

THE COVENANTS

BY

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

MY gratitude is due to God, and to his people, for the kindness with which this little work has been received. A second edition is demanded at a much earlier period than I had anticipated. I have prepared it with as much attention as my circumstances would permit. Some portions of the book, as will be seen, have been recast, and a new Chapter has been added, on Infant Salvation. More perspicuity and conclusiveness have, as I think, been thus given to some of the arguments, and the whole work made much more complete. Again I send it forth, with the earnest prayer that it may prove a blessing to the cause of true religion.

ROBT BOYT C. HOWELL.
Richmond, Virginia, Dec. 17th, 1851.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

THE following pages were written with the specific design of considering, not the "mode of baptism," nor "the subjects of baptism", but the EVILS of INFANT baptism." What baptism is, and who are authorized to receive it, have been questions of controversy during fifteen hundred years. The last two centuries have been especially prolific of essays and books on these subjects. Great learning and zeal have been called in requisition on both sides of the discussion. The conflict, as time passes, loses nothing of its interest, but grows each year, more and more warm. Nor will it ever cease until all Christians fully understand the divine teaching in the premises, and submit themselves to the guidance of the word of God. The evils of infant baptism seem, however, to be a topic which has attracted heretofore, but very little attention. I have seen an occasional allusion to it in books, and periodicals, and sometime a paragraph or two, affirming and sustaining the mischievous results of the rite. I myself wrote a small tract on the subject, more than twenty-five years ago, entitled "Plain Things for Plain Men," suggesting most of the propositions contained in this work. Beyond these almost nothing, so far as I know, has been published.¹ Consequently the advocates of infant baptism, driven from every other quarter, have here felt themselves safe. They affirm, and expect us to admit, that "If it does no good, it does no harm." It is innocent, and therefore may be practiced. It was this very apology, offered in its behalf lately, by a friend in my presence, and which I had before so often heard, that called forth the book now before you. I thought it wrong to permit the public mind longer to remain involved in this error; and as I knew of no one who was likely soon to expose it, I determined to undertake the task myself. I have attempted, with what success my readers will judge, to show that infant baptism is far from being harmless. On the contrary, that it is one of the most calamitous evils with which the church has ever been visited.

Permit, if you please, a word of explanation in the outset, regarding some terms, and phrases, of frequent occurrence. I have spoken of it as baptism, when only sprinkling was used, and infants were the subjects, not that I suppose any such thing really baptism, or that others than believers are capable of the ordinance, but simply as a matter of courtesy, and in compliance with common usage. In the same sense I have

spoken of the church, "the churches," and "the churches of Christ." In the use of these, and like expressions, I shall certainly, by all intelligent people, be perfectly understood.

One other prefatory remark will be pardoned. In this, as in every other book I have written, I have carefully sought the utmost simplicity and plainness. I write for "the million," and I have determined that "the million" shall understand me. I am unwilling to sacrifice force and directness to elegance of style. I do not enter in the presence of my readers, into labored criticisms, nor abstruse disquisition's, but give them the results simply, without fatiguing them with the process; and they have them in the plainest Saxon I can command. It has been my purpose to present the truth fully, fairly, and candidly, but at the same time, with all proper respect for the opinions of others. I have not introduced an argument which I do not believe to be logical and conclusive, a single passage of scripture which I am not persuaded is relevant, nor an authority from any writer, ancient or modern, which I am not assured is justly adduced, and applicable to the subject. My sole desire is the honor of truth, and the salvation of men.

With these observations premised, I send forth this little volume, earnestly praying that God our Heavenly Father, may make it a blessing to his cause and people.

ROBT BOYTE C. HOWELL
Richmond, Virginia, March 24th, 1851

¹ Since the first edition of this work went to press, I have seen Dr. Gill's Tract, "Infant Baptism a Part and Pillar of Popery," edited by George B. Ide, D. D., and published in a handsome little volume, by the American Baptist Publication Society. This volume has a chapter by Dr. Ide on "The Influence of Infant Baptism on Protestant Churches, Historically considered." This is an able and conclusive chapter, of which, in this second edition, I have fully availed myself.

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CHAPTER I.

THE COVENANTS.

Not understood; the causes of it; proposed method of discussion; simplicity of the subject; its importance.

SALVATION through Jesus Christ, is according to "the determinate counsel, and foreknowledge of God¹ He was pleased to make known to the fathers, his purposes in this behalf, in the form 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 grace. A perfect knowledge of the Gospel therefore, involves necessarily, a correct comprehension of the covenants. But by whom among us, are these covenants clearly understood? To most men, you need only to speak on this subject, and you at once perceive that "Even unto this day, the vail is upon their heart."² They fail to perceive what the covenants are in themselves, in their relations to each other, and consequently in their bearings upon the designs of God in the Redeemer! This darkness is lamentable in all its aspects, since falling short of the knowledge of these, — "the rudiments of the doctrine of Christ," — obscurity must necessarily rest upon the whole Gospel system. How can he who does not perceive "the first principles" of any specified science, ever become a master of that science?

But why should obscurity rest upon a knowledge of the covenants? Are they in themselves, difficult of comprehension? Far from it. No part of the word of God is more plain, and simple. The causes of their perplexity, and embarrassment, are to be sought for in other quarters. Nor are they problematical. To every intelligent, and unprejudiced observer, they are so obvious as not to be readily mistaken. Who does not know that for ages past, they have been the prolific source from which theological polemics of every caste, and of the most opposite sentiments, have sought to derive support for many of their most extravagant speculations in religion, and especially in the departments of ecclesiastical organization, the nature and efficacy of those ordinances commonly known as sacraments, and the required qualifications for membership in the church of Christ? By each class they receive such expositions as that to superficial minds, they appear to sustain its own peculiar conclusions. In this work of perversion, both the pulpit, and the press have been profuse, and elaborate. Witsius, and Boston, Strong, and Russell, Macknight, Dick, Dwight, and many others, have written profoundly. But who has been enlightened? Nave they not rather "darkened counsel, by words without knowledge?" However this may be, the opinion has been created, and now prevails almost universally, that the whole subject is exceedingly abstruse, so much so indeed, as to be beyond the reach of ordinary minds. By whom now, are the covenants even studied, independently of some recognized guide, apart from the Scriptures? Ministers themselves, who preach sermons, and write controversial essays upon them, and assume to enlighten public sentiment, are with almost no exceptions, meantime, tamely following in the track of such writers as happen to have gained the confidence of that particular denomination to which they are severally attached. Investigation has really ceased on this subject, and error has become stereotyped!

You have only to look into the books that are issued on both sides of the Atlantic, and you will see how confidently the covenants are claimed as authority for the union of church and state, and for the severance of church and state; for Popery, and for Lutheranism, for Prelacy, and for Presbytery; for the introduction of infants into the church of Christ, and for the connection with it of none but believers! The adherents of each party, are perfectly certain that the covenants fully sustain the doctrines they advocate. They have seen them, not indeed, in the Bible, but only through the medium of some essayist of their own class. The result has necessarily been a perplexity, and confusion almost hopeless.

These are some of the causes by which the understanding of this subject has been rendered, to many minds, so exceedingly difficult. How until they are removed, can the covenants ever be comprehended? While their sense, and purposes, continue to be thus turned aside, and perverted, the hearts of the simple must be deceived, and to many sincere christians, much of the word of God remain a sealed book.

In the investigation upon which we are now entering, I shall in the outset, direct your attention to "the covenant of works," the breach of which made all the others necessary. It stands by itself, and will be so treated. Next I shall refer you to the *three* separate developements of the covenants, — of salvation in the Mediator; the first being the announcement in Eden, immediately after the fall, of a Deliverer from sin; the second, the previous covenant of redemption, upon which necessarily, that announcement was predicated; and the third, the promise to Abraham that Messiah should come of his family, which promise was renewed, and transferred successively, to Isaac, to Jacob, to Judah, and to David. I shall then consider the *three* manifestations of the covenant of the law; the first of which, made with Abraham, constituted his descendants a separate nation, and gave them as the place of their residence until the coming of Messiah, the land of Canaan; the second of which, also made with Abraham, enacted circumcision, and thus distinguished his posterity personally, from all other men; and the third, made with all Israel at Sinai, gave them their peculiar national government. It will be necessary here, for us to pause, and investigate the philology of these covenants; which when we have examined, we shall consider how they appear in relation to the christian dispensation. It will then at once be apparent that the former three covenants were *direct* in their reference to Christ, and were substantially *one covenant*, made known in the gospel, as "the new and everlasting covenant;" and that the *latter three* were *indirect* in their reference to Christ. Together formed the *old* covenant, and when Messiah came, and his claims were fully established, were consummated and superceded by the gospel, which is their perfect developement. I shall then close the discussion by a brief explanation of the doctrinal, and practical teachings of the covenants. In this sketch I have not, you will perceive, included all the covenants of every class, recorded in the word of God, such, for example, as the covenant with Noah, the covenant of the priesthood in the family of Aaron, and many others of minor importance, because they are not especially connected with the promises which guarantied a Messiah, and do not, therefore, immediately concern our present investigation; and because by omitting them, we shall be able, without detriment to a perfect understanding of the whole subject, to attain much more brevity, and directness, than would otherwise be practicable.

