some sense higher than Abraham himself, clearly showed, and were no doubt partly raised up for the purpose of showing that there was nothing arbitrary in Abraham's position, and that the ground he occupied was to a certain extent common to believers generally.

"The peculiar honour conceded to him was that the great trunk of blessing was to be of him, while only some isolated twigs or scattered branches were to be found elsewhere; and even these could only be found by persons coming, in a manner, to make common cause with him. In regard to himself, however, the large dowry of good conveyed to him in the Divine promise could manifestly not be realised through him personally. There could at the most be but a beginning made in his own experience and history: and the widening of the circle of blessing to other kindreds and regions, till it reached to the most distant families of the earth, must necessarily be affected by means of those who

were to spring from him. Hence the original word of promise, 'In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed,' was afterwards changed into 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed'" (P. Fairbairn).

It needs pointing out, though, that *each* of those expressions had its own specific significance and importance, and that they must be conjoined so as to bring out the full design of God in the calling of Abraham. The promised blessing was to be wrought out in its widest sense not by Abraham individually and immediately, but through him mediately, by means of the "seed" that should be given to him. This clearly implied that that "seed" must possess far higher qualities than any to be found in Abraham himself, since blessing from it would flow out so widely; yea, it only thinly veiled the truth that there should be a wondrous commingling of the Divine with the human. Christ, then, as the essential kernel of the promise and the Seed of Abraham, rather, than Abraham himself, was to have the honour of blessing all nations.

But what we have just called attention to by no means evacuates the force of the original "*in thee* shall all families of the ground be blessed," for by so definitely connecting the good with Abraham himself as well as with his "seed," the organic connection was marked between the one and the other. "The blessing to be brought to the world through his line had even in his time a present though small realisation—precisely as the kingdom of Christ had its commencement in that of David, and the one ultimately merged into the other. And so, in Abraham as the living root of all that was to follow, the whole and every part may be said to take its rise" (P. Fairbairn). Not only was Christ after the flesh "the Son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1), but every believer in Christ is of Abraham's "seed" (Gal. 3:29); and the entire company of the redeemed shall have their place and portion "with Abraham" in the kingdom of God (Matt. 8:11).

Other promises followed, such as "unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12:7), "to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17:7) etc., which Lord willing, we shall consider later. That which immediately concerns us is the meaning of the term "seed" in these passages. The Scripture which throws the most light thereon is Galatians 3:16, 17: "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. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." Yet strange to say, this passage has occasioned the commentators much trouble, no two of them agreeing in its interpretation. It is commonly regarded as one of the most abstruse passages in all the Pauline Epistles.

Matthew Henry says, "The covenant is made with Abraham and his Seed. And he (the Apostle) gives us a very surprising exposition of that but he attempts no detailed interpretation at all. J.N. Darby seeks to undo the knot by changing the Apostle's "promises" to "the promise," restricting the reference unto Genesis 22. Yet not only is the Greek in the plural number, but such an idea is plainly refuted by the "four hundred and thirty years after," which necessarily carries us back to Genesis 12. Albert Barnes discusses at great length what he terms "the perplexities of this very difficult passage of Scripture." But as usual, the commentators have created their own difficulties: partly by failing to take into full account the immediate context, and partly through a slavish adherence to "the letter," there is missing the "spirit" of the verse.

"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made" (Gal. 3:16). Abraham was the "father" of a twofold "seed," a natural and a spiritual; and if we attend unto the context here, there is not the slightest difficulty in determining *which* of them the Holy Spirit has in view. In verse 6 He had said, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness"; from which the conclusion is drawn, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of

Abraham" (v. 7). What could be plainer than that? They which are "of faith," genuine believers are "the *children* of Abraham": that is, his *spiritual* children-he being their "father" as the pattern to which they are conformed. In other words-sinners today are justified by God in precisely the same way as Abraham was-by faith.

"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen (Gentiles) 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). The same truth is here re-affirmed. In view of God's purpose to justify Gentiles by faith, He proclaimed that Gospel to Abraham himself, saying, "In thee shall all nations be blessed." Let it be carefully noted that the Holy Spirit here quotes from Genesis 12, and *not* from Genesis 22! The same conclusion is again drawn: believers receive the identical spiritual blessing that Abraham did, namely, the righteousness of Christ imputed to their account, so that they now measure up to every requirement of the law. And that, because "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13); this having opened the way "that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (v. 14).

"Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto" (Gal. 3:15). But in the case before us we have far more than "a man's covenant"-we have a *Divine* "covenant," for God solemnly ratified His promises to Abraham by covenant. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made" (v. 16). Now in the light of "the children of Abraham" (v. 7), "they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (v. 9), and "that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ" (v. 14), "to Abraham and his seed" *must* mean "to Abraham and his *spiritual* seed were the promises made." Collateral proof of this is supplied by Romans 4:16, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all," for it is only *all* of his *spiritual* "seed" who are assured of the blessings promised.

"He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). This is the clause which many have found so perplexing. They have pointed out that, both in the Old Testament and the New, the term "seed" often refers to descendants *without* limitation, just as the word "posterity" does with us. Furthermore, it is a fact, which a use of the concordance will amply confirm, that this term "seed" is *never* used in the plural at all to denote a posterity, the singular from being constantly employed for that purpose; indeed the plural form of the word never occurs except here in Galatians 3:16. This presents a problem for which no literalist can supply any satisfactory solution, which plainly intimates that it was not with the surface-meaning of the term the Apostle was here treating.

"The force of his reasoning here depends not on the mere dictionary *word* 'seed,' but upon the great scriptural *idea* which, more and more clearly in Old Testament revelation, becomes manifested through that word-the idea of an individual person, who should sum up in Himself the covenant people as well as (for them) the covenant blessings, that is, the promised Messiah, *Christ*" (James MacGregor, on Galatians, 1879). This is the only writer we are acquainted with who has indicated the direction in which we must look for the true explanation of the Apostle's terms, namely, not in their merely literal signification, but in the spiritual concept which they embodied-just as the term "Christ" literally signifies "anointed," but is employed as the special title of the Saviour, and is given to Him not as a private but public Person, including both the Head and members of the Church (1 Cor. 12:12).

"He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). Abraham had two entirely different "seeds," one by humble procreation, the other by Divine

regeneration. But the promises were not made to both his seeds, but to one of them only, namely, the spiritual, the *mystical* "Christ"-the Redeemer and all who are legally and vitally united to Him. Thus the antithesis drawn by the Apostle is between the *unity* of the "seed" in contrast from the *diversity* of the "seeds." This has been strikingly shadowed forth on the earth plane. Abraham had two sons, but one of them, Ishmael, was excluded from the highest privileges: "In *Isaac* shall thy seed be called" (Gen. 21:12). But those words did not signify, All the descendants of Isaac are destined unto heavenly bliss; rather do they affirm that it was from Isaac the promised Messiah, would, according to the flesh, descend.

Later, the line of Messiah's descent was more definitely restricted, for of Isaac's two sons Esau was rejected, and Jacob was chosen as the progenitor of Christ. Out of Jacob's twelve sons Judah was selected as the tribe from which the promised Seed should issue. Out of all the thousands of Judah the family of Jesse was the one honoured to give birth to the Saviour (Isa. 11:1). Of Jesse's eight sons (1 Sam. 16:10, 11) David was appointed to be the father of the Messiah. Thus we may see that as time went on the channel through which Abraham's "Seed" should issue was more definitely narrowed down and defined, and therein and thereby God gradually made it known *how* His original promises to Abraham were to receive their fulfillment. The *limitation* of these promises was evidenced by the rejection of Ishmael, and then of Esau, which clearly intimated that *all* of Abraham's descendants were *not* included therein; until, ultimately, it was seen that their *fulfillment* was received in Christ Himself and those united to Him.

Had the promises of God to Abraham embraced both branches of his family, including Ishmael as well as Isaac, then some other term than "seed" had been used. But God so ordered that so different were the circumstances of the births and future lives, so diverse were the prophecies respecting them, and so utterly dissimilar were the two races that sprang from them, that in Scripture the descendants of Ishmael ceased to be spoken of as the posterity of Abraham. And therein God adumbrated the wide gulf which separated the *natural* descendents of Abraham (the Jews) from his *spiritual* children (Christians), and has thereby rendered excuseless our confounding the one with the other when looking for *fulfillment* of the promises. The promises were *limited* originally, and that limitation was evidenced more clearly by successive revelations until it was shown that none but Christ (and those united to Him) were included: "And to thy Seed, which is *Christ*" (*mystical*)!!

"He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). To sum up. The promises of God were never made to all the descendants of Abraham, like so many different kinds of "seed," but were limited to the *spiritual* line, that is, to "Christ" *mystical*. Hence the *unbelieving* descendants of *Jacob* were as much excluded from those promises as were the posterity of Ishmael and Esau. Contrariwise, believing Gentiles, one with Christ in the Everlasting Covenant, were as truly embraced by them as was Isaac and Jacob and all the godly Israelites.

#### Abrahamic-Part 6

What was before us last month is of fundamental importance: not only to aright understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant itself, but also for a sound interpretation of much of the Old Testament. Once it be clearly recognised that *the type merges into the antitype*, that believers in Christ are Abraham's "children" (Rom 4:16, Gal. 3:7), citizens of the free and heavenly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26, Eph. 2:19, Rev. 21:2, 14), the "Circumcision" (Phil. 3:3), the "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16, Eph. 2:12, 13), the "comers unto Mount Zion" (Heb. 12:22), it will be found that we have a reliable guide for conducting us through the mazes of prophecy, without which we are sure to lose ourselves in inextricable confusion and uncertainty. This was common knowledge among the saints in days gone by, but alas a generation succeeded them boasting they had new light, only to plunge themselves

and their followers into gross darkness.

The promises of God to Abraham and his seed were never made to his natural descendants, but belonged to those who had a like faith with him. It could not be otherwise, "For all the promises of God in Him (Christ) are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Cor. 1:20). All the "promises" (not "prophecies") of God are made *in Christ*: that is, all the *blessings* promised are placed in the hands of the Mediator, and none who are out of Christ can lay claim to a single one of them. All who are out of Christ, are out of God's favour, and therefore the Divine threatenings, and not the promises are *their* portion. Here, then, is our reply to those who complain "You apply to the Church all the good things of the Old Testament, but the bad ones you relegate to the Jews." Of course we do: the *blessings* of God pertain to all who are in Christ; the *curses* of God to all-Jews or Gentiles-who are out of Christ.

Thus, the *unbelieving* descendants of Jacob were as much excluded from the Abrahamic promises as were the posterity of Ishmael and Esau; whereas those promises belonged as really and truly to *believing Gentiles* as they did to Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. But alas this basic truth, so clearly revealed in Scripture, is repudiated by "Dispensationalists," who are perpetuating the error of those who opposed Christ in the days of His flesh. When He spoke of the *spiritual* freedom which He could bestow, His unregenerate hearers exclaimed, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man" (John 8:33). When He made mention of His Father, the carnal Jews answered "Abraham is *our* father," to which the Saviour replied "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). Alas, alas, that so many of our moderns know not *who are* "Abraham's children."

The vital importance of what we sought to present in last month's article will appear still more evident when it be pointed out that believers in Christ have a *joint-heritage with Abraham*, as well as a common standing before God. But many will at once object to this, That cannot be: why, the inheritance of Abraham and his seed was an *earthly* one-it was the land of Canaan which God promised them! Our first answer is, Such was the firm belief of those who crucified the Lord of Glory; such is still the conviction of all the "orthodox" Jews on earth today-Jews who despise and reject the Christ of God. Are *they* safe guides to follow? To say the least, professing Christians who share this view are not in very good company! The very fact that this idea is so widely entertained among Jews who have not the Spirit of God, should raise a strong suspicion in those claiming to have spiritual discernment.