These preliminary considerations submitted, in which we have seen that the covenants are not understood; the causes of that obscurity; the processes by which their comprehension has been perplexed, and embarrassed; and the method

proposed in their investigation; I proceed at once, to the execution of my task. All the theories and discussions which they have heretofore elicited, and of which the world is full, I shall, learned and ingenious as many of them are, eschew wholly. With the Bible before us, and the Bible only, we shall carefully, and prayerfully pursue our purpose. By this process the prevailing obscurity will vanish. You will be surprised that it ever existed. Not only will you clearly, and fully understand the covenants themselves, but the knowledge of them, will cast over every other part of the divine record, a brightness and beauty, that will fill your heart with surprise, and overwhelming delight. And as you thus see more and more of the goodness, and grace of God, his word will become to your heart increasingly precious.

¹ Acts ii : 28

² 2 Cor iii : 15

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CHAPTER II.

THE COVENANT OF WORKS.

*Man as created; definition of a covenant ; nature of the covenant of works;
blessings of obedience ; penalty of disobedience ;
condition as a sinner.*

How beautiful is the scene in which man first appears upon the stage of being! He is the most exalted emanation of God. Himself clothed in dignity, intelligence, and excellence, he is surrounded on every side by exquisite beauty and loveliness. Balmy breezes, loaded with the fragrance of Eden, fan his bosom. Rich foliage, and flowers of every form and hue, delight his senses. Rivers roll in majesty before him, and rills are at his feet, whose waters dance, and sparkle in the sunlight. The companion of his paradise, is more a being of heaven than of earth, an embodiment of elegance, and grace, and love! Angels are their familiar associates. God himself deigns to visit, and cheer them by his presence, and blessing. They are in soul and in body, pure and holy, and, therefore, immortal, and perfectly happy.

Brought into being, and gloriously endowed by the power of God, and for his own holy, and sovereign purposes, our first parents were necessarily created under the government of appropriate laws, and therefore in covenant with their Maker. No fact is more plain and certain, than that nothing can exist in any department of the universe, whether physical, mental, moral, or spiritual, without an appropriate government by which it may be directed. The laws which governed man have been called, and properly, *the covenant of works*. But what are we to understand by a covenant? A covenant, I answer, has been defined by Lexicographers, "A mutual consent, or agreement between two or more parties, to do, or to forbear, some act, or thing; a contract; a stipulation; an appointment; a testament." This exposition, which refers to its ordinary sense, must not, as you will readily see, be too literally applied to the divine transaction known in the scriptures as a covenant;¹ which if you invest with the technicality of a mere human bargain, you err inevitably. A covenant, as that word occurs in the sacred oracles, describes, in some places, an appointment, or law; in others a command, or a promise; and frequently an arrangement, a constitution, a dispensation. But in many instances, as in that of the covenant now to be considered, and in several others hereafter to occupy your attention, the word is not employed at all in connexion with the transaction. The facts in the case alone, determine whether what is done amounts legitimately to a covenant. In its *gospel* application a covenant is "A settlement, or an establishment of things, wherein by means of a Mediator, God reconciles men to himself, and takes them into a friendly relation as his own peculiar people; stipulates for them blessings, and privileges, and gives them his laws, and ordinances, as the rule of their obedience, and the means of their intercourse with him." Such I understand to be a covenant in its *ordinary* sense, and especially in its *scriptural* acceptance.

Let these expositions now be applied to the events which characterized the creation of man upon the earth. He was we have seen, brought into existence, necessarily

under an appropriate government. The law of his being, "Takes," says Dr. Dwight, "in this case, the name of a covenant, rather than that of a law, (although it has all the nature, and sanctions of a law) because God was pleased to communicate his will to man in the form of a covenant; a mode gentle, condescending, and highly expressive of the divine benignity."² It is recorded in the divine word, in terms singularly brief, and comprehensive. "Of every tree of the garden," said Jehovah, to him, "Thou mayest freely eat; 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."³ But still more at large:- "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 over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed. 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 the knowledge of good and evil." "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress, and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; 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."⁴

We here have, in the beginning of the world, distinctly placed before us, as the parties to the covenant God, and man, the Creator, and the created, 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. And it is further to be observed that its great principles were not only outwardly proclaimed, they also written in the consciences of men, as they were upon that of all other intelligences; and that they necessarily bind them all alike to the throne of Jehovah. In *them* we have plainly the sum of all *moral and spiritual government*, whether on earth or in heaven; among men or among angels; under the law or under the gospel. These exalted principles are indeed not peculiar to the covenant of works. They enter fully, also, into *all the other covenants* recorded in the divine word. They are the same that were met, honored, and fulfilled on our behalf, by the righteousness and merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

That the covenant of works is *connate* with man and that its principles are by him every where recognised, appear in the traces of it, still discernible in his soul. From this source it is, in part at least, that even the heathen themselves, however dark and ignorant, have some glimmerings of light from heaven, so that an apostle could say — "These having not the [written] law, are a law unto themselves, who show the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another."⁵ Carried out in its principles, this is the covenant that governs all the relations between man and man, and between man and his Maker. *Its substance is love*, and it is set forth in both the Old

Testament and the New, as descriptive of the state of mind to which all men must return, before we can be fully prepared for heaven and glory. This fact is thus inculcated by our Lord Jesus Christ:- "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength," "and thy neighbors as thyself."⁶ And its *sufficiency* is declared by his apostle: "Love is the fulfilling of the law."⁷ In its nature, it is an exact reflection of the moral perfections of God, and its observance is the highest distinction of which man is capable.

The covenant of works demanded as its conditions, perfect obedience.

Nor was this in any degree difficult. One test only was instituted, by which that obedience was to be formally expressed; abstinence from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. How simple, and easy, was the observance of the obligation! How appalling the consequences of its violation! Compliance however, as is true in regard to all the other laws of God, was not confined exclusively to *external action*. The state of the heart was of primary consideration. The covenant claimed to govern not the conduct alone, but also, then as now, the powers of the inner man. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."⁸ "The whole heart must be in perfect submission, uninterrupted by a single insurgent feeling. A purity of character must be maintained, uncontaminated by a single spot. A zeal and devotion must be preserved, unrelaxing in a single purpose."

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. I have before intimated that, 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! O, who can estimate the joy, deep, calm, overwhelming, that fills angelic bosoms I Nor was man originally, and during the whole period of his holiness, less happy. Who can adequately conceive of half his joys? Whence all this pure, this unmingled delight? It arose exclusively, as a perennial fountain, from the covenant of works. "The man," said Paul, "that doeth these things, shall live by them."⁹ His bliss is unfading. Happiness embraces every ultimate good. Perfect happiness, is perfect good. God intended man, and all his creatures, to be thus happy. To gain this end was the purpose of the covenant. To all the obedient it was, and ever must be, complete in its results.

The penalty of a violation of the covenant of works, next demands our attention.