Our second answer is that, If the inheritance of Abraham *was* an "earthly" one, namely, the land of Canaan, then most certainly *the Christians' inheritance* is an earthly one too, for we are all joint-heirs with Abraham. Are you, my reader, (no matter what you may have received from "deep students of Prophecy") prepared to settle this question by the plain teaching of Holy Scriptures? If you are, it may quickly be brought to a simple issue: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, *and heirs* according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29). What could be clearer than that: "If children, then heirs" (Rom. 8:17)-if children of God, then heirs of God; and in like manner, if "children" of Abraham, then "heirs" of and with Abraham. There is no legitimate escape from that obvious conclusion.

In the last verse of Galatians 3 the Apostle drew the unavoidable inference from the premises which he had established in the context. Let us return for a moment to Galatians 3:16, and then observe what follows. There the plain statement is made "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made," and, as we fully proved in last month's article, the reference is to his *spiritual* "seed"; but as though to remove all possible uncertainty, the Holy Spirit has added "And to thy seed, which is *Christ*"-Christ mystical as in 1 Corinthians 12:12 and Colossians 1:24: that is, Christ Himself and all who are united to Him. Thus there is no room left for a shadow of doubts as *to whom* the Abrahamic

promises belonged-his carnal seed being expressly excluded in the “he saith not, and to seeds, as of many.”

“And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect” (Gal. 3:17). The only difficulty lies in the words “in Christ.” Inasmuch as “the covenant” here mentioned was confirmed only four hundred and thirty years before the Law (at Sinai) the reference *cannot be* to the Everlasting Covenant-which was “confirmed” by God in Christ ere the world began (Titus 1:2, etc.). Hence we are obliged to adopt the rendering given by spiritual and able scholars “the covenant that was confirmed before God *concerning* Christ”-just as “eis Christon” is translated “*concerning* Christ” in Ephesians 5:32 and “eis auton” is rendered “*concerning* Him” in Acts 2:25. Here, then, is a further word from God that His covenant with Abraham concerned *Christ*, that is *Christ mystical*

Now the special point that the Apostle was labouring in Galatians 3 was that the promises given by God to Abraham (which were solemnly “confirmed” by His covenant-oath) were given centuries before the Siniatic economy was established; and that inasmuch as God is faithful so that His Word cannot be broken (v. 15), then there could be nothing in connection with the giving of the Law that would to the slightest degree invalidate what He was pledged to bestow: “The law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.” Be it observed that *here* “the promise” is in the singular number, the reason for this being that the Apostle was about to confine himself to one particular promise, namely that which respected the *Inheritance*.

“For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise” (Gal 3:18). The “inheritance” was given to Abraham by God long before the Law. The question now before us is *what was* the “Inheritance” which God gave to Abraham? Easily answered, replies some one: Genesis 12:7 and 13:15, etc., tell us it was “the land of Canaan,” and when God said “this land” He means that, and nothing else. Not quite so fast, dear friend. When a young believer reads Exodus 12 with its varied details of the slaying of the lamb, and the promise of shelter beneath its blood, and wonders what is the *spiritual* significance thereof, by far his best course is to turn to the New Testament, and prayerfully search for the answer. Eventually he will find that answer in 1 Corinthians 5:7, “Christ *our* Passover is sacrificed for us.”

When the young believer reads Leviticus 16, describing the elaborate ritual which the high priest of Israel was required to observe on the annual day of atonement, and is concerned to discover the *spiritual* meaning of the same, the 9th of Hebrews will give him much light thereon. In like manner, those reading the historical account in Genesis 14 of Melchizedek, the king of Salem and priest of the Most High God, bringing forth bread and wine and blessing Abraham, to whom the patriarch paid tithes, may learn from Hebrews 7 that Melchizedek supplied a striking fore-shadowment of the Lord Jesus in His official character. Now let us point out two things which are common to all these examples. First, the New Testament teaching thereon in nowise reduces those important Old Testament incidents to mere allegories: it neither repudiates their historicity nor evacuates their liberality. Second, but the New Testament *does* reveal that those Old Testament events possessed a *higher* meaning than their “literal” significance, that the historical was but a shadowing forth on earth of that which has its reality or antitype in Heaven.

Why not, then, apply this *same* principle to God’s promise to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed? Since believers in Christ are Abraham’s children and “*heirs* according to the promise,” then it clearly follows that *they* are interested in ALL that was said or promised to *him*. It is a great mistake to regard certain of the Abrahamic promises as being simply of a temporal kind and restricted to his natural descendants, and that others were of a celestial character and pertain to his spiritual

seed. The fact is that the outward and the temporal never existed by itself nor for itself, but was appointed as an adumbration of the spiritual and eternal, and as a *means* for the obtaining thereof. The outward and the temporal must be *consistently* viewed throughout as the shell and shadow of the spiritual and eternal.

Nor is the establishing of this important principle left in any doubt as it applies to the subject of the inheritance of Abraham and his seed. In the 11th of Hebrews we find the patriarchs themselves *identifying their* prospects of a future inheritance *with ours*. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a *strange* country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he *looked* for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God . . . These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them *afar off*, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were *strangers and pilgrims on the earth*. For they that say *such* things declare plainly that they *seek* a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an *heavenly*: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (vv. 9-10, 13-16). How clear it is from these verses that they looked *beyond* the "literal" purport of the promises, unto a heavenly and eternal inheritance, namely, to the *same* described in 1 Peter 1:4.

We are not now concerned with considering the immediate ends which were served by the *natural* descendants of Abraham occupying the *earthly* Canaan—a consideration parallel with the *temporal* advantages enjoyed by those who lived under the "literal" exercise of the Aaronic priesthood. What ever be or be not the future of Palestine in relation to the Jews, even though they again occupy it for a thousand years, certain it is that the promise of God that Abraham and his seed should have "the land of Canaan for an *everlasting* possession" (Gen. 17:8) has not, will not, and cannot be fulfilled in his natural posterity, for that land, in common with the whole earth, is to be *destroyed*! No, rather are we now concerned with the spiritual and antitypical meaning thereof.

Our third answer, then, to the oft-made affirmation that the inheritance of Abraham and his seed was an *earthly* one, is, that it is repudiated by Scripture itself. Was the inheritance of Moses an "earthly" one? No indeed, for of him we read, "Esteeming the reproach of *Christ* greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the *recompense of the Reward*" (Heb. 11:26). Was the inheritance of David an "earthly" one? No indeed, for after his kingdom was established, he declared, "Hold not Thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with Thee, and a *sojourner, as all my fathers were*" (Psa. 39:12); and again, "I am a *stranger in the earth*" (Psa. 119:19). The "land of Canaan" is no more to be understood in a carnal way than the "seed" of Abraham is to be regarded as his natural posterity. The land of Canaan was no more given to the Jews after the flesh than the "*blessing of Abraham*" (namely, the Holy Spirit-Gal. 3:14) has come upon them.

"For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, *or to his seed*, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith" (Rom. 4:13). Observe two things: first, it was promised that Abraham should not be merely "the heir of Palestine," but "of the world"; and second, this promise was made to Abraham *and* "to his seed," which "seed is defined in verse 12 as those who "walk in the steps of that faith" which their "father Abraham" had. In perfect harmony with this our Lord declared, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit (possess, have dominion over, enjoy) *the earth* (Matt. 5:5)-if "literalists" have cast such a shadow over this verse that some readers find it hard to understand, then we suggest that they ponder it in the light of 1 Corinthians 3:21-23 and 1 John 5:4! In concluding this important article we feel that we cannot do better than give the spiritual Calvin's comments on Romans 4:13, which are a refreshing contrast from the carnalizing of "Dispensationalists."

“Since he now speaks of eternal salvation, the Apostle seems to have somewhat unseasonably led his readers to ‘the world’; but he includes generally under this word ‘world,’ *the restoration* which was expected through Christ. The chief thing was indeed the restoration of life; it was yet necessary that the fallen state of the whole world should be repaired. The Apostle, in Hebrews 1:2, calls Christ the Heir of all the good things of God; for the adoption which we obtain through His favour restores to us the possession of the inheritance which we lost in Adam; and as under the type of the land of Canaan, not only the hope of a heavenly life was exhibited to Abraham, but also the full and complete blessing of God, the Apostle rightly teaches us that *the dominion of the world* was promised to him. Some taste of this the godly have in the present life; for how much soever they may at times be oppressed with want, yet as they partake with a peaceable conscience of those things which God has created for their use, and as they enjoy through His mercy and goodwill His earthly benefits no otherwise than as pledges and earnest of eternal life, their poverty does in no degree prevent them from acknowledging heaven and the earth, and the sea, *as their own possessions*.

“Though the ungodly swallow up the riches of the world, they can yet call nothing as their own; but they rather snatch them as it were by stealth; for they possess them under the curse of God. It is indeed a great comfort to the godly in their poverty, that though they fare slenderly, they yet steal nothing of what belongs to another, but receive their lawful allowance from the hand of their heavenly Father, until they enter on the full possession of their inheritance, when all creatures shall be made subservient to their glory; for both heaven and earth shall be renewed for this end,-that according to their measure they may contribute to render glorious the Kingdom of God.” It will repay the reader to re-read the above and meditate thereon as a helpful opening-up of Romans 4:13, with its application to us.-A.W.P.

N.B. We follow this article by another which we have entitled “The Typical Canaan,” that was too lengthy to insert in the above. It is a quotation from a deeply-taught servant of God.

#### *The Abrahamic-Part 7*

In the last two months’ articles upon this most interesting subject we sought to establish the basic fact that the promises of God to Abraham were never made to his natural descendants, but rather to his *spiritual* “seed,” that is, to those possessing a like faith with his; consequently, the *unbelieving* posterity of Jacob were as much excluded from the spiritual blessings of the covenant as were the offspring of Ishmael and Esau. Then we sought to show, by an appeal to Romans 4:13-16, Galatians 3:16-18, 29; Hebrews 11:9-16 that *all* who belong to Christ have a joint-heritage with Abraham. At the close of last month’s paper we endeavoured to dispose of the objection that the inheritance promised to Abraham was merely an “earthly” one. Before proceeding further, we make a suggestive quotation from the writings of Robert Haldane.

“The land of Canaan was a type of the heavenly country. It was the inheritance given by promise to Abraham and his posterity: as his descendants after the flesh inherited the one, so his spiritual seed shall inherit the other. Canaan was the land of rest, after the toils and dangers of the wilderness. To make it a fit inheritance, and an emblem of that inheritance which is undefiled, and into which there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, it was cleared of the ungodly inhabitants. As the introduction of the people of Israel into that land was not effected by their own power or efforts (Josh. 24:12, Psa. 44:4), but by the unmerited goodness and power of God; so the children of God do not obtain possession of the heavenly inheritance by their own power or efforts, but by the free grace and power of God (Rom. 9:16). As those who believed not were excluded from Canaan, so all unbelievers will be excluded from Heaven. As Moses could not lead the people of Israel into Canaan, that honour being reserved for Joshua, so it is not by the law

that the people of God shall enter Heaven, but by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the true Joshua. No other country on earth could have been selected as a fitter emblem of Heaven: it is called in Scripture 'the pleasant land,' 'the glory of all lands,' 'a land flowing with milk and honey.'"

Not only was Palestine a striking and beautiful type of Heaven, but the promise of the heavenly Canaan was couched under the promise of the earthly Canaan. The patriarchs themselves so understood it, as is abundantly evident from Hebrews 11. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed" (v. 8): that "place" which he was to afterward receive "for an inheritance" could not be the earthly Canaan, for we are distinctly told that God "gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on" (Acts 7:5), and in the absence of any scriptural statement to that effect, it would seem most incongruous to suppose that after spending four thousand years in Heaven, the patriarch, after the resurrection, will again reside upon earth. No, his hope concerned a "Heavenly County" (Heb. 11:14, 16), yet no promise concerning *it* is found anywhere in the Old Testament, unless it be the real kernel inside the promise of the earthly Canaan. That *our* "hope" is the same as Abraham's is clear from Hebrews 6:17-19.

In addition to the two great promises which our patriarch received, that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed and the inheritance be secured to them, was the still greater and yet more comprehensive assurance "to be a *God* unto thee, and to thy seed after thee . . . I will be their *God*" (Gen. 17:7, 8). This Divine declaration was designed to make known the infinitely condescending relation which Jehovah meant to sustain to His believing people, and to encourage them in the exercise of strong confidence in Him. It was a new revelation to Abraham of the gracious intercourse which He would maintain with them, for so far as Scripture records no similar word has been given to any of the saints which preceded. Here, then, was a further and fuller unfolding of the Divine communications under the Abrahamic Covenant, a distinct advance upon what had been previously revealed.

When the Most High promises to be a *God* unto any, it is in effect declaring that He takes them into His favour and under His protection; that *He* will be their portion, and that there is nothing good-with a wise respect to their welfare-which He will withhold from them. All there is of evil which needs to be averted, all there is of real good that can suitably be bestowed, is included in this grand assurance. Our finite minds are incapable of defining the capacity of God to bless, or to adequately comprehend all that such a statement includes. Its application is not limited to this life only, but also looks forward to the never-ending ages of eternity. The great Jehovah is solemnly pledged to guide, guard, glorify His covenant people: "*my God* shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

Now each of the promises to Abraham received a *double* fulfillment: a "letter" and a "spirit," or as we prefer to designate them, a carnal and a spiritual. "Thou shalt be a father of many nations . . . and kings shall come out of thee" (Gen. 17:4, 6). In addition to the Israelites, Abraham was the father of the Ishmaelites and the various children of Keturah (Gen. 25:1, 2). But these were all born after the flesh (Gal. 4:23), and were only a figure of the real seed, the spiritual. This is clear from, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure *to all the seed*; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is *the father of us all*-As it is written, I have made thee *a father of many nations*" (Rom. 4:16, 17). Thus, in the truest and highest sense Abraham was the father of *believers*, whether Jews or Gentiles, and of them *only*. In John 8:39 and 44 Christ emphatically denied that Abraham was the "father" of the unbelieving Jews of His day.

"And I will establish My *covenant* between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant" (Gen. 17:7). The making good of this was adumbrated when

Israel after the flesh was taken into covenant by Jehovah at Sinai, whereby He formally became their God and acknowledged them as His people: Exodus 19:5, 6; Leviticus 26:12, etc. But the actual and ultimate accomplishment of Genesis 17:7 is in connection with the spiritual Israel, Abraham's children by faith, and this by a "better covenant": for with the true house of Israel He says, "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 . . . . I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 8:10, 12).

"And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, *the land* wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" (Gen. 17:8). Israel's conquest and occupation of the earthly Canaan in the days of Joshua was the figurative and lower fulfillment of this promise. As we have already shown, its spiritual realisation lies in the possession of the "better Country" which those who are of the faith of Abraham shall eternally inherit. Thus it was that the patriarchs themselves understood this promise, as is unmistakably evident from Hebrews 11:9-16: their faith was more especially directed to the "*Heavenly Country*," of which the earthly was but an emblem.

The same truth was brought out clearly in our Lord's reasoning with the Sadducees, who denied all that was spiritual. "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Luke 20:37): the covenant-promises taught the patriarchs that their resurrection and glorification was necessary to the fulfillment of them. That the "Canaan" in which they were to dwell after the resurrection was to be, not on earth, but in Heaven, is equally plain from the previous part of this same conversation of Christ: "The children of *this* world (the earthly Canaan in which the Sadducees then were) marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain *that* world, (the heavenly Canaan) and the resurrection from the dead, (to prepare them for it) neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels" (vv. 34-36).

The Apostle Paul gave an exposition of the covenant-promises in perfect accord with that which we have just considered from the lips of the Lord Jesus. In His defence before King Agrippa, he hesitated not to say, and that in the presence of the Jewish leaders, "I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews" (Acts 26:6, 7). And *what* was that "promise"? Their unimpeded and happy enjoyment of the land of Palestine? No indeed, but "why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should *raise the dead*?" (v. 8). So also, when before Felix, he declared "I confess unto thee, that after the way which they (the unbelieving Jews) call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written *in the Law* and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be *a resurrection* of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:14, 15).

But where is the promise made unto the fathers of the resurrection from the dead "*written in the Law*"? The answer is, nowhere, unless it be *in the covenant-promises* made to Abraham and repeated to Isaac and Jacob; nor is it there, except in the sense in which they have now been explained. God will raise from the dead all the *spiritual* seed of Abraham, and will give them "for an everlasting possession" that Canaan above, of which the Canaan on earth was the appointed emblem and shadow. Rightly did James Haldane point out that "One great means by which Satan has succeeded in corrupting the Gospel, has been the blending (we may add "the confusing") of the literal and spiritual fulfillment of these promises-thus confounding the old and new covenants. This is seen in the attempts made to apply to the carnal 'seed' of believers (Christians) the promises made to the spiritual 'seed of Abraham.'"

We are not unmindful that some of our readers are likely to object strongly to what they would term this “spiritualizing” method of interpreting the Scriptures. But let it be pointed out that this giving to the covenant-promises both a “letter” and “spirit” significance is not a theory formed to serve a purpose: it is in keeping with and required by every part of the Old Testament dispensation, wherein the things of earth were employed to shadow forth heavenly realities, types pointing forward to antitypes. Take for example the temple: it was “the house of God” in the letter, but Christ and His Church is so in the spirit. To now call any earthly building “the House of God” is as far below the sense which that expression bears when it is applied to the Church of Christ, as calling the *nation* of Israel the “people of God” was far below the meaning of that phrase when applied to the *spiritual* Israel (Gal. 6:16).

Things are said of the house of God in the letter which only fully suit the spirit. Solomon declared “I have surely built Thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for Thee to abide in for ever” (1 Kings 8:13). Now the incongruity of supposing that *He* whom “the heaven of heavens cannot contain” should dwell in any earthly and material house forever, as “a settled habitation,” is only removed by referring it to the spirit. Christ’s body (personal and mystical) is the only “temple” (John 2:19, 21; Eph. 2:18-22) of which this is fully true. This is not open to argument: God *did not* “dwell forever” in the temple built by Solomon, for it was destroyed thousands of years ago; but in His *spiritual* “temple” it is accomplished to its utmost extent. According to the same principle must the covenant-promises be interpreted: the temporal things promised therein being but images of those “better things” which God promised to bestow upon Abraham’s believing children.

Reviewing the ground now covered let us point out that the first great purpose of the covenant was to make known *the stock* from which the Messiah was to spring. Second, this covenant revealed that God’s ultimate design was the *worldwide* diffusion of the benefits it announced. Before Nimrod, the whole race was as one language and had an easy intercourse with each other. But upon the confusion of tongues, they were divided and scattered abroad, and were all alike fast falling into a state of confirmed defection from God. When Abraham was called, and his family selected as a people to whom God was to communicate a knowledge of His will, and attach (by sovereign grace) to His service, it would be natural to infer that the rest of the nations were totally and finally abandoned to their own evil devices, and that only the one favoured nation would participate in the triumphs of the future Deliverer. It is instructive to note how this logical but erroneous conclusion was anticipated by God from the beginning, and refuted by the very terms of the covenant which He made with Abraham.

The patriarch and his descendants were indeed set apart from all others; peculiar privileges and blessings of the highest value were conferred upon them; but at the very conferring of them the Lord gave an express intimation that those privileges were confined to them *in trust*, and that the Israelitish theocracy was only a *temporary* arrangement, for in Abraham would “*all families of the earth be blessed.*” Thus clear announcement was made that the time would come when the middle wall of partition would be broken down and all restrictions removed, and the blessings of Abraham be extended to a far wider circle. The *external* arrangements of the covenant were simply a necessity for a time, with the object of securing grander and more comprehensive results. “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 22:18) was a definite publication of the *international* scope of the Divine mercy.

Thus, the Abrahamic Covenant, taken as a whole, not only defined the particular line from which the Messiah was to spring, announced the needful (temporal) arrangements in preparation for His appearing, and the extent to which His glorious work was destined to reach; but it placed in a clearer light the relation which (in consequence of it) God condescended to sustain to His redeemed people;

and it supplied a striking intimation and typification of the *nature* of the blessings, which, in virtue of that relation, He designed to confer upon them. It was a wonderful enlargement of revelation; it was the Gospel in figure, and is so regarded in the New Testament (John 8:56, Gal. 3:8). The Apostle Paul refers to the Abrahamic Covenant again and again as foreshadowing and illustrating the privileges bestowed upon Christians, and of the principle on which those privileges are conferred—a faith which is evidenced by obedience.

#### *The Abrahamic-Part 8-Conclusion*

The grand *promises* of the Abrahamic Covenant, as originally given to the patriarch, are recorded in Genesis 12:2, 3, 7. The covenant itself was solemnly *ratified* by sacrifice, thus making it inviolable, in Genesis 15:9-21. The “seal” and “sign” of the covenant, circumcision, is brought before us in Genesis 17:9-14. The covenant was *confirmed* by Divine oath in Genesis 22:15-18, which provided a ground of “strong consolation” (Heb. 6:17-19). There were not two distinct and diverse covenants made with Abraham (as the older Baptists argued), the one having respect to spiritual blessings and the other relating to temporal benefits. The covenant was one, having a special spiritual object, to which the temporal arrangements and inferior privileges enjoyed by the nation of Israel were strictly subordinated, and necessary only as a means of securing the higher results contemplated.

It is true that the contents of the covenant were of a *mixed* kind, involving both the natural descendants and the spiritual “seed” of Abraham, its promises receiving a minor and major fulfillment. There was to be a temporary accomplishment of those promises to his natural offspring here on earth, and there was to be an eternal realisation of them to his spiritual children in Heaven. Unless this twofoldness of the contents of the covenant be steadily borne in mind, it is impossible to obtain a right and clear view of them. Nevertheless it is highly essential that we distinguish sharply between the two, lest we fall into the error of others who insist that the spiritual blessings belonged not only to the natural seed of Abraham, but to the offspring of Christians as well. Spiritual blessings cannot be communicated by carnal propagation.

Nothing could more clearly establish what has just been pointed out than, “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the *seed* of Abraham, are they all CHILDREN: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed” (Rom. 9:6-8). All of Abraham’s descendants did not participate in the spiritual blessings promised to him, for to some *of them* Christ said, “Ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24), which was shadowed forth in the fact that Ishmael and Esau were excluded from even the temporal privileges enjoyed by the offspring of Isaac and Jacob. Nor do all the children of Christians enter into the spiritual privileges promised to Abraham, but only those which were eternally chosen unto salvation; and *who they are* cannot be known until they *believe*: “Know ye therefore that they which are *of faith*, the same are the children of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7).

Let us point out in the next place that Abraham’s covenant was strictly *peculiar to himself*, for neither in the Old Testament nor in the New is it ever said that the covenant with Abraham was made on behalf of all believers, or that it is given to them. The great thing that the covenant secured to Abraham was that he should *have a seed*, and that God would be *the God* of that seed; but Christians have no Divine warrant that He will be the God of their “seed,” nor even that they shall have any children at all. As a matter of fact, many of them have no posterity, and therefore they cannot have the covenant of Abraham. The covenant of Abraham was as peculiar to himself as the one God made with Phinehas, “And he shall have it, *and his seed* after him, even the covenant of an

everlasting priesthood" (Num. 25:13), and as the covenant of royalty which God made with David *and his seed* (2 Sam. 7:12-16). In each case a Divine promise was given *securing a posterity*, and had no children been born to those men, then God had broken his covenant.

Look at the original promises made to Abraham, "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:2, 3). Has God promised every Christian that He will make *of him* a "great nation"? or that He will make *his* "name great"-celebrated like the patriarch's was and is? or that in *him* "all the families of the earth be blessed"? Surely there is no room for argument here: the very asking of such questions answers them. Nothing could be more extravagant and absurd than to suppose that any such promises as these were made *to us*.