All its blessings instantly cease. Transgression turns them all aside, and converts them into so many fountains of wretchedness and woe! And man, alas, became a transgressor, and, incurred the penalty. The manner of this transgression is thus narrated in the sacred record:- "Now the, serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field, which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman; Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent; We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said; Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman; Ye shall not surely die, for Gad doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be

opened, and ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat."¹⁰ The deed was done! The tempter triumphed. All was lost. The *obligations* of the covenant, and its *curses* alone remained. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin."¹¹ Miserable and hopeless beings! How can they escape? The covenant provides no Mediator, nor any other method of restoration to the purity which is now lost. Between the *blessing* of obedience, and the curse of disobedience, there is no middle ground. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."¹² Nor does this inevitable result arise from a mere arbitrary decision on the part of God, but from the very nature of that justice, and holiness, and truth, without which the moral world would be but a horrid mass of confusion and destruction. The law of gravitation for example, is essential to the existence of the physical universe. Remove this law, and all the "fair fabric" we behold, would be instantly dissolved. Place yourself in opposition to this law, in itself so wise and benevolent, and you are in a moment crushed and destroyed by its force. So as to the laws of health. Obey them and all is well. Habitually violate them, and you destroy your life. Thus the covenant secured to our first parents, while obeyed, holiness, and happiness, and life. Transgressed, it overwhelmed them in guilt, and misery, and death.

We have now seen the covenant of works, in its nature, in its demands, in its blessings, and in its penalty. Let us, in conclusion, contemplate it in relation to man as a sinner.

The violation of the covenant did not cancel his obligations still to obey all its requirements. Whatever disabilities may have been incurred by the transgression, and especially by the consequent depravity of human nature, our relations to the law were not thereby changed. Are those who transgress the laws of our country thereby absolved from the penalty denounced against future obedience? Surely not. Are the loss of the inclination, and even the ability, when it is a consequence of previous sin, a sufficient apology for not complying with the demands of justice; and truth, to the utmost practicable extent? A drunkard may have no wish, and he may have lost much of his power, to keep sober. Is it, therefore, no sin for him to be drunken? No such principle obtains in any equitable human government. Nor does it in the government of God.¹³ Embracing, as we have seen, in its nature, all those principles which constitute holiness, justice, and truth, this covenant remained not only unimpaired in its claims, by its primitive transgression, but continues in every age in full force. You are, therefore, today, as much obliged to be conformed to its injunctions as were our first parents before the fall. You do not obey them. Therefore, you, also are a sinner, and justly condemned before God.

You inherit the condition of our first parents in other respects also, and especially in their exposure to misery and death, spiritual, temporal, and eternal. The covenant, while observed, guarded their holiness, their happiness, and their life. By its violation, that guard was removed, and all was lost. They stood before God, guilty and ruined! And so, for any thing man can do, they, and their posterity must stand forever. It is a characteristic inherent in the very nature of justice, that once a man is an offender, he can never afterwards be by the same law, pronounced innocent of crime. He may have been pure up to that hour; he may be pure ever after; he may weep perpetual tears of penitence over his crime; but he is an offender still, and if justice is permitted to speak, she will pronounce him guilty. This is true of human

laws; and how much more of the laws of God! Such was the condition of man, when he had violated the covenant of works. Our first parents had sinned. They were cursed. Penitence for their crime could not change the fact. No subsequent good action could expiate their guilt. What hope had they? The covenant, the only law of which they had any knowledge, could not save them, because it contained no provisions for pardon; because it was a faithful reflection of God's own holy character, and must be enforced; and because with sin came depravity, for the removal of which it provided no method. What blessing could this violated covenant now confer? It could only repeat perpetually, and it ever continues to repeat, guilty; *guilty; guilty!* In this attitude did they stand before God; and thus out of Christ, do we all stand before God; criminal, and helpless, and lost!

¹ beriyth (Hebrew) diatheke (Greek)

² Theology, vol. 1, p. 897.

³ Gen ii: 16, 17.

⁴ Gen i: 26-31; ii : 1- 25.

⁵ Rom ii: 14, 15.

⁶ Matt xxii: 37-40.

⁷ Rom xiii: 10.

⁸ John iv: 24.

⁹ Rom x: 5.

¹⁰ Gen iii: 1-6.

¹¹ Rom v: 11

¹² Ezekiel xvii: 4

¹³ Vile Way of Salvation, chap, 11.

CHAPTER III.

THE COVENANT OF EDEN.

The announcement of the seed of the woman a promise of Christ; this promise was a covenant; character and work of Messiah declared; further explained by sacrifices; influence of this covenant upon the faith, and piety of the patriarchs; lessons taught by this covenant.

The first announcement of a Deliverer for man, from the horrible position in which sin had placed him, was made in Eden, immediately after the fall, by God himself. It was addressed, in the presence of our first parents, to the malicious tempter. "I will put enmity," said he, "between thee, and the woman; and between thy seed, and her seed. It shall bruise thy head; and thou shalt bruise his heel."¹ May this declaration be accounted, and received, in any proper and correct sense, as a *covenant*? Why I ask, may it not? It was a stipulation, a promise, a declaration of the divine purpose, an appointment. Particularly, was it not "A settlement, or an establishment of things, wherein by means of a Mediator, God designed to reconcile men, and take them into a friendly relation with himself?" If the definition of a word may be properly substituted for the word itself, and that it may, no one will dispute, then is it shown by the exposition of the former chapter, that this announcement is unquestionably a covenant in the highest sense of that term. It contained within itself, a promise of Messiah, with a declaration as to the humanity of his nature, and as to the manner in which having his own heel, or humanity bruised, but at the same time, bruising the head, or overthrowing the power of Satan, he would achieve the redemption of men. That our first parents, and all the primitive saints fully so understood it, there can reasonably be no doubt. That your mind may be still more deeply impressed with these facts, let the whole passage in which this covenant occurs, be repeated. Speaking of our first parents, Moses says:- "They heard the voice of the Lord God, walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam, and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord, amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, [ashamed] because I was naked, and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the Lord said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field. Upon thy belly shall thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And *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.* Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband; and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: Cursed is the ground for thy sake. In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also, and thistles, shall it bring forth unto thee. And thou shalt eat the herb of the field. in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread until thou

return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken. For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."²

I pause not here further to consider the appalling curse pronounced; the withering blight which came over man, and over all earthly things. These have been sufficiently presented in our discussion of the "covenant of works," in the previous chapter. Our only object is, to learn definitely, the true sense of *the covenant of Eden*, if I may so designate this transaction. I do not allege that it has been seriously misunderstood. There has in regard to it, been in every age, a remarkable unity of opinion. But that by Biblical Interpreters generally, it has not been properly estimated, is to me most evident. Some of our most popular divines speak of it as "obscurely intimating a Saviour;" others as "giving faint intimations of the divine goodness;" and even those who have attributed to it the highest importance, have not felt its full force and magnitude. Did it indeed, but "obscurely hint" a Saviour? Did it give forth of him "*faint intimations*" only? It was in truth, nothing less than the glorious "dawning of the gospel" day upon our world. So it was undoubtedly understood by the apostles. Paul refers it thus,³ "When he [Christ] cometh into the world he saith, Sacrifice, and offering, thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings, and sacrifices for sin, thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo I come, in the volume"—. the *head*,⁴ the *beginning*—"of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God." "By *the* which will we are sanctified, *through* the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all." What does he mean by "the head," or the beginning of the book, the Bible? What other passage there, but this, speaks of the mission, and work of Christ? Nor is this exposition peculiar to christians. The *Jewish Rabbies*, as is well known, understood the covenant in the same sense. Speaking of it the Targum of Jerusalem says:- "There will be a remedy for man, but not for the serpent, but he shall wound his heel, at the end of the days of the king Messiah." The Targum of Jonathan, and numerous other Hebrew authorities, say substantially the same thing. They assert that "The seed of the woman is Messiah."⁵ Did Scott then affirm too much, when he said,⁶ "This announcement comprises the whole gospel, with a prophetic history of the apposition with which it should meet, and the success with which it should be crowned, in all ages, and countries, until the end of time?"

But why has this covenant failed to make its full impression upon so many minds? It may, perhaps, be on account of the singular relations in which it is found, and of the indirect manner in which it was announced. These circumstances are happily explained by Andrew Fuller. He says, "If man had been in a suitable state of mind, the promise might have been direct, and addressed to him. But he was in no such state. His heart, whatever it might have been afterwards, was yet hardened against God. It was fit, therefore, that whatever designs of mercy were entertained concerning him, or his posterity, they should not be given in the form of a promise to him, but of a threatening to Satan."⁷ On these accounts God said to the serpent, and not to them, "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." This peculiar relation of the covenant has also another excellency. It serves to reveal to us one at least, of the most precious truths in the divine word. It apprises us that the declaration of a Deliverer was made to man, before the sentence was pronounced which overwhelmed him with the consequences of his sins. He stood before his Creator a transgressor, criminal, ashamed, but still stout and unsubdued. He was not yet formally condemned. The sorrow, and suffering, and death, he had incurred, were withheld. They had not descended upon him. How full of kindness were these dealings of God! The remedy was thus made known, that man might not be utterly crushed by the blow. Then, and not till then, the curse came upon him.