If God fulfills the covenant with Abraham and his seed to every believer and his seed, then He does so in accord with the terms of the covenant itself. But if we turn to and carefully examine its contents, it will at once appear that they were not to be fulfilled in the case of all believers, in addition to Abraham himself. In that covenant God promises that Abraham should be "a father of many nations," that "kings shall come out of thee," that "I will give thee *and to thy seed* after thee, *the land* wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" (Gen. 17:5-8). But Christians are not made the fathers of many nations; kings do not come out of them: nor do their descendants occupy the land of Canaan, either literally or spiritually. How many a godly believer has had to mourn with David, "*although my house be not so with God*; yet He hath made with *me* an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all *my* salvation" (2 Sam. 23:5).

The covenant established *no spiritual relation* between Abraham and his offspring, still less does it establish a spiritual relation between every believer and his babes. Abraham was not the *spiritual* father of his own natural offspring, for spiritual qualities cannot be propagated by carnal generation. Was he the spiritual father of Ishmael? Was he the spiritual father of Esau? No indeed; instead, Abraham was "the father of *all them that believe*" (Rom. 4:11). So far as his natural descendants were concerned, Scripture declares that Abraham was, "the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also *walk in the steps of that faith* of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised" (Rom. 4:12). What could be plainer? Let us beware of *adding* to God's Word. No theory or practice, no matter how venerable it be or how widely held, is tenable, if no clear Scripture can be found to warrant and establish it.

The question may be asked, But are not Christians *under* the Abrahamic Covenant? In the entire absence of any word in Scripture affirming that they *are*, we answer, *No*. The "blessing of Abraham" has indeed "come on the (believing) Gentiles through Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:14), and what this "blessing" is, the very same verse tells us, namely "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit *through faith*." That "blessing" consists not in creating spiritual relations between believers and their infant offspring, but is *for themselves*, in response to the exercise of their faith. Plainer still is Galatians 3:9 in defining for us *what* the "blessing of Abraham" is which has come upon the Gentiles: "So then they which be of faith are *blessed with faithful Abraham*." And again, "Know ye therefore that they which are *of faith*, the same are the children of Abraham" (v. 7)-the only *spiritual* "children" of Abraham are such as have FAITH.

We must now turn to and consider *the seal* of the covenant. "And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep My covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is My covenant, which ye shall keep, between Me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a *token* of the covenant betwixt Me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you,

every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken My covenant” (Gen. 17:9-14).

In seeking to ascertain the significance of the above passage, we cannot do better than throw upon it the light of the New Testament. There we are told, “And he (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also” (Rom. 4:11). The first observation we would make upon this verse is that it definitely establishes the *unity* of the Abrahamic Covenant, for in Romans 4:3 the Apostle had quoted from Genesis 15-where the word “covenant” occurs for the first time in connection with Abraham; and now he refers us to Genesis 17, thereby intimating it is one and the same covenant in both chapters. The main difference between the two chapters is that the one gives us more the Divine side (ratifying the covenant), the other the human side-the “keeping of” the covenant, or obedience to the Divine Command.

The next thing we would observe is that circumcision was “a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had.” Again we would say, Let us be on our guard against *adding to God’s Word*, for nowhere does Scripture say that circumcision was a “seal” to any one but to Abraham himself; and even in his case, so far was it from communicating any spiritual blessing, it simply confirmed what was already promised to him. As a “seal” from God, circumcision was a Divine pledge or guaranty that from him should issue that “Seed” which would bring blessing to all nations, and that, on the same terms as justifying righteousness had become his-by faith alone. It was not a seal of his faith, but of that righteousness which, in due time, was to be wrought out by the Messiah and Mediator. Circumcision was not a memorial of any thing which had already been actualised, but an earnest of that which was yet future, namely, of that justifying righteousness which was to be brought in by Christ.

But did not God enjoin that all the males of Abraham’s household, and in those of his descendants, should also be circumcised? He did, and in that very fact we find definite confirmation of what has just been said above. What did circumcision “seal” to Abraham’s servants and slaves? Nothing. “Circumcision neither signed nor sealed the blessings of the covenant of Abraham to the individuals to whom it was by Divine appointment administered. It did not imply that they who were circumcised were accounted the heirs of the promises, either temporal or spiritual. It was not applied to mark them individually as heirs of the promises. It did not imply this even to Isaac and Jacob, who are by name designated heirs with Abraham. *Their* interest in the promises was secured *to them* by God’s expressly giving *them* the covenant, but was *not* represented in their circumcision. Circumcision marked no character, and had an individual application to no man but Abraham himself. It was the token of this covenant; and as a token or sign, no doubt applied to every promise in the covenant, but it did not designate the individual circumcised as having a personal interest in these promises. The covenant promised a numerous seed to Abraham; circumcision, as the token of that covenant, must have been a sign of this; but it did not sign this *to any other*. Any other circumcised individual, except Isaac and Jacob, to whom the covenant was given by name, might have been *childless*.

“Circumcision did not impart to any individual that any portion of the numerous seed of Abraham should descend through *him*. The covenant promised that all nations should be blessed in Abraham-that the Messiah should be his descendant. But circumcision was no sign *to any other* that

the Messiah should descend from him,-even to Isaac and Jacob this promise was peculiarly given, *and not implied in their circumcision*. From some of Abraham's race, the Messiah, according to the covenant, must descend, and circumcision was a sign of this: but this was not signed by circumcision to any one of all his race. Much less could circumcision 'sign' this to the strangers and slaves who were not of Abraham's posterity. To such, even the temporal promises were not either 'signed' or sealed by circumcision. The covenant promised Canaan to Abraham's descendants, but circumcision could be no sign of this to the strangers and slaves who enjoyed no inheritance in it" (Alex. Carson, 1860).

That circumcision did *not* "seal" anything to any one but to Abraham himself, is established beyond shadow of doubt by the fact that circumcision was applied to those who had *no personal interest* in the covenant to which it was attached. Not only was circumcision administered by Abraham to the servants and slaves of his household, but in Genesis 17:23 we read that he circumcised *Ishmael*, who was expressly excluded from that covenant! There is no evading the force of that, and it is impossible to reconcile it with the views so widely pervading upon the Abrahamic Covenant. Furthermore, circumcision was not submitted to voluntarily, nor given with reference to faith, it was *compulsory*, and that in every instance: "He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, *must* needs be circumcised" (Gen. 17:13)-those refusing, being "cut off from his people" (v. 14): how vastly different was *that* from Christian baptism!

It may be asked, If, then, circumcision "sealed" nothing to those who received it, except in the one case of Abraham himself, then *why* did God ordain it to be administered to all his male descendants? First, because it was the mark He selected to distinguish from all other nations that people from whom the Messiah was to issue. Second, because it served as a continual reminder that from the Abrahamic stock the promised "Seed" would spring-hence, soon after He appeared, circumcision was set aside by God. Third, because of what it typically foreshadowed. To be born naturally of the Abrahamic stock gave a title to circumcision and the earthly inheritance, which was a figure of their title to the Heavenly inheritance of those born of the Spirit. The servants and slaves in Abraham's household "bought with money," beautifully adumbrated the truth that those who enter the kingdom of Christ are "bought" by His blood.

It is a mistake to suppose that baptism has come in the place of circumcision. As that which supplanted the Old Testament sacrifices was the one offering of the Saviour, as that which superseded the Aaronic priesthood was the High Priesthood of Christ, so that which has succeeded circumcision is the *spiritual* circumcision which believers have in and by *Christ*: "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2:11)-how simple! how satisfying! "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him" (v. 12) is *something additional*: it is only wresting the Scriptures to say these two verses mean "Being buried with Him in baptism ye are circumcised." No, no; verse 11 declares the Christian circumcision is "made *without* hands," and baptism is administered *by* hands! The circumcision "made without hands in putting off (judicially, before God) the body of the sins of the flesh" has taken the place of the circumcision made *with* hands. The circumcision *of Christ* has come in the place of the circumcision of the Law. Never once in the New Testament is baptism spoken of as the "seal" of the *new covenant*, rather is *the Holy Spirit* the seal: see Ephesians 1:13; 4:30.

To sum up. The grand design of God's covenant with Abraham was to make known that through him should come the One who would bring blessing to all the families of the earth. The promises made to him were to receive a lower and a higher fulfillment, according as he was to have both natural and spiritual children-for "*kings* shall come out of thee" (Gen. 17:6) compare Revelation 1:6! for "thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies" (Gen. 22:17) compare Colossians 2:15,

Romans 8:37, 1 John 5:4! Abraham is called a "father" neither in a federal nor in a spiritual sense, but because he is the head of the faith-clan, the prototype to which all believers are conformed. Christians are not "under" the Abrahamic Covenant, though they are "blessed with him" by having their faith counted unto righteousness. Though New Testament believers are not under the Abrahamic Covenant, they are, because of their union with Christ, heirs of its spiritual inheritance.

It only remains for us now to point out wherein the Abrahamic Covenant adumbrated the Everlasting Covenant. First, it proclaimed the international scope of the Divine mercy: some out of all "nations" were included in the election of grace. Second, it made known the ordained stock from which the Messiah and Mediator was to issue. Third, it announced that faith alone secured an interest in all the good God had promised. Fourth, in Abraham's being the "father" of all believers was shadowed forth the truth that Christ is the Father of His own spiritual seed (Isa. 53:10, 11). Fifth, in Abraham's call from God to leave his own country and become a sojourner in a strange land, was typed out Christ's leaving Heaven and tabernacling upon earth. Sixth, as the "heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13) Abraham foreshadowed Christ as "the Heir of all things" (Heb. 1:2). Seventh, in the promise of Canaan to his seed we have a figure of the Heavenly Inheritance which Christ has procured for his people.

N.B. It seems a sad tragedy that the people of God are so divided on the subject of baptism. Though the editor has strong conviction on the subject, for fourteen years he has refrained from pressing (or even presenting) them in this magazine-mainly because of its inter-denominational character. But it seemed impossible to deal faithfully with the Abrahamic Covenant without making some slight reference thereto. We have sought to write temperately in the above article, avoiding harsh expressions and needless reflections. We trust the reader will kindly receive it in the spirit in which it is written; weighing all before God. If he disagrees with what has been said, please bear with us. We do not expect to return to the subject.

### *The Siniatic-Part 1*

We have now arrived at a stage of our subject which we fear is not likely to be of much interest to many of our readers, yet we would ask them to kindly bear with us for the sake of those who *are* anxious to have a systematic exposition thereof. We write, therefore, for those who desire answers to such questions as the following: What was the precise nature of the covenant which God entered into with Israel at Sinai? did it concern only their temporal welfare as a nation, or did it also set forth God's requirements for the individual's enjoyment of eternal blessings? Was a radical change now made in God's revelation to men and what He demanded of them?-was an entirely different "way of salvation" now introduced? Wherein is the Siniatic Covenant *related* to the others, particularly to the Everlasting Covenant of grace and to the Adamic Covenant of works?-was it in harmony with the former, or a renewal of the latter? Was the Siniatic Covenant a simple or a mixed one: did it have only a "letter" significance pertaining to earthly things or a "spirit" as well, pertaining to heavenly things? What specific contribution did it make unto the progressive unfolding of the Divine plan and purpose?

We deem it of great importance that a clear conception be obtained of the precise nature and meaning of that august transaction which took place at Sinai, when Jehovah proclaimed the Ten Commandments in the hearing of Israel. No one who has given any due attention thereto can fail to perceive that it marked a memorable epoch in the history of that people. But it was far more than that: it possessed a much deeper and broader significance-it was the beginning of a new era in the history of *the human race*, being a momentous step in that series of Divine dispensations toward fallen mankind. Yet it must be frankly acknowledged that the subject is as difficult as it is important: the great diversity of opinion which prevails among the theologians and divines who have studied the

subject is proof thereof. Yet this is no reason why we should despair of obtaining light thereon: rather should it cause us to cry to God for help, and to prosecute our inquiry cautiously, humbly, and carefully.

What was the precise character of the transaction which Jehovah entered into with Israel at Sinai? That there was a bona fide "covenant" made on that occasion cannot be gainsaid. The term is actually used in Exodus 19:5, "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My *covenant*, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people." So again we read, "And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the *blood of the covenant*, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words" (Exo. 24:7, 8). Years after, when rehearsing God's dealings with Israel, Moses said, "The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb" (Deut. 5:2). Not only is the *word* "covenant" used, but the transactions at Sinai contained all the *elements* of a covenant: the contracting parties were the Lord God and Israel; the condition was "If ye will obey My voice indeed"; the promise was "Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exo. 19:6); the penalty was the "curses" of Deuteronomy 28:15, etc.

But *what* was the nature and design of that covenant? Did God mock His fallen creatures by formally renewing the (Adamic) Covenant of Works, which they had already broken, under the curse of which all by nature lay, and which He knew they could not keep for a single hour? Such a question answers itself. Or did God do with Israel then as He does with His people now: first redeem, and then put under law as a rule of life, a standard of conduct? But if *that* were the case, *why* enter into this formal "covenant?" Even Fairbairn virtually cuts the knot here by saying that the form of a covenant is of no consequence at all. But this *covenant-form* at Sinai is the very thing which requires to be accounted for. Christians are *not* put under the Law as a "covenant," though they are as a Rule. No help is to be obtained by dodging difficulties, or by denying their existence; they must be fairly and prayerfully grappled with.

There is no doubt in the mind of the writer that many have been led astray when considering the *typical* teaching of Israel's history and the antitype in the experience of Christians, by failing to duly note *the contrasts* as well as the comparison between them. It is true that God's deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt blessedly foreshadowed the redemption of His elect from sin and Satan, yet let it not be forgotten that the majority of those who were emancipated from Pharaoh's slavery perished in the wilderness, *not* being suffered to enter the promised land. Nor are we left to mere reasoning at this point: it is placed upon inspired record that "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when 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 when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord" (Heb. 8:8, 9). Thus we have Divine authority for saying that God's dealings with Israel at Sinai *were not a parallel* with His dealings with His people under the Gospel, but a *contrast!*

H. Witsius took the view that the Siniatic compact was neither, *formally*, the Covenant of Grace nor the Covenant of Works, but a *national* covenant which presupposed them both, and that it promised "not only temporal blessings . . . but also spiritual and eternal." So far so good. But when he states (book 4, section 4, paragraphs 43-45) that the *condition* of this covenant was "a sincere, though not, in every respect, a perfect obedience of His commands," we certainly cannot agree. Witsius held that the Siniatic Covenant differed from the Covenant of Works-which made no provision or allowance for the acceptance of a sincere though imperfect obedience; and that it differed from the Covenant of Grace, since it contained no promises of strength to enable Israel to render that

obedience. Though plausible, his position is not only erroneous, but highly dangerous. God *never* promised eternal life to men on the condition of an imperfect but sincere obedience-that would overthrow the whole argument of Romans and Galatians.

Thomas Bell (1814) in his heavy work on "The Covenants" insists that "The Covenant of Works was delivered from Sinai, yet as subservient to the Covenant of Grace. Such an accurate thinker was bound to feel the pressure of those difficulties which such a postulate involves, yet he took a strange way of getting out of them. Appealing to Deuteronomy 29:1 Bell argued that God made "two distinct covenants with Israel," and that "the one made in Moab was the Covenant of Grace," and that "the two covenants mentioned in Deuteronomy 29:1 are as opposite as the righteousness of the Law and the righteousness of faith." We will not here attempt to show the unsatisfactoriness and untenability of such an inference: suffice it to say there is less warrant for it, than to conclude that God made two totally distinct covenants with Abraham (in Gen. 15 and 17): the covenant at Moab was a *renewal* of the Siniatic, as the ones made with Isaac and Jacob were of the original one with Abraham.

Quite a different idea has been advanced by those known as "The Plymouth Brethren." Mr. Darby (who had quite a penchant for novelties) advanced the theory that at Sinai Israel made a fatal blunder, deliberately abandoning the ground of receiving all from God on the basis of pure grace, and in their stupidity and self-sufficiency agreeing to henceforth *earn* His favours. The idea is that when God rehearsed His merciful dealings with them (Exo. 19:4) and then added "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people" (v. 5), that Israel was guilty of perverting His words, and evidenced their carnality and pride by saying "All that the LORD hath spoken, we will do" (v. 8). Those are regarded as most disastrous words, leading to most disastrous results, for it is supposed that, from this time, God entirely changed His attitude toward them.

In his "Synopsis" Mr. Darby concludes his remarks on Exodus 18 and opens 19 by saying, "But having thus terminated the course of grace the scene changes entirely. They do not keep the feast on the mount, whither God, as He had promised, had led them-had 'brought them, bearing them as on eagles' wings to Himself.' He proposes a condition to them: If they obeyed His voice, they should be His people. The people-instead of knowing themselves, and saying, 'We dare not, though bound to obey, place ourselves under such a condition, and risk our blessing, yea, make sure of losing it'-undertake to do all that the Lord has spoken. The blessing now took the form of dependence, like Adam's on the faithfulness of man as well as of God . . . . The people, however, are not permitted to approach God, who hid Himself in the darkness."

Mr. C. H. Mackintosh in his comments upon Exodus 19, says, "It (the scene presented at the end of 18) was but a brief moment of sunshine in which a very vivid picture of the kingdom was afforded; but the sunshine was speedily followed by the heavy clouds which gathered around that 'palpable mount,' where Israel, in a spirit of dark and senseless legality, abandoned His covenant of pure grace for man's covenant of works. Disastrous movement! A movement fraught with the most dismal results. Hitherto as we have seen no enemy could stand before Israel-no obstacle was suffered to interrupt their onward and victorious march. Pharaoh's hosts were overthrown, Amalek and his people were discomfited with the edge of the sword; all was victory, because God was acting on behalf of His people in pursuance of His promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

"In the opening verses of the chapter now before us, the Lord recapitulates His actions toward Israel in the following touching and beautiful language: see Exodus 19:3-6. Observe, it is '*My voice*' and '*My covenant*.' What was the utterance of that 'voice'? and what did that 'covenant' involve? Had Jehovah's voice made itself heard for the purpose of laying down the rules and regulations of a severe and unbending Lawgiver? By no means. It had spoken to demand freedom for the captive, to

provide a refuge from the sword of the destroyer, to make a way for the ransomed to pass over, to bring down bread from Heaven, to draw forth water out of the flinty rock;-such had been the gracious and intelligible utterance of Jehovah's 'voice' up to the moment at which 'Israel camped before the mount.'

"And as to His 'covenant,' it was one of unmingled grace. It proposed no condition, it made no demands, it put no yoke on the neck, no burden on the shoulder. When 'the God of Glory appeared unto Abraham' in Ur of the Chaldees, He certainly did not address him in such words as Thou shalt do this, and thou shalt not do that, ah, no; such language was not according to His heart. It suits Him far better to place 'a fair mitre' upon a sinner's head than to put a 'yoke upon his neck.' His word to Abraham was '*I will give.*' The land of Canaan was not to be purchased by man's doings, but to be given by God's grace. Thus it stood; and in the opening of the book of Exodus we see God coming down in grace to make good His promise to Abraham's seed . . . . However, Israel was not disposed to occupy this blessed position."

As so many have been misled by this teaching, we will digress for a moment and show how utterly unscriptural it is. It is a serious mistake to say that in the Abrahamic Covenant God "proposed no conditions, and made no demands, it put no yoke on the neck." As we pointed out in our articles thereon when studying the Abrahamic Covenant, attention is *not* to be confined unto one or two particular passages, but *the whole* of God's dealings with that patriarch are to be taken into consideration. Did not God say to Abraham "walk before Me, and be thou perfect, *and* I will make My covenant between Me and thee" (Gen. 17:1, 2)? Did He not say "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; *that* (in order that) the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him" (Gen. 18:19)? Abraham had to "keep the way of the Lord," which is defined as "to *do* justice and judgment," this is, to walk obediently, in subjection to God's revealed will, if he was to receive the fulfillment of the Divine promises.

Again; did not the Lord expressly confirm His covenant to Abraham by oath in saying "By Myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for *because* thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I *will* bless thee," etc., (Gen. 22:16, 17). It is true, blessedly true, that God dealt with Abraham in pure *grace*; but it is equally true that He dealt with him as a *responsible* creature, as subject to the Divine authority and place him under law. At a later date, when Jehovah renewed the covenant to Isaac, He said, "And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (the original covenant promise) BECAUSE that Abraham *obeyed* My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My *laws*" (Gen. 26:4, 5). That is clear enough; and nothing could be plainer that God introduced *no change* in His dealings with Abraham's descendants when He said to Israel at Sinai, "Now therefore, if ye will *obey* My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, *then* ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people" (Exo. 19:5).

Equally clear is it from Scripture that the nation of Israel was itself *under law before* they reached Sinai: "if thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to *His commandments*, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee" (Exo. 15:26). Is it not strange to see men ignoring such plain passages? Lest the quibble be raised that the reference to God's "commandments and statutes" in that passage was *prospective*, i.e., in view of the Law which was shortly to be given them, note the following, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in *My law*, or no" (Exo. 16:4). The meaning of this is explained in "Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the LORD" (16:23). Alas for their

response: "There went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather" (v. 27). Now mark carefully God's complaint "*How long* refuse ye to keep My commandments and *My laws*?" (16:28)-so the reference in 16:4 was not prospective, but *retrospective*: Israel WAS *under law* long before they reached Sinai!

But in further rebuttal of the strange theory mentioned above, we would ask, Was it not the Lord Himself who took the initiative in this so-called abandonment of the Abrahamic Covenant? for it was *He* who sent Moses to the people with the words (Exo. 19:5) which manifestly sought to evoke an affirmative reply! Again, we ask, If their reply proceeded from carnal pride and self-sufficiency, if it displayed an intolerable arrogance and presumption, why did it call forth no formal rebuke? So far from the Lord being displeased with Israel's promise, He said unto Moses "Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and *believe thee forever*" (Exo. 19:9). Again; why at the rehearsal of this transaction, did Moses say, "The LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have *well* said *all* that they have spoken," and then He breathed the wish "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" (Deut. 5:28, 29).

How utterly excuseless and untenable is this theory (which has been accepted by many and echoed in the "Scofield Bible") in the light of the plain facts of Holy Writ. Had Israel acted so madly and presumptuously, would the Lord have gone through all the formalities of a covenant-transaction (Exo. 24:3-8)? Had the words uttered by Him, and responded to by the people, been based on impossible conditions on the one side, and palpable lies on the other, a *covenant* would be unthinkable. Finally, let it be carefully observed that so far from God pronouncing a judgment upon Israel for their promise at Sinai, He declared that, on their performance of the same, they would be peculiarly honoured and blessed: Exodus 23:27-29; Deuteronomy 6:18.

### *The Siniatic-Part 2*

In approaching the study of the Siniatic Covenant several things need attending to. First, it is to be viewed in connection with all that had preceded it (particularly the earlier "covenants"), rather than regarded as an isolated transaction: only thus can its details be seen in their proper perspective. Second, it is to be pondered in relation to the eternal purpose of God, and the gradual and progressive unfolding thereof which He gave unto His people: there was something more in it than what is merely temporal and evanescent. Third, the full light of the later communications from God must not be read back into it; nevertheless, the direct references to the Mosaic dispensation in the New Testament are to be carefully weighed in connection therewith.