It is now I trust, apparent to you that the announcement of a Deliverer for man in Eden, was a covenant, in the true gospel sense, and that it was so understood by all primitive saints, as well as by Christ, and his apostles. It was accompanied, also, by most important and impressive explanations of the character and work of the Deliverer, in the forms of divine worship then instituted.

The worship of God has always demanded, and ever must require, as to its *essence*, the homage as we have seen, of the heart. The *forms* of worship have, however, been different under different dispensations. That now instituted consisted mainly in the offering of slain beasts in sacrifice. These were wholly consumed upon the altar. The skins were reserved, and became the materials of which they prepared their necessary apparel. That such service was specifically enjoined by Jehovah, is sufficiently evinced by the subsequent offerings of Cain and Abel. If they had not been required, their presentation could not have constituted the worship of God, since no truth is more clear than that where there is no command there can be no obedience. The sacrifice of Abel, and those of many others afterwards, were accepted as obedience to Jehovah. They were therefore, commanded by him. That of *Cain* was not accepted because it consisted not in slain animals, but fruits of the earth, and therefore was in *form*, and *matter*, a violation of the divine ordinance. God kindly instructed personally, our first parents in his service; he himself primarily officiating. The narrative is brief, but peculiarly graphic. "Unto Adam, and unto his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them;"⁸ coats of the skins of those animals he had slain for sacrifice. They could not have been slain for food, because it was not then lawful for men to eat flesh. The appointment of God on this subject immediately after the fall, is contained in a passage already before you. He said to our first parents, in relation to their subsistence, "Thou shalt eat *the herb* of the field."⁹ It was not until after the flood that they were allowed animal food. God said to Noah and his family, after they had left the ark: "Every *moving thing that liveth*, shall be meet for you; even as the green *herb* [which alone had before been eaten] have I given you all things."¹⁰ Would this grant now have been formally made, if it had previously existed? Animal food was not therefore eaten by men, previous to the flood. Consequently the beasts that were slain were as has been said, wholly consumed in sacrifice. How full of instruction are these facts! I may say, adopting the quaint language of Henry:¹¹ "These coats of skin had a significancy. The beasts whose skins they were, must be slain; slain before their eyes; to show them [our first parents] what death is;" "that they may see themselves as mortal, and dying." "They were slain not for food, but for sacrifice, to typify the great sacrifice which in the latter end of the world, should be offered for all. Thus the first thing that died was a sacrifice, or *Christ in a figure*;" a representation of "the woman's seed," whose heel was to be bruised, or who was to suffer death for the sins of men." "These sacrifices," he continues, "were divided between God and man, in token of reconciliation; the flesh to be offered to God, a whole burnt offering; the skins given to man for clothing; signifying that Jesus Christ having offered himself to God a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savor, we are to clothe ourselves with his righteousness as with a garment, that the shame of our nakedness may not appear." Such were the explanations given in the forms of worship instituted in the beginning of the world, of the character and work of the Redeemer promised in the covenant.

And is it true, as has been asserted, that all the saints previous to the days of Abraham, understood these doctrines as they have now been explained? That they did, cannot be reasonably questioned. No other period of the world has been marked by instances of more devoted piety than that of which we now speak. But piety without intelligence is impracticable. It is an axiom in theology, that where there is

no promise, or other divine declaration, there can be no faith. There is in fact, nothing to believe. Yet it is said, that "By *faith* Abel offered unto God, a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gift; and by it he being dead, yet speaketh." Also that, "By *faith* Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."¹² Similar statements are true of Noah, and many more, who lived during that age. But what did they all believe? Than those contained in this covenant there were no other promises, no other divine declarations whatever. Their faith must therefore have been predicated alone upon the divine declarations, and promises made in the covenant now under consideration.

And now, what were some of these truths, may we not say great gospel-truths — which holy men of primitive times, learned from the covenant of Eden, and upon which their faith rested?

1. It taught them that the great Deliverer promised, was to be, not an angel, not any being of another race, but their brother; "the seed of the woman." And such truly was he. For "Both he that sanctified, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." And since "the children" of men, "are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise, took part of the same." "He took not on him the nature of angel;" but "the seed of Abraham," because "in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."¹³ And yet more. They learned from it, that the Messiah promised, was to be "the seed of the woman" peculiarly; that is, of the woman only; in other words, as to his human nature, that he was to be the son of a virgin. The fulfilment of this declaration in Jesus of Nazareth, is amply set forth by the evangelists, and especially by Mathew, and Luke,¹⁴ with a record of the before so frequently repeated promise: - "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

2. They were further instructed by this covenant, that Messiah was to accomplish the work of redemption through suffering. To Satan Jehovah said, "Thou shalt bruise his heel." And in all parts of the word of God, but especially in the New Testament, this great truth is perpetually kept before our eyes. "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering."¹⁵ And again. "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations."¹⁶

3. They were also here distinctly taught that Messiah, in his mission upon earth, would achieve a glorious conquest over all the powers of darkness. And blessed be God, he has effectually "bruised the head" of the great enemy. For this purpose the Son of man was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."¹⁷ By his sufferings "He hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."¹⁸ And ultimately being "lifted up from the earth," he "will draw all men unto him."¹⁹ All sin will at last be blotted out, and Jesus will reign over the whole earth.

In these truths they had, as you must perceive, the sum and essence of the gospel of Christ. They were sustained, directed and saved, by the same truth, and the same grace, that now animate and fill your heart with peace and joy.

We have now seen that the announcement in Eden of a Deliverer for man, was a promise of Christ, and that this promise was a covenant in the highest and most exalted sense; that the nature and work of Messiah was further explained in the forms of worship then, instituted; that the influence of this covenant upon the faith and piety of the early patriarchs, and of all the saints up to the days of Abraham was of the most elevated character; and that it taught them that Christ was to be their, and our brother, that he was to be the son of a virgin, that the work of redemption was to be accomplished by him through suffering, and that by his mission into our world he would achieve a glorious conquest over all the powers of darkness, and ultimately "fill the whole earth with the knowledge of the glory of God, as the waters covers the sea." With these expositions, I submit this part of our subject. I am gratified to find that in these views, we have the concurrence of the true men of every age; the ancient Hebrews, and all modern evangelical christians. How rich was that grace which led to the provision of this glorious remedy for sin, and the merciful kindness which prompted its early development to men. I entreat you to study it carefully, and prayerfully, until in all its characteristics, it is fixed in your heart, and your soul overflows with the gratitude it is so well fitted to inspire.

¹ Gen iii: 15.

² Gen iii: 8 –19.

³ Heb x: 5-10.

⁴ En kephalidi biblion gegraptai peri emou.

⁵ Vide Gill in loco, et Paulus Fagius.

⁶ Com in loco.

⁷ Works. Vol 3, p. 15.

⁸ Gen iii: 21.

⁹ Gen iii: 18.

¹⁰ Gen ix: 3.

¹¹ Comm. in loco.

¹² Heb xi:4, 5

¹³ Heb ii: 11-17

¹⁴ Matt I:18-21; Luke I: 26-33

¹⁵ Heb ii: 10,14

¹⁶ Luke xiv: 46,47

¹⁷ 1 John iii : 8

¹⁸ 2 Tim I:10

¹⁹ John xii: 32

THE COVENANTS

by R.B.C. Howell

CHAPTER IV.

THE COVENANT OF REDEMPTION.

Testimonies of its existence; period of its formation; purposes it contemplated; parties to the covenant; its promises.

The divine declaration, and appointment contained in the covenant of Eden, and which we considered in the last chapter, could unquestionably never have been made, had not God entertained towards men previous purposes of mercy. That when these purposes were formed, no sin had been committed by them, detracts from this proposition nothing of its force, or importance. It was, we must remember, the act of him who said, "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning; from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." It was impossible in the nature of things, that he should not foresee the defection, and fall of our race. All the events which mark the history of the universe, were necessarily before the omniscient mind, ere the existence of our world. Jehovah beheld and pitied our miseries, and moved by infinite grace, he determined to provide the means for our deliverance and salvation. This he was pleased to do in *the covenant of redemption*, now to be considered.