Let us start, then, by considering what had preceded the Siniatic Covenant. Confining ourselves to that which relates the closest to our present inquiry, let us remind ourselves that under the preceding covenant God had made it known that the promised Messiah and Redeemer should spring from the line of Abraham. Now, clearly, that necessitated several things. The existence of Abraham's descendants as *a separate people* became indispensable, so that Christ's descent could be undeniably traced, and the leading promise of that covenant clearly verified. Moreover, the isolation of Abraham's descendants, Israel, from the heathen, was equally essential for the preservation of the knowledge and worship of God in the earth, until the fullness of time should come, and a higher dispensation succeed. In pursuance of this, to Israel were committed the living oracles, and amongst them the ordinances of Divine worship were authoritatively established.

It was not until the large family of Jacob had developed (seventy-five souls: Acts 7:14) that the Abrahamic Covenant, in its *natural* aspect, began to bud toward fulfillment. There was then a fair

prospect of their progressive increase, yet some considerable time would be required before they could attain their augmentation in numbers which would justify their political organization as a separate nation and put them into a condition to occupy the promised inheritance. In order for that, the providence of God gave them a temporary settlement in Egypt, which was greatly to their advantage. A season in the midst of the most learned nation of antiquity afforded the Israelites an opportunity of obtaining instruction in many important branches of knowledge, of which they took advantage, as their subsequent history shows: while the fact that “every shepherd was an abomination to the Egyptians” (Gen. 46:34) kept the two nations apart religiously, so that to a considerable extent the Hebrews were preserved from idolatry. Later, the cruel bondage they experienced there, made them glad to leave.

In Egypt, the descendants of Abraham had multiplied so extensively that by the time of the great Exodus there were probably at least two million souls. If, then, they were to be organised into a nation, and be brought into proper subjection to God, it was necessary that He should make a full revelation of His will for them, giving them laws and precepts for the regulation of all phases of their corporate and individual lives; and, above all, prescribe the nature and requirements of the Divine worship. This is what Jehovah graciously did at Sinai. There, God gave Israel a full declaration of His claims upon them and what He required of them, providing a “Constitution” which had in view naught but their own good and the glorifying of His great name; the whole being ratified by a solemn covenant. This was a decided advance on all that had gone before, and marked another step forward in the unfolding of the Divine plan.

But at this point we are faced with a formidable difficulty, namely, the remarkable *diversity* in the representation found in the later Scriptures respecting the tendency and bearing of the Law on those who were subject to it. On the one hand, we find a class of passages which represent the Law as coming expressly from Israel’s Redeemer, conveying a benign aspect and aiming at happy results. Moses extolled the condition of Israel as, on this very account, surpassing that of all other people: “For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD *our* God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all *this Law*, which I set before you this day?” (Deut. 4:7, 8). The same sentiment is echoed in various forms in the Psalms. “He showeth His word unto Jacob, *His statutes* and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them” (147:19, 20). “Great peace have they which *love Thy law*: and nothing shall offend them” (119:165).

But on the other hand, there is another class of passages which appear to point in the very opposite direction. In these the Law is represented as a source of trouble and terror<sup>3/4</sup>a bondage from which it is true liberty to escape. “The Law worketh wrath” (Rom. 4:15); “the strength of sin is the Law” (1 Cor. 15:56). In 2 Corinthians 3:7, 9 the Apostle speaks of the law as “the ministration of *death*, written and engraven in stones,” and as “the ministration of *condemnation*.” Again, he declares, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under *the curse*” (Gal. 3:10). “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with *the yoke of bondage*. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law” (Gal. 5:1-3).

Now it is very obvious that such diverse and antagonistic representations could not have been given of the law in the *same* respect, or with the same regard to its direct and *primary* aim. We are obliged to believe that *both* these representations are true, being *alike* found in the Volume of Inspiration. Thus it is clear that the Scriptures require *us* to contemplate the Law from more than one point of view, and with regard to *different* uses and applications of it. *What* those different viewpoints

are, and *what* the varied uses and applications of the Law, will (D.V.) be pointed out by us later on. For the present, we confine ourselves unto a consideration of the place which the Law holds in the *Mosaic* economy. This is surely the only logical order to follow, for it is the happier class of representation which are found in the Pentateuch, occupying the foreground; while the others come in afterward, and must be noticed by us subsequently.

“The *national covenant* with Israel was here (Exo. 19:5) meant; the charter upon which they were incorporated, as a people, under the government of Jehovah. It was an engagement of God, to give Israel possession of Canaan, and to protect them in it: to render the land fruitful, and the nation victorious and prosperous, and to perpetuate His oracles and ordinances among them; so long as they did not, as a people, reject His authority, apostatize to idolatry, and tolerate open wickedness. These things constitute a forfeiture of the covenant; as their national rejection of Christ did afterwards. True believers among them were *personally* dealt with according to the Covenant of Grace, even as true Christians now are; and unbelievers were under the Covenant of Works, and liable to condemnation by it, as at present: yet, *the national covenant* was not strictly either the one or the other, but had something in it of the nature of each.

“The national covenant *did not* refer to the final salvation of individuals: nor was it broken by the disobedience, or even idolatry, of any number of them, provided this was not sanctioned or tolerated by public authority. It was indeed *a type* of the covenant made with true believers in Christ Jesus, as were all the transactions with Israel; but, like other types, it ‘had not the very image,’ but only ‘a shadow of good things to come.’ When therefore, *as a nation*, they had broken this covenant, the Lord declared that He would make ‘a *new* covenant with Israel, putting His law,’ not only in their hands, but ‘in their inward parts’; and ‘writing it,’ not upon tables of stone, ‘but in their hearts; forgiving their iniquity and remembering their sin no more’ (Jer. 31:32-34; Heb. 8:7-12, 10:16, 17). The Israelites were under a dispensation of mercy, and had outward privileges and great advantages in various ways for salvation: yet, like professing Christians, the most of them rested in these, and looked no further. The outward covenant was made with the Nation, entitling them to outward advantages, upon the condition of outward national obedience; and the Covenant of Grace was ratified *personally* with true believers, and sealed and secured *spiritual* blessings to them, by producing a holy disposition of heart, and spiritual obedience to the Divine Law. In case Israel kept the covenant, the Lord promised that they should be to Him ‘a peculiar treasure.’ ‘All the earth’ (Exo. 19:5) being the Lord’s, He might have chosen any other people instead of Israel: and this implied that, as His choice of them was gratuitous, so if they rejected His covenant, He would reject them, and communicate their privileges to others; as indeed He hath done, since the introduction of the Christian dispensation” (Thomas Scott).

The above quotation contains the most lucid, comprehensive, and yet simple analysis of the Siniatic Covenant which we have met with in all our reading. It draws a clear line of distinction between God’s dealings with Israel as a nation, and with individuals in it. It shows the correct position of the Everlasting Covenant of Grace and the Adamic Covenant of Works in relation to the Mosaic dispensation. All were born under the condemnation of the federal head (Adam), and while they continued unregenerate and in unbelief, were under the wrath of God; whereas God’s elect, upon believing, were treated by Him then, as *individuals*, in precisely the same way as they are now. Mr. Scott brings out clearly the character, the scope, the design, and the limitation of the Siniatic Covenant: its character was a supplementary combination of law and mercy; its scope was national; its design was to regulate the temporal affairs of Israel under the Divine government; its limitation was determined by Israel’s obedience or disobedience. The *typical* nature of it<sup>3</sup>the hardest point to elucidate<sup>3</sup>is also allowed. We advise the interested student to re-read the last four paragraphs.

Much confusion will be avoided and much help obtained if the Siniatic economy be contemplated *separately* under its two leading aspects, namely, as a system of religion and government designed for the immediate use of the Jews during the continuance of that dispensation; and then as a scheme *of preparation* for another and better economy, by which it was to be superseded when its temporal purpose had been fulfilled. The first design and the immediate end of what God revealed through Moses was to instruct and order the life of Israel, now formed into a nation. The second and ultimate intention of God was to prepare the people, by a lengthy course of discipline, for the coming of Christ. The character of the Siniatic Covenant was, in itself, neither purely evangelical nor exclusively legal: Divine wisdom devised a wondrous and blessed co-mingling of righteousness and grace, justice and mercy. The requirements of the high and unchanging holiness of God were clearly revealed; while His goodness, kindness and longsuffering were also as definitely manifested. The moral and ceremonial law, running together side by side, presented and maintained a perfect balance, which only the corruption of fallen human nature failed to reap the full advantage of.

The covenant which God made with Israel at Sinai required outward obedience to the letter of the law. It contained promises of *national* blessing if they, as a people, kept the law; and it also announced national calamities if they were disobedient. This is unmistakably clear from such a passage as the following: "Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which He sware unto thy fathers: And He will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: He will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which He sware unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. And thou shalt consume all the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver thee" (Deut. 7:12-16).

In connection with the above passage, notice, first, the definite reference made to God's "*mercy*," which proves that He *did not* deal with Israel on the bare ground of exacting and relentless law, as some have erroneously supposed. Second, observe the reference which the Lord here made unto His oath to their fathers, i.e., Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; which show that the Siniatic Covenant was based upon, and not divorced from, the Abrahamic<sup>3/4</sup> Israel's occupation of Canaan being the "letter" fulfillment of it. Third, if, as a nation, Israel rendered unto their God the obedience to which He was entitled as their King and Governor, then He would love and bless them<sup>3/4</sup> under the Christian economy there is no promise that He will love and bless any who live in defiance of His claims upon them! Fourth, the specific blessings here enumerated were all of a temporal and material kind. In other passages God threatened to bring upon them plagues and judgments (Deut. 28:15-65) for disobedience. The whole was a compact promising to Israel certain outward and national blessings on the condition of their rendering to God a general outward obedience to His Law.

The *tenor* of the covenant made with them was, "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exo. 19:5, 6). "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him, and obey His voice, provoke Him not; for He will not pardon your transgressions: for My name is in Him. But if thou shalt indeed obey His voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an Enemy unto thine enemies, and an Adversary unto thine adversaries" (Exo. 23:20-22). Nevertheless, *a provision of mercy was made* where true repentance for failure was evidenced: "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass

which they trespassed against Me, and that also they have walked contrary unto Me; and that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: Then will I remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham. . . . These are the statutes and judgments and laws, which the LORD made between Him and the children of Israel in mount Sinai by the hand of Moses” (Lev. 26:40-42, 46).

The Siniatic Covenant in no way interfered with the Divine administration of either the Everlasting Covenant of Grace, (toward the elect) nor the Adamic Covenant of Works (which all by nature lie under); it being in quite another region. Whether *the individual* Israelites were heirs of blessing under the former, or under the curse of the latter, in no wise hindered or affected Israel’s being *as a people* under this national regime, which respected not inward and eternal blessings, but only outward and temporal interests. Nor did God in entering into this arrangement with Israel mock their impotency or tantalise them with vain hopes, any more than He does so *now*, when it still holds good that “Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). Though it be true that Israel miserably failed to keep their national engagements and brought down upon themselves the penalties which God had threatened, nevertheless, the obedience which He required of them was *not* obviously and hopelessly impracticable: nay, there were bright periods in their history when it was fairly rendered, and the fruits of it were manifestly enjoyed by them.

### *The Siniatic-Part 3*

Considered as a part of the gradual and progressive unfolding of God’s eternal purpose, the Siniatic transaction marked a decided step forward upon the Abrahamic Covenant for Christianity; considered separately by itself, the Siniatic transaction was the giving of a system of government designed for the immediate use of the Jews. These two leading aspects must be kept distinct if hopeless confusion is to be avoided. It is of the second we continue to treat, namely, the Siniatic Covenant as it pertained strictly to *the nation* of Israel. It announced certain outward and temporal blessings on the condition that Israel *as a people* remained in subjection to their Divine King, while it threatened national curses and calamities if they rejected His sceptre and flouted His laws. *This* it is which supplies the key to the entire history of the Jews.

As an example and exemplification of what has just been said, take the following, “Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I *will bring you in unto the land*, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD” (Exo. 6:6-8). Now that passage has presented a formidable difficulty to those who have thoughtfully pondered it, for scarcely any of the adults whom God brought out of Egypt ever entered Canaan! How, then, is this to be explained?

Thus: first, that promise concerned Israel *as a people*, and did not by any means necessarily imply that all, or even any of *that* particular generation were to enter Canaan. The Divine veracity was not sullied: forty years later the Nation *did* obtain the promised inheritance. Second, other passages must be compared with it. In Exodus 6 no express condition was mentioned in connection with the promise, not even the believing of it. Yet, so far as that generation was concerned, this, as the sequel clearly shows, was implied: for if it had been an absolute, unconditional promise to that generation, it must have been performed, otherwise God had failed to make good His word. That the promise to that generation was suspended upon their faith is plain from Hebrews 3:18, 19. Third, therein we see the

*contrast*: the fulfillment of every condition is secured for *us* in and by Christ.

The Siniatic Covenant, then, was a compact promising to Israel as a people certain material and national blessings on the condition of their rendering to God a general obedience to His Laws. But at this point it may be objected that God, who is infinitely holy and whose prerogative it is to search the heart, could never be satisfied with an outward and general obedience, which in the case of many would be hollow and insincere. The objection is pertinent, and presents a real difficulty: how can we meet it? Very simply: this would be true of *individuals* as such, but not necessarily so where the *nations* are concerned. And why not, it may be asked? For this reason: because nations as such have only a *temporary* existence, and therefore they must be rewarded or punished in this *present* world, or not at all! This being so, the kind of obedience required from *them*, is lower than from individuals, whose rewards and punishments shall be *eternal*.

But again it might be objected, Did not the Lord declare "I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God" (Exo. 6:7)? Is there not something far more spiritual implied there than a national covenant, something in its terms which could not be exhausted by merely outward and temporal blessings? Once more we must insist upon drawing a broad line between what pertains to individuals and that which is applicable to nations. This objection would be quite valid if that promised described the relation of God to *the individual* soul, but the case is quite different when we remember the relation in which God stands to *a nation* as such! To ascertain the exact purport and scope of the Divine promises to Israel as a people we must take note of the actual engagements which we find He entered into with them as a Nation. This is quite obvious, yet few theologians have followed it out consistently when dealing with what is now before us.

Let it next be pointed out that the view we have propounded above (and in the preceding article) of the nature and scope of the Siniatic Covenant agrees fully with the statements made regarding it in the New Testament, the most important of which is found in Hebrews 8, where it is contrasted from the better and new covenant under which Christians are now living. At first view it may appear that the antithesis drawn between the two covenants in Hebrews 8 is so radical, that it must be an opposition between the Covenant of Works made with Adam, and the Covenant of Grace made with believers under the Gospel; in fact several able commentators so understand it. But this is quite a mistake, and one which carries serious implication, for error on one point affects, more or less, the whole of our theological thinking. A little reflection should quickly determine this matter.

In the first place, the people of God, even before the incarnation of Christ, were *not* under the broken Covenant of Works, with its inevitable curse; but enjoyed the blessings of the Everlasting Covenant which God had made with their Surety before the foundation of the world. In the second place, such a view of the Siniatic Covenant (i.e. making it a repetition of the one entered into with Adam) would be in flat contradiction to what is said in the Epistle to the Galatians, where it is specifically declared that, whatever may have been God's purpose in the giving of the Law, it was not meant to and could not annul the promises made to Abraham or supersede the previous method of salvation by faith which was revealed to that Patriarch. But if we understand the Apostle (and remember he was addressing Jews in the Hebrews Epistle) to be drawing a contrast between the *national* covenant made with their fathers at Sinai, and the far higher and better covenant into which Jews and Gentiles are brought by faith in Christ, then we get a satisfactory explanation of Hebrews 8 and one that brings it into complete harmony with Galatians 3.

Observe carefully what is said in Hebrews 8 to be the characteristic difference between the new and the old economies: "I will put My laws into their mind, and write them *in their hearts*" (v. 10). No promise in any wise comparable to this was given at Sinai. But the absence of any assurance of the Spirit's internal and effectual operations was quite in keeping with the fact that the Mosaic economy

required not so much an inward and spiritual, as an outward and natural obedience to the Law, which for them had nothing higher than temporal sanctions. This is a fundamental principle which has not received the consideration to which it is entitled: it is vital to a clear understanding of the radical difference which obtains between Judaism and Christianity. Under the former, God dealt with one nation only, now He is manifesting His grace to elect individuals scattered among all nations. Under the former He simply made known His requirements; in the latter He actually produces that which meets His requirements.

Galatians 3 shows plainly that the Siniatic Covenant was *subsidiary* to the promises given to Abraham concerning his Seed: "Wherefore then serveth the Law? (i.e., the entire Legal economy). It was *added* because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made" (v. 19). Thus it is clear that from the first the Mosaic economy was designed to be but *temporary*, to last only from the time of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness till Christ. It was needed because of their "transgressions." The children of Israel were so intractable and perverse, so prone to depart from God, that without such a Divinely-provided hedge, they would have lost their national identity, mixing themselves with the surrounding nations, and becoming sunk in their idolatrous ways. The Holy Spirit was not then so largely given that, by the potent influences of His grace, such a disastrous issue would have been prevented. Therefore a *temporary arrangement*, such as Judaism provided, was essential to preserve a pure stock from which the promised Messiah should issue; and *this* end the Siniatic Covenant, with its promises and penalties, *did* effect!

But there was another and deeper reason for the Legal Economy. Though the Siniatic compact was not identical with the Covenant of Works made with Adam, yet in some respects, it *closely resembled it*: it was analogous to it, only on a lower plane. During the fifteen hundred years which had elapsed between Sinai and Bethlehem God carried out a practical demonstration with the two great divisions of the human race. The Gentiles were left to the light of nature: they were "suffered to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16 and cf. 17:26-30), and this in order to supply answer (for men) to question, "Can fallen man, in the exercise of his own unaided reason and conscience find out God, and raise himself to a higher and better life?" One has only to consult the history of the great nations of that period—the Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans—to see the hopelessness of such an attempt: Romans 1:21-31 gives the inspired comment thereon.

Running parallel with God's suffering all nations (the Gentiles) to walk in their own ways, was another experiment (speaking from the human side of things, for from the Divine side "Known unto God are *all* His works from the beginning of the world": Acts 15:18), conducted on a smaller scale, yet quite as decisive in its outcome. The Jews were placed under a Covenant of Law to supply answer to this further question, "Can fallen man, when placed in most favourable circumstances, win eternal life by any doings of his own? Can he, even when separated from the heathen, taken into outward covenant with God, supplied with a complete Divine code for the regulation of his conduct, conquer indwelling sin and act so as to secure his acceptance with the thrice holy God?" The answer furnished by the history of Israel is an emphatic negative. The lesson supplied thereby for all succeeding generations of the human race is writ in unmistakable language: If *Israel* failed under the National Covenant of outward and general obedience, how impossible it is for any member of Adam's depraved offspring to render spiritual and perfect obedience!

In the spirit of it, the Siniatic Covenant contained the same moral law as the law of nature under which Adam was created and placed in Eden—the tenth commandment giving warning that something more than outward things were required by God: yet only those *Divinely illumined* could perceive this—it was not until the Holy Spirit applied that tenth commandment in power to the conscience of Saul of Tarsus that he first realised that he was an inward transgressor of the Law

(Rom. 7:7, etc.). The great bulk of the Nation, blinded by their self-sufficiency and self-righteousness, turned the Sinai compact into a Covenant of Works, elevating the handmaid into the position of the married wife<sup>3/4</sup>as Abraham did with Hagar. Galatians 4 reveals that, while the Sinai Covenant was regarded as *subservient* to the Covenant of Grace it served important practical ends; but when Israel perversely elevated it to the place which the better covenant was designed to hold, it became a hindrance and the fruitful mother of bondage.

The grievous error into which so many of the Jews fell concerning the design of God in giving them His Law has been perpetuated, though in a modified form, by some of our theologians. This is due to their failure to properly recognize *the condition of Israel* at Sinai: once we see what they already possessed, it rules out of court the idea of the Law being intended to convey the same to them. When was it that they received from God His Law? Not while they were still in the land of Pharaoh, nor while they were on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea, but after they had been completely delivered from their taskmasters. It is clear then beyond contradiction, from the very time of its introduction, that the Law was not given to Israel in order to deliver them from evil or as a procurer of blessing. It could not have for its design the delivering them from death or the obtaining of God's favour, for such blessings were *already* theirs!

It is of great importance to keep distinctly in view what the Law was never designed to effect. If we exalt it to a position which it was never meant to occupy, or expect benefits from it which it was never fitted to yield, then we shall not only err in our own reckonings, but deprive ourselves of any clear knowledge of the dispensation to which it belonged. It was in order to define *the negative* side of the Law<sup>3/4</sup>what it was *not* intended to procure<sup>3/4</sup>that the Apostle declared "And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the Law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the Law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham *by promise*" (Gal. 3:17, 18). This is decisive, yet perhaps a few words of explanation will enable the reader to more easily grasp its purport.

It was because the Jews had, for the most part, come to regard their obedience to the Law as constituting their title to the inheritance, and because certain of the Judaisers were beginning to corrupt the Galatian converts with the leaven of their self-righteousness, that the Apostle was here moved by the Spirit to check this evil, and to expose the basic error from which it proceeded. He presses upon them the Scriptural facts of the nature and design of Jehovah's covenant with Abraham, which he declares was "confirmed before of God concerning Christ." The covenant-promise made to Abraham is said to be "concerning Christ," first, because it had pre-eminent regard to Him; and second, because it had in view the Covenant of Redemption which He was to establish. The particular point which the Apostle now emphasised was, that the Abrahamic covenant expressly conferred on his posterity, as God's *free gift*, the inheritance of the land of Canaan<sup>3/4</sup>which entailed their deliverance from the land of bondage and their safe passage through the wilderness, which were necessary in order to their entrance into the possession thereof.

Thus the Apostle made it unmistakably clear that Israel's title to Canaan could not possibly need to be re-acquired by a law-righteousness performed by them personally, for in such a case the Law would revoke the Covenant of Promise, and thereby the latter revelation which God made at Sinai would overthrow the foundation of what He had laid in His promises to Abraham. That the Lord never meant for the Law to interfere with the gifts and promises of the Abrahamic covenant, is abundantly clear from what He said to Israel immediately *before* the Law was formally announced from Sinai: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a

peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exo. 19:4-6).

From the above quotation it will be seen that God addressed Israel as *already* standing in such a blessed relation to Him as evidenced for them an interest in His love and faithfulness. He appealed to the proofs which He had given of this, as being not only sufficient to set their hearts at rest, but also to encourage them to expect whatever might still be needed to complete their felicity. “Now *therefore*, if ye will obey My voice”: not because ye *have* obeyed it have I wrought so mightily for you: but these things have been done that ye might render Me loving and loyal subjection. So too He prefaced the Ten Commandments with “I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exo. 20:2): He rests His claims to their obedience on *the grace* that He had already bestowed upon them!

N.B. For much in the early paragraphs of this article we are indebted to an able discussion of the character of the Siniatic Covenant by Robert Balfour, which appeared in the British and Foreign Evangelical Review of July 1877.

#### *The Siniatic-Part 4*

When God established His covenant with Abraham He said to him, “Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance” (Gen. 15:13, 14). Accordingly, when the time approached for the execution of judgment on their oppressors, the servitude of Israel had reached its extreme point and the bitterness of their bondage had awakened in their minds an earnest desire for deliverance. Their discipline was an essential part of their preparation for the benefits which God designed to bestow upon them. Contemporaneously with those events, Moses was raised up as the instrument of their deliverance, and was Divinely qualified for the work assigned him.