To the *actual existence* of the *covenant of redemption*, called by most writers the covenant of grace, the word of God bears, in every part, the amplest testimony.

The character of a "*Surety*," for example, given to the Saviour in the divine oracles, necessarily involves the covenant, since the least that can be said of that relation, is that he who bears it, is constituted the representative of others, and thereby comes under an engagement to fulfill certain obligations in their name, and for their benefit. And when about to offer up his own life upon the cross, he said, "Lo I come to do thy will, O God." But how could this fearful sacrifice have been known to be the will of God, had he not previously so declared it? The prophets abound in declarations affirmative of the covenant of redemption. To Messiah the Father said, "I the Lord have called thee," "and will give thee for a covenant of the people; for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes; to bring out the prisoners from the prison; and them that sit in darkness from the prison house." And again, "Thus saith the Lord," "I will give thee for a covenant of the people." But more fully, he says of him:- "If his soul" - (I follow the version of Lowth) - "shall be a propitiary sacrifice, he shall prolong their days, and the gracious purpose of Jehovah shall prosper in his hands. Of the travail of his soul he shall see" [the fruit] - "and be satisfied. By the knowledge of him, shall my servant justify many, for the punishment of their iniquities shall he bear. Therefore will I distribute to him the many for his portion; and the mighty people shall he share for his spoil, because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sins of many; and he made intercession for the transgressors." The last of the prophets, announcing his coming, says:- "The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; even the Messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in; behold he shall

come, saith the Lord of hosts." From these and similar texts you learn, that by the gracious act of the Father, Christ the Son was constituted the Surety of his people; that when "he gave himself for us," it was according to the previously declared will of God; and that he was called to this work by the Father, who, for our redemption, made his soul an offering for sin. Did all this occur without any previous consent or agreement? Who then can question the reality of the covenant of redemption?

That *this covenant came into being before the fall of man*, is a truth sustained in the divine word by the clearest evidence.

It is fully supported by Peter, when he says, addressing Christians in all lands:- "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation [manner of life] received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith, and hope, might be in God." Paul bears concurrent testimony in the declaration that "God who cannot lie, promised us eternal life before the world began." He says, "He hath saved us, and called us, with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose, and grace, given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." And yet more:- "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." The covenant of redemption was, therefore, brought into being before the creation of the world.

The *purpose of the covenant* is expressed by its name; it looked to the redemption and salvation of men. The plan, however, by which these results were to be gained, must necessarily be such as would, at the same time, glorify the purity and justice and honor alike, of all the persons of the adorable Trinity. Any arrangement which would fail of these ends, it is impossible he could have devised or approved. Had man been restored to happiness without meeting these demands, God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, would have been dishonored. It was the design of the covenant, therefore, to bring into perfect harmony the salvation of men, and the glory of God.

The contracting parties appear distinctly before your mind. This part of our subject, however, demands somewhat more of particularity.

It is plain that man could not have been one of these parties, since, as we have seen, the covenant was made before the foundation of the world, and he, of course, was not then in being. His happiness was indeed its object, but in its formation he could assuredly have had no active participation. But even had this been otherwise, his fulfillment of the necessary terms of redemption would have been impossible. None but a divine person could do this, who joining himself to our nature, could bear Almighty wrath, and "magnify the law" by a perfect obedience. Angels could not, for the same reasons, have been parties to this covenant. They excel men in the spirituality of their essence, and the extent of their powers. Still, like men, their nature is too limited. And, besides, they belong to another class of beings, who never could, either by incarnation, or in any other manner, become so related to us as to accomplish the design proposed. Who then were the parties covenanting? They were,

I answer, the same who in the beginning said, "Let *us* make man in *our* image, and after *our* likeness." They were *God*, as he has made himself known to us, in the exalted persons of the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost*. Truly, "The Lord our God is one Lord," and "besides him there is no other." But it is equally true that, for the purpose of redeeming us, he has revealed himself in the form of a glorious Trinity, all the persons of whom are "the same in essence, and equal in divine properties." To one of these sin was in every sense as offensive as to another. The honor of each was alike engaged to demand its rebuke and punishment. The concurrence of all was, therefore, alike necessary to any expedient by which the penalty might be averted from those by whom sin should be committed. Nor was this concurrence difficult, since the love which impelled to redemption; burned with equal intensity in the hearts of each. The promise of eternal life was indeed made by the Father, but it was not exclusively his. It was equally expressive of the goodness of both the other persons in the Godhead. And also the life promised was, in its nature, to be the enjoyment no less of the love and favor of the Son, and of the Spirit, than of the Father. When, therefore, John prayed for grace, and peace, for the churches of Asia, he supplicated them not only from "Him who was, and is, and is to come," that is, the Father, but also from the Holy Ghost, whom he calls on account of the variety and fullness of his gifts, "The seven Spirits which are before the throne;" and "from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." Each was alike interested, since the covenant was in its practical development, to vindicate the right, and to manifest the glory of all. Redemption was, therefore, the result of the united wisdom, and grace, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

One of the parties to the covenant was, therefore, *God the Father*.

That the adorable Jehovah might have left our guilty race to perish in their sin, all intelligent beings must acknowledge. He was not in *justice* bound to interfere in their behalf. As the *righteous* governor of the universe, he might have proceeded to uphold the authority of his law, by executing its penalty upon the disobedient, and thus to give an awful example of vengeance to the intelligent inhabitants of the various provinces of his empire. His *goodness* did not require that he should rescue his rebellious subjects from the misery which they had brought upon themselves, because he had already given of this an ample display in their creation and endowments, and it was still exhibited in the happiness diffused through all the regions of innocence. His *glory* does not depend upon the manifestation of any particular attribute, but of them all, on proper occasions, and in full harmony. He is glorified when he bestows blessings upon the righteous, and he is no less glorified when he inflicts punishment upon the wicked. The event shows that his glory is greater in the salvation, than it would have been in the destruction of men. It ought, however, to be considered, that his glory means nothing but the manifestation of his character to his creatures, and that as there was no necessity for such a manifestation, and as it could contribute in no degree to his felicity, it was perfectly voluntary, and might have as well been withheld. The only necessity which can be admitted, is that if he did show himself to his creatures, the exhibition should correspond with the greatness and excellence of his character. He might had he pleased, not have created a single being to contemplate his perfections. When he did create them, and they dishonored him, he might have cast them off forever. It was under these circumstances that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The whole arrangement was, therefore, of his own sovereign grace, uninfluenced by human merit. But this conclusion is not only inferable from the facts

before you. His entire sovereignty in this whole transaction is expressly *affirmed* in his word:- " Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing [purifying] of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life."

Another of the parties in the covenant of redemption was *God the Son*.

Nor were *his* acts in this behalf, less sovereign than those of the Father. In all respects both the Father and the Son were moved by the same considerations. It was the prerogative, however, alone of the Son, to assume our nature, thus becoming our representative head, in a sense similar to that sustained to us by "the first Adam," to meet, and satisfy on our behalf, all the claims of divine justice. Having assumed this relation in the covenant, he was substituted in our place. His acts, therefore, had legal respect to those whom he represented, and by the supreme Lawgiver were held as a full equivalent for the sins of his people. Having in himself the power to redeem us, he gladly undertook this great work. He himself says in regard to it, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." He is indeed expressly made known to us as "*The second Adam*." "The first man Adam, was made a living soul. The last Adam was made a quickening Spirit. Howbeit that was not first which was spiritual, but that which was natural, and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy. The second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy. And as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." And still more. "Not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift. For the judgment was by one to condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life, by one, Jesus Christ." Thus clearly stated is the representative character of Adam and of Christ. The result of their agencies were *different*; the one being the cause of guilt, depravity, and death; the other of righteousness, sanctification, and life. Their relations to us are *similar*, the federal association of Christ being as clearly stated as is that of Adam. If the first man had not been our federal head, we should not have suffered by his transgression. If the second man, "the Lord from heaven," had not been our federal head, we should not have been benefited by his obedience. Our relations to them being alike, Paul says, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." He in a word became, by this covenant, our Mediator, "According as it is written," "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

The other party to the covenant of redemption was *God the Holy Ghost*.

Partaking in the love, and grace, of the Father and the Son, he acting with the same freedom, engaged to become the efficient agent by which men might be regenerated, sanctified, and prepared to receive and enjoy the blessings of eternal life, and thus to consummate the end for which we were redeemed. A necessity exists for the work of the Spirit in salvation, no less imperative than for the work of

the Father, and of the Son. "Except a man be born again - born of the Spirit - he cannot see the kingdom of God."

These are the covenanting parties, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and such, briefly, is the part which each engaged to perform in the redemption of men.

Let us now, for a moment, consider *the promises* embodied in the covenant of redemption.

Some of these promises are made exclusively to the Son, as the Messiah:—"The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool. The Lord will send the rod [the people] of thy strength out of Zion. Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing, in the day of thy power." And again. "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thy inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." And again "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation." In view of these and similar declarations, an Apostle says, "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"

Others of the promises of the covenant are given to Messiah for his people.

"To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the *gift of Christ*. Therefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." These gifts are all comprehended in the "Hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie, promised before the world began." And to whom but to Christ, could this promise before the world began, have been made; and in what relation, if not in connection with the covenant of redemption? "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." John referring to this subject says, "This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." Nor are these and such like, as pardon, and justification, the only blessings which come immediately from him. He also stipulates others to be conferred by *the Holy Spirit*. "I will," said he, "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." Thus he secures your enlightenment, your regeneration, and your sanctification, for which when an apostle prays, he predicates his assurance of an answer, upon the faithfulness of God to his promise given in the covenant. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

And how "great and precious" are his promises, made through Christ, directly to his people! Upon these, delightful as would be their full contemplation, we may not now dwell. I will detain you only to remark, that these promises pledge you grace to direct and keep you in life, and to sustain and comfort you in death; they assure you a happy resurrection; justification at the tribunal of Christ; and in heaven everlasting glory.

Thus we have seen the actual existence of the covenant of redemption; the previous period at which it was brought into being; the purposes it contemplated; the parties covenanting, and the gracious promises it extends to his people. This was the covenant upon which was predicated the announcement in Eden of the Deliverer from sin, under the power and penalty of which man had fallen, by a violation of the

provisions contained in the covenant of works. Well then may we, with all our heart, join in that exalted thanksgiving uttered by the beloved disciple, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father, unto him be glory and dominion, forever and ever. Amen."

THE COVENANTS

by R.B.C. Howell

CHAPTER V.

THE COVENANT OF PROMISE IN CHRIST TO ABRAHAM

Purpose of the covenant; the original promise; its repetition with an oath of God; renewal and transfer of the covenant to Isaac; to Jacob; to Judah; to David; its identity in every repetition; the same in its purposes, and its promises, with the covenant in Eden, and the covenant of redemption.

The promises of God in the covenant of Eden, sustained triumphantly, the piety of his saints, until the covenant in Christ was announced to Abraham. Up to this time all that had been certainly revealed as to the person of Christ, was that he was to be of the human race, eminently 'the seed of the woman'; but of what particular family, or nation, had not as yet transpired. Where men were to look for him, whether in Egypt, in Babylon, in Assyria, or in some other land, no one was informed. *The object of the covenant* now to be considered, was not more to renew the former promises of a Saviour, than it was to *make known his family and place*. For this great honor Abraham, 'the friend of God', was selected; and Canaan, 'that land of vine clad hills, and blooming vallies', was designated as the scene of Messiah's glorious mission.

Abraham's place was "Ur of the Chaldees." There he received a divine command indicative of some future purpose of Jehovah, what he knew not. 'The God of glory' appeared to him, and said, 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and go into the land which I shall show thee.' Promptly he obeyed, 'and went out, not knowing whither he went.' Providence directed his steps to Haran, where he remained until he had performed the last sad rites of sepulture for his aged father. Then again, 'The Lord said to Abraham, Depart to a land that I will shew thee, And I will make 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.*¹ In this simple narrative we have the original promise made to Abraham, which Paul calls '*the covenant of God, in Christ*', or the pledge that *Messiah should come of his family*. The promise was made when the patriarch was seventy-five years old, in the year of the world two thousand and eighty-two, and nineteen hundred and twenty-two years before the advent of Messiah. He received and embraced it with unwavering faith, and devoutly and promptly complied with the command with which it was associated. He 'departed as the Lord had spoken to him', with all his family and substance. And as Moses instructs us, 'They went from Haran, to go into the land of Canaan ; and into the land of Canaan they came. And Abram passed through the land, to the place of Sychem, to the plain of Moreh,² a beautiful valley between the mountains Ebal and Gerizim, where he fixed his residence, and 'builded an altar unto the Lord," who there again appeared to him, and said, 'To thee will I give this land.'³ Upon these events, and in explanation of the full import of the covenant, an inspired apostle says, '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.'⁴

But Abraham had subsequently, assurances on this subject, still more full, and emphatic. More than forty years he had resided, 'as a pilgrim and a stranger,' in Canaan, when the covenant was *renewed*, "and *ratified with an oath*.' Mean time his faith had been subjected to various trials of the severest character. He and his wife had now both reached a very great age; he about a hundred and his wife ninety years, and they were still without issue. In the ordinary course of things, as respects posterity they were both, as Paul justly remarks, 'as good as dead'. The promised son came not! How could he believe that he would come, or that the promise would, or could, ever be fulfilled? We are assured however, that 'Abraham staggered not'. His faith was unshaken. "With God nothing is impossible." Isaac at length was born! And under the circumstances, his birth was as truly miraculous, as was that of the Saviour himself. All his cherished hopes were realized, and this son so dear to his heart, was now verging towards manhood, when occurred *another trial of his faith*, infinitely more painful and appalling than the former. 'Take now thy son," said God to the aged patriarch, 'thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering!' But *could this* command be *really* from on high! Had he not in this case, every reason to distrust the evidence of even his own senses? Could infinite goodness require of a father, a deed so horrible? Thus Abraham might have reasoned. But no such inquiries were in his heart. It was enough that God had spoken. Of this he was assured. He therefore, hesitated not to obey, but hastened to the appointed mountain; builded there the prescribed altar; placed upon it the necessary wood; bound his son, laid him upon the pile, grasped the knife, and stretched forth his hand to strike the fatal blow; when his proceeding was arrested by a voice from above! 'Abraham, lay not thy hand upon the lad; neither do thou any thing to him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld from me thy son, thine only son.'⁵ Another glorious victory was achieved. Faith had again triumphed. Paul illustrating this cardinal grace, thus refers to the incident before us:- "By faith Abraham when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."⁶ When these and other scenes had passed, and which are recorded, that "we upon whom the ends of the earth have come," may imitate the unwavering confidence in the word of God, which characterized "the father of the faithful," then Jehovah said to Abraham:- " By myself *have I sworn*," "that blessing I will bless thee; and multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And *in thy seed shall all the earth be blessed*."⁷ These trials of Abraham's faith, and repetitions in the strongest forms, to him of " the covenant of promise," were, like the sufferings of Job, not especially necessary on his account, but were for our advantage. Therefore said Paul, "When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." "Men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them, an end of all strife." So "God, willing more abundantly to show unto [us the true] heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it with an *oath*, that by two immutable things [*the promise* in the original covenant, and the oath in its repetition] in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have *strong consolation*, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail, whither our forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus Christ."⁸

"The covenant of promise to Abraham, of God in Christ," is now before you. It is said by the apostle, to have been "the preaching of the gospel to Abraham." "The

scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." ⁹ To Adam also, was this covenant as announced in Eden, no less "the preaching of the gospel," since it was "the glad tidings" of a Deliverer from sin, and of eternal life, and salvation. I will also remark in passing, that the blessings promised in all these covenants—the covenants of redemption, of Eden, and of Abraham—were in their spiritual import, never designed to be, nor are they truly, confined to any one family, or nation. The possible impression of their partial or Hebrew bearing, is carefully guarded against, in the very language of the covenants themselves, and earnestly denied by both prophets and apostles. They embraced specifically, "all the families of the earth," and revealed a Saviour, who is "a light to lighten the *Gentiles*," as well as "the glory of his people *Israel*" ¹⁰ "Of a truth," "God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation,"—and this has been ever so—" he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." ¹¹

We now pass from the period of Abraham, and proceed to consider the frequent repetitions to his successors, at various times, during more than eight hundred years, of this same "covenant of promise confirmed before of God in Christ." ¹²

To Isaac, his son, and heir, this covenant, about a hundred and fifty years afterwards, was solemnly renewed, and transferred. In the narrative of this transaction by Moses, you are informed that a famine prevailed in Canaan, and that to find sustenance for himself, and his family, Isaac was obliged to leave for a time, the place of his residence. He went therefore "unto Abimelech, the king of the Philistines, unto Gerar. And the Lord appeared unto him and said, Go not down into Egypt;"—whither it seems, he was disposed to direct his steps;—" Dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee. For unto thee, and unto thy seed, will I give all these countries. And I will perform my oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father. 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.*" ¹³ The identity of this covenant with that of Abraham, cannot be questioned, since in the covenant itself, this fact is expressly declared :—" I will perform unto thee my oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father."

Forty-four years after this event, the same covenant was repeated, and transferred to Jacob, the son of Isaac, and grandson of Abraham. Jacob had now reached the age of manhood. Painful events had occurred in his father's house. He was about to leave the scenes of his early days, and enter the great theatre of life, preparatory to which his father gave him his formal blessing. How full of tenderness and affection was that prayer! "God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land in which thou art a stranger, which God gave to Abraham. And Isaac sent away Jacob."¹⁴ And "Jacob went out from Beersheba and went towards Haran. And he lighted on a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set. And he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed; and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending, and descending upon it! And behold the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac. The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth. And

thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. *And in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*¹⁵ Such is the form and language, in which the covenant is transferred to Jacob. This also, contains within itself, as did that to Isaac, the declaration that it is identically the same covenant previously given to Abraham. Jacob is now assured that he is to be the *Father of Messiah*.

The scenes in the life of Jacob, were many and various, and not a few of them of the most touching character. When "his pilgrimage upon earth" was about to close, seventy one years after he had been honored with the covenant, he assembled in his chamber, in Goshen, *his twelve sons*, and in an address replete with affection, faith, piety and eloquence, constituted them into "*the Twelve Tribes of Israel*" Upon each of the tribes he pronounced an appropriate blessing, prophetic of its future circumstances, and character; he assigned them all their places in the promised land; but to Judah alone, and especially, he transmitted *the covenant received from his fathers*. "The promised land," Bishop Newton justly observes, "Jacob might divide among all his children. But the promise of being the progenitor of Messiah, must be confined to one only." That distinction, by divine direction, was conferred upon Judah. Thus he blessed that favored tribe:- "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his feet, until *Shiloh* come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."¹⁶ The sense of the covenant in the form which it here assumes, need not be mistaken, and yet it has been somewhat embarrassed, partly perhaps, because the authors of our common version of the scriptures seem not to have understood it; and partly because expositors generally, appear not to have comprehended its true relations. A few remarks in explanation from me, is therefore necessary. I may just observe that the word translated *scepter*¹⁷ means literally a *rod*, and does not, as so many have imagined, refer here to the *regal rule* of Judah, but is used metaphorically, to represent the *tribe*. The substance of this part of the passage is therefore, an assurance that whatever may become of the other tribes, the rod, or tribe of Judah, shall endure in its distinct, and separate, and full existence, until the Messiah promised—the Shiloh—springing from that tribe, shall come and accomplish his mission upon earth. I may also remark that the term rendered *Lawgiver*¹⁸ here means simply, a *teacher*, or *prophet*, and nothing more. With these corrections, the whole text will read truly, and plainly thus:- From Judah his distinct existence as a tribe shall not depart, nor among his offspring shall a teacher be wanting, till Messiah come, and unto him shall all people be gathered. God here pledges that he will himself watch over and preserve *this tribe*, until "the desire of all nations shall appear." And how faithfully, in his good providence, this pledge was redeemed, is in the subsequent history of his people, familiar to all who study the sacred records. The other tribes, as is well known, fell into the grossest idolatry, from which no admonitions, or judgments, could recall them. They were at length abandoned to the fury of their enemies, by whom they were overcome, and carried into hopeless captivity. More than seven hundred years before Shiloh appeared, they were all irrecoverably lost, among the nations of the east. Judah by the evident intervention of almighty power, was indestructible, until the promise in this covenant, was gloriously accomplished.

Six hundred years had now passed away since the transfer of the covenant to Judah. Israel had taken possession of the promised land. Every foe was conquered, and all the tribes, united, prosperous and happy, lived securely under the government of the "man after God's own heart." Under these circumstances God appeared to David, and "swore with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ."¹⁹ The form of inspired language, ever after this renewal of

the covenants, connects Messiah with the throne of David; his throne being plainly a metaphor employed to express with emphasis, Christ's *spiritual reign*. "Thy seed," said Jehovah to David, "will I establish forever, and [thus] build up thy throne to all generations."²⁰ It was in allusion to these promises, that David himself said, in his last moments, "The God of Israel hath made with me, an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."²¹ The exposition of this covenant is beautifully given by one of the prophets. Referring to the coming of Christ he says:- "In that day [the opening of the gospel] there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious."²² Previous to this transaction, Messiah was known only as "The seed of the woman," who should redeem us by suffering; the substitute for man to divine justice; the Deliverer appointed by the Father; the seed of Abraham; the Shiloh, in whom it all the nations and families of the earth should be blessed. Thenceforward he is known as "the Prince;" the "Ruler of the people ;" "the David ;" the "King of Israel ;" and by one or another of these, or similar titles, he is constantly designated. This is the style of Jeremiah, for example, through whom God said to Israel :—"If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season, then may also my covenant with David be broken, that he should not have a Son [the Christ] to sit upon his throne."²³ It is the style of Daniel, to whom it was said by the angel: "Understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore, and to build Jerusalem, unto *Messiah the prince*, shall be seven weeks, and three score and two weeks; [of years] "and after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off but not for himself." ²⁴Take Micah as another example "Thou Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel! whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting." ²⁵

It is necessary to pause here, until I have justified the remark made a moment since, that "the throne of David" upon which Christ is to sit, is employed always, as a metaphor to represent his spiritual reign. A mistake on this point has led to a false philology in religion, by which a full impression of the sense of the covenant with David, has been turned aside, and painfully weakened. It has been supposed to be, not what it really is, the repetition and transfer to him of "the covenant of promise" to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Judah, but another and distinct covenant, which they have been pleased to call "*The Covenant of Royalty!*" And what do they mean by "the covenant of royalty?" If simply that David had the promise of God, that Messiah who will reign over spiritual Israel forever, should come of his family, and consummate the covenant, then they but perplex the subject by new, and unexplained terms, without any corresponding advantage. But if they mean, as I understand them, that this covenant guaranteed to David the occupancy of his throne, by one of his own descendants, until the coming of Messiah, and that Christ at his second coming, or at some other period, would occupy it literally, their interpretation is contradicted by the facts in history, and by the explanations of both Christ himself, and of his apostles.

The facts in history contradict this interpretation. David transmitted the kingdom of Israel to Solomon, and Solomon to Rehoboam. This last king, by his haughtiness of bearing, and the cruelty of his measures, forfeited the attachment of his people. Ten of the tribes revolted under Jeroboam, became completely severed from their brethren, and were never afterwards recovered to the government. Here the reign of the family of David *over all* Israel, actually, and forever ceased. Indeed, from beginning to end, it continued at most, but *three generations*, or about one century. Over *Judah alone*, his descendants continued to reign for several centuries more. At

length however Nebuchadnezzar invaded and conquered the nation, destroyed Jerusalem, burned the temple, carried the people into captivity, and desolated the whole land. With this overthrow, which occurred five hundred and eighty nine years before the coming of Christ, ended finally, the reign even over Judah itself, of the family of David. *His literal throne existed no more.* It is true that after the Babylonish captivity, which continued seventy years, a remnant of the people returned, and Judah was ruled a hundred and twenty eight years, by Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. The first of these was of the house of David, but both the others, were of the tribe of Levi. None of them however, were kings in any sense, but simply governors under foreign authority. During the two hundred and forty two years next succeeding, Judah was governed by her High Priests, all of whom were of the house of Aaron. Mean time the nation was tributary successively, to the Persians, the Greeks, the Egyptians, and the Syrians. From the close of this period until Judea became a Roman province under Herod, and Christ was born, the Jews were under the government of the Asmonean family, known as the Maccabees, all of whom belonged to the priestly tribe. History thus rebukes the interpretation in question. Does the covenant promise David, that his natural sons should reign upon his literal throne, until the coming of Messiah? If so, then it was not fulfilled. But "God's word cannot be broken." It was fulfilled. Therefore the promise is to be understood not in a literal sense, but as a metaphor.

The other part of the interpretation—that Christ ever will occupy David's literal throne—will be found upon examination, to fail in a manner equally signal. Recur if you please, to the exposition of this covenant by Peter, in a passage, a part of which is already before you. He said to the Jews, in his sermon at Pentecost, "The patriarch David," was "a prophet: and he knew "that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne."²⁶ Did he mean however, his literal throne? that at his second coming at least Christ will reign in Jerusalem, or elsewhere, not only over gathered, and restored, Israel and Judah, but over all the nations of the earth? Then he directly contradicts the Saviour himself, since at that time, the kingdom of Christ, will certainly be "of this world." But repeatedly, as you well know, does the *Saviour* declare the contrary. He affirms and without conditions, or limitations, "My kingdom is *not* of this world."²⁷ It is not of this world in its origin ; it is not of this world in its nature; it is not of this world in its ends. It indeed, extends to every creature, since "all authority is committed into his hands, both in heaven and on earth," but it is exclusively spiritual, and evangelical. He was "David's son, and David's Lord;" the spiritual David himself; the king who shall reign over spiritual Israel forever. It was therefore over no *literal* empire; no nations of men; that he was to reign. The covenant promised no such dominion. Twenty four hundred years has David's literal throne been buried. It will never be resuscitated. The promise is figurative, and pledges a spiritual dominion, and a spiritual people. With these facts before us, how glorious is the inspired language on this subject of the inimitable Ethan! "Thou," O Lord, "didst speak in vision, to thy Holy One, and say, I have laid help upon one that is mighty." "I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him; [made him Christ] with whom my hand shall be established; my arm also shall strengthen him." "And I will beat down his foes before his face; and afflict them that hate him; but my faithfulness, and my mercy shall be with him." "I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. He shall cry to me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my first born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him forever more, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. *His seed also*, will I make to endure forever, and *his throne*" [his spiritual government]' as the days of heaven. If his *children*

forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then [will I not cast them off, as I did the literal sons of David, whom I rejected for their sins, but] I will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that hath gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie to David [the exalted Messiah.] His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established forever, as the moon; and as a faithful witness in heaven." ²⁸ Daniel uses language in the same sense, when he says, "There was given unto" "the Son of Man; Messiah ;" "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, and nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." ²⁹ We have now seen what is usually called "the Abrahamic covenant," or more properly, "the covenant confirmed to Abraham, of God in Christ," and we have considered the repetition, and transmission of that covenant, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and to Judah, and to David. Its promises are, as is apparent, identical in their spiritual import, with those developed in the covenants by which it was preceded. Indeed it refers to those covenants in direct terms. Was it, as Paul declares, a "covenant *confirmed* to Abraham, of God in Christ?" That which was simply confirmed, must have had a previous existence. And where shall we look for this covenant, at any previous time, but to Eden, in which two thousand years before, it was made known to our first parents? And in all its developments, whether in Eden, to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to Judah, or to David, it rested firmly, upon the gracious engagement of Christ for us, in the glorious covenant of redemption, "before the foundation of the world."

The uncertainty which had until now, marked the nation of which Messiah should come, and the scene of his achievements, was here dissipated. The family of Abraham is designated, and of that family the tribe of Judah, and of the tribe of Judah the house of David. Each successive development narrows down the circle, and makes the investigation of Christ's claims to the divine mission, when he shall come, more simple and certain. Yet many centuries are to pass before his advent. Other measures must therefore be adopted, such as that on his appearing, it shall be known beyond the possibility of a doubt, that he is the very Christ promised to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to Judah, and to David. Of these measures, what are to be the nature and character?

¹ Gen xii : 1, 3

² Gen xii : 1 -3

³ Ib. 4 - 6

⁴ Heb xi : 12

⁵ Gen xxii : 1, - 13

⁶ Heb xi : 17, 18

⁷ Gen xxii : 15, 16

⁸ Heb vi 13 - 20

⁹ Gal. iii : 16, 17

¹⁰ Luke ii : 32

¹¹ Acts x : 34, 35

¹² Gal. iii : 17

¹³ Gen. 26 : 1 - 5

- 14 Gen xxviii : 3 – 5
- 15 Gen xxvii : 11 –14
- 16 Gen xlix : 10
- 17 shebet (Hebrew)
- 18 chaqraq (Hebrew)
- 19 Acts ii : 30
- 20 Psalm lxxxix : 3, 4
- 21 2 Sam xxiii : 5
- 22 Isa xi : 10
- 23 Jere xxxiii : 20, 21
- 24 Danl ix : 25, 26
- 25 Mich v : 2
- 26 Acts ii : 29, 30
- 27 John xviii : 37
- 28 Ps lxxxix : 19 – 37
- 29 Danl vii : 14

THE COVENANTS

by R.B.C. Howell

CHAPTER VI.

THE COVENANTS OF THE LAW.

Design of these covenants; covenant of the land of Canaan; of circumcision; of Sinai; history of the Hebrews; prophecy.

The covenant considered in the last chapter, determined, as we saw, that the Saviour provided in the covenant of redemption, and announced to our first parents in Eden, should be of "the seed of Abraham;" and that the scene of his actions upon earth, should be in the land of Canaan. But when is he to appear among men? Many a century is yet to pass ere his actual advent. By what means, it has been asked, shall it, when he does come, be known with positive certainty, that he is the very Christ promised? Indubitable testimony for the establishment of his claims must surround him. Otherwise how can men believe in the Son of God? Faith is a primary condition of salvation. This is true of all classes; of the Jews no less emphatically than of the Gentiles. Nor in all that pertains to sanctification and eternal life, is he less the Christ of the one, than of the other. Upon the Hebrews Jehovah conferred peculiar honor. To their custody was committed "the oracles of God;" theirs "were the fathers; and of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came." In all other respects however, they possessed no special advantages. In Messiah "all the families of the earth" were to be blessed. Therefore "all the families of the earth" were equally, and alike interested in whatever measures might be found necessary to elicit, and confirm their faith in Christ. To gain this end, the plan adopted by Jehovah was perfect, and is presented to us mainly in the *three collateral covenants* now to be considered, and which we have called "*The covenants of the law*," together with the history of Israel, and the predictions of the prophets. Of them truly may we say, as John did of his Gospel, "These [things] are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." Let us refer to them separately and consecutively.

The first of these collateral covenants, in time, if not in importance, gave to Abraham a specified country, and made his family a distinct and separate nation.

"The word of the Lord came unto Abram," while he dwelt in Mamre, "saying: Fear not Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." And God "brought Abraham forth abroad, and said: Look now towards heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him: So shall thy seed be. And he believed the Lord, and it was counted to him for righteousness. And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur; of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit. And Abram said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? And God said unto him: Take me a heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another but the birds he divided not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away. And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him! And

God said unto Abram, know surely that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them," of that land, "and they shall afflict them, four hundred years! And also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge. And afterwards shall they come out with great substance." And "they shall come hither again." "And it came to pass when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp, that passed between the pieces. In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: Unto thy seed will I give this land, from the river of Egypt, unto the great river, the river Euphrates."

Promises of the land of Canaan, had frequently before been made. They were indeed (so important was the separate national existence of Israel to the end proposed, regarded,) included in the previous "covenant of God in Christ," and also, as we shall see, in the subsequent covenant of circumcision. But here we have the distinct and formal covenant itself, pledging the land to Abram, and his posterity forever. The reasons of this importance you must yourself perceive, upon a moment's reflection. A Saviour is promised. He is to spring from this family. "In the fullness of the time" he will come. But nearly two thousand years are yet to transpire before he appears. Meanwhile what changes may not occur among men, and even among nations! What family mingling as is common with other families, could hope so long to survive, and preserve its distinct character? Are there any families now upon earth, who have so maintained themselves, and can confidently trace back their lineage for twenty centuries? Such a result may, without divine interposition, be in the ordinary course of things, safely pronounced impossible. Yet this much, at least, the family of Abraham must be able to do, since upon it is, to a great extent suspended, the faith of all nations. Without it, how can the true Messiah be certainly recognized? How can false Christs be detected and exposed? Of his claims, when he comes, it will not be conclusive that he shall manifest extraordinary wisdom. This did Solomon. It will not be enough that he shall perform miracles, since Moses and the prophets did the same. Will he heal the sick, and even raise the dead? Elisha did both. It must be known beyond doubt, that he is precisely of the descent promised; otherwise