Moses, acting under Divine directions and by a series of remarkable judgments upon Egypt, extorted from Pharaoh a reluctant permission for their departure from his land, with all their possessions. Those judgments were designed not only to afford a practical confutation of the idolatry of the Egyptians and a retribution for their cruel oppression of God’s people, but more particularly an open vindication of the supremacy of Jehovah in the sight of the surrounding nations, and at the same time to influence the hearts of the people themselves so as to induce a heartfelt acknowledgment of God, and a prompt and cheerful obedience to Him. Assuredly, no course could have been more fitted to accomplish those ends. The manifestations of Divine power Israel had witnessed, the marked separation between them and the Egyptians-being preserved from the plagues which smote their oppressors and their miraculous escape from the judgment which overwhelmed the Egyptians at the Red Sea, were well suited to create deep and lasting effects upon them.

Those impressive events all indicated in a manner to which it was impossible that even the blindest among them could have been insensible to God’s interposition for their deliverance. They were well calculated to awaken a deep conviction of the Divine presence in their midst in a special manner. Such manifestations of God’s power, faithfulness and grace on their behalf ought to have produced in them a ready compliance with every intimation of His holy will. He had dealt with them as He had dealt with no other people. How much they needed those object lessons, and how little they really benefited from them, their future conduct shows.

Their moral conditions the Lord well knew-their faint-heartedness, their perversity, their unbelief. In order to more effectually prepare them for the immediate future, as well as of formally establishing

that Covenant by which He indicated the relation which He was graciously pleased to sustain toward them, and the principles by which His future dealings with them would be regulated, He led them through the wilderness and brought them to Sinai. There the Lord granted a fresh manifestation of His glory: amidst thunderings and lightnings, flames and smoke. He delivered to them the Ten Words. The object of God in that solemn transaction was clearly intimated in the language He addressed to them immediately before: see Exodus 19:5, 6. But although the law of the Ten Commandments constituted the *leading* feature of the Siniatic Covenant, and gave to the entire transaction its *distinctive* character, we must not conclude that it was limited thereto.

It is true that God added no more to the Ten Commandments at that time, not because there was nothing more to be revealed, but because the people in terror entreated that Moses might be the medium of all further communications: Deuteronomy 5:24-27. Accordingly we find the Law itself was followed by a number of statutes (Exo. 21 to end of 23), which were in part explanatory of the great principles of the Law, and in part enjoining the ordinances for the regulation of their worship-which later received much enlargement. Both the basic Law and the subsidiary statutes were immediately put on permanent record, and the whole sealed by "the book of the Covenant" being read in the audience of the people and blood being sprinkled on them: Exodus 24:4-8. It was to that solemn ratification of this Covenant which the Apostle makes reference in Hebrews 9:18-20-it was substantially a repetition of the same significant ceremony which attended the establishment of the earlier covenants.

Thus it is clear that while the Ten Commandments was the most prominent and distinctive feature of the Siniatic Covenant, yet it embraced the entire body of the statutes and judgments which God gave Moses for the government of Israel, as well in their civil as in their religious capacity. They formed one code, in which the moral law and the ceremonial law were blended in a way peculiar to the special constitution under which the nation of Israel was placed. Speaking generally, the civil had a religious and the religious a civil aspect, in a sense found nowhere else. All the particulars of that Code were not equally important: some things were vital to it, the violation of which involved the practical renunciation of the Covenant; others were subordinate, enjoined because necessary as means of attaining the grand end in view; yet were they all parts of the one Covenant, demanding a prompt and sincere obedience.

In the above paragraphs we have purposely gone back to the beginning of God's dealings with Israel as a Nation in order to show once more *how unique* was the Mosaic economy, that there was much connected with it which, in the very nature of the case, *has no parallel* under the present Gospel order of things. The Siniatic Covenant was the foundation of that *political constitution* which the people of Israel enjoyed: in consequence thereof Jehovah sustained a *special* relation to them. He was not only the God of all the earth (Exo. 19:5), but, in a peculiar sense, the King and Legislator of Israel. Any attempt on their part to change the Divinely-instituted system of Law, given for their government, was expressly forbidden: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God" (Deut. 4:2). That Code was complete in itself, that is, as considered in relation to the particular condition of that people for whose government it was intended.

"It is of great importance to the right interpretation of many passages in the Old Testament, that this particular be well understood and kept in view. Jehovah is very frequently represented as the Lord and God of all the ancient Israelites; even when it is manifest that the generality of them were considered as destitute of internal piety, and many of them as enormously wicked. How, then, could He be called *their* Lord and *their* God, in distinction from His relation to Gentiles (whose Creator, Benefactor, and Sovereign He was), except on the ground of the *Siniatic* Covenant? He was *their*

Lord as being their Sovereign, whom, by a federal transaction they were bound to obey, in opposition to every political monarch who would at any time presume to govern them by laws of his own. He was *their* God, as the only Object of holy worship; and whom, by the same National Covenant, they had solemnly engaged to serve according to His own rule, in opposition to every Pagan idol.

“But that National relation between Jehovah and Israel being long since dissolved, and the Jew having no prerogative above the Gentile; the nature of the Gospel economy and of the Messiah’s kingdom absolutely forbids our supporting that either Jews or Gentiles are warranted to call the Universal Sovereign *their* Lord or their God, if they do not yield willing obedience to Him and perform *spiritual* worship. It is, therefore, either for want of understanding, or of considering the nature, aspect, and influence of the Sinai Constitution, that many persons dream of the New Covenant in great numbers of places where Moses and the Prophets had no thought of it, but had the Convention at Horeb directly in view. It is owing to the same ignorance, or inadvertency, that others argue from various passages in the Old Testament for justification before God by their own obedience, and against the final perseverance of real saints.

“Again, as none but real Christians are the subjects of our Lord’s kingdom, neither adults nor infants can be members of the Gospel Church in virtue of an *external* covenant or a *relative* holiness. A striking disparity this, between the Jewish and the Christian Church. A barely *relative* sanctity [that is, a sanctity occurring from belonging to the Nation of God’s choice, A.W.P.] supposes its possessors to be the people of God in a merely external sense; such an external people supposes an external covenant, or one that relates to exterior conduct and temporal blessings; and an external covenant supposes an external king. Now an external king is a political sovereign, but *such is not* our Lord Jesus Christ, nor yet the Divine Father.

“Under the Gospel Dispensation, these peculiarities have *no* existence. For Christ has not made an external covenant with any people. He is not the king of any particular nation. He dwells not in a temple made with hands. His throne is in the heavenly sanctuary, nor does He afford His visible presence in any place upon earth. The petition-wall between Jews and Gentiles has long been demolished: and, consequently, our Divine Sovereign does not stand related to any people or to any person so as to confer a relative sanctity, or to produce an *external* holiness.

“The covenant made at Sinai having long been obsolete, all its peculiarities are vanished away: among which, relative sanctity [that is, being accounted externally holy, because belonging to the Nation separated unto God, A.W.P.] made a conspicuous figure. That National Constitution being abolished, Jehovah’s political sovereignty is at an end. The Covenant which is now in force, and the royal relation of our Lord to the Church, are *entirely spiritual*. All that external holiness of persons, of places, and of things, which existed under the old economy, is gone forever; so that if the professors of Christianity do not possess a real, *internal* sanctity, they have none at all. The National confederation at Sinai is expressly contrasted in Holy Scripture with the new covenant (see Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:7-13), and though the latter manifestly provides for internal holiness, respecting all the covenantees, yet it says not a word about relative sanctity” (Abraham Booth, 1796).

Jehovah, then, was King in Israel: *His* authority was supreme. *He* gave them the land in which they dwelt, settled the conditions on which they held it, made known the laws they were required to obey, and raised up from time to time, as they were demanded, leaders and judges, who for a season exercised, under God, authority over them. *This* is what is signified by the term “theocracy”<sup>3/4</sup>a government administered, under certain limitations, directly by God Himself. Such a relation as Jehovah sustained towards Israel, condemning all idolatry and demanding their separation from other nations, largely regulated the legislation under which they were placed. So far as righteousness between man and man was concerned, there was of course much which admitted of a universal

application, resting on common and unalterable principles of equity; but there were also many enactments which derived their peculiar complexion from the special circumstances of the Nation. The most cursory examination of the Pentateuch suffices to show this.

The Books of Moses reveal the singular provisions made for a self-sustaining nation, carefully fenced around and protected from moral danger from without, so far as civil arrangements could effect this end. Encouragement was indeed given to such strangers as might, on the renunciation of idolatry, become converts to the faith of Israel, and settle amongst them, though they were not permitted to have any share in the earthly inheritance; but all connection and ensnaring alliances with any people beyond their own confines were rigorously guarded against. The law of jubilee, which secured to each family a perpetual interest in the property belonging to it; the restrictions on marriage; the practical discouragement of commerce; the hindrances placed in the way of aggressive warfare; in the prohibition of cavalry, then the chief strength of armies; were all of a restricted character and illustrated that special exclusiveness of Judaism.

The nature of God's immediate government of Israel involved *a special providence* as essential to its administration. It is true that eternal rewards and punishments were not employed for this purpose, because nations, as such, have no hereafter. In the Judgment men will be dealt with not according to their corporate but in their individual capacity. Yet it must not be inferred that Israel had no knowledge of a future state, for they had; yet that knowledge could not be formally employed to enforce their civil obedience. Social relations are an affair of this world, and the laws which regulate them must find their sanctions in considerations bearing on the mere interests of this present life. Accordingly, God, as the political Head of Israel, by special and extraordinary providences, intimated His approval or displeasure as their conduct called for. Prosperity, peace, and an abundance of material things, were the rewards of national obedience; wars, famines, pestilences, were the punishment of their sin. The whole history of the Nation shows with what uniformity the course of this intimation was pursued toward them.

Such, then, was the nature and design of the Constitution conferred upon Israel; yet it must be remembered that the great benefits it involved were not the fruit of the Siniatic Covenant. True, their *continued* enjoyment of them depended on their obedience to that covenant, but their *original bestowment* was the effect of the Abrahamic Covenant. Of this fact they were definitely reminded by Moses: "The LORD did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the LORD loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn *unto your fathers*" (Deut. 7:7, 8). In keeping therewith we find that when serious crises arose because of their sins, those who interceded before God in their behalf, sought forgiveness on the ground of the promises made *to Abraham*: see Exodus 32:13, Deuteronomy 9:27, 2 Kings 13:23.

By undeserved and sovereign grace the Israelites were chosen to be the people of God, and their obedience was not intended to purchase advantages and immunities not already possessed, but rather *to preserve* to them the possession of what God had already bestowed. This it is which indicated the place which the Moral Law occupied in regard to the Nation at large. It proceeded on the recognition of their *existing relation to God*: He had chosen, redeemed, and made them His people, and now it was their privilege and duty to live in subjection to Him. It set before them the character and conduct which that existing relation required from them, and on which its perpetuation, with all the advantages connected with it, depended. "And ye shall be holy unto Me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be Mine" (Lev. 20:26). At the same time it was the standard to which their political code was adjusted, so far as their circumstances allowed.

The place which the Moral Law occupied, the express terms in which love to God was enforced as

its leading principle (Deut. 6:5), and the solemn circumstances under which it was given, were all fitted to teach the people that something more was required from them than a mechanical performance of duties<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>something in their heart and *inward state*, without which no service they were capable of performing could meet the approval of the Holy One. To suppose that a mere external conformity to the Law was all that was expected from the people, is to overlook the plainest statements and the most obvious facts recorded in the Old Testament. God required truth “in the *inward parts*” (Psa. 51:6), and scores of passages revealed the fact that nothing but a right state of heart toward Him could secure the service He commanded. Nothing but the blindness which sin occasioned could have made the Israelites insensible to this basic truth, otherwise the charges brought against them by Christ had been quite groundless and pointless; it had been meaningless for Him to denounce them for making clean the outside while they were full of corruption within.

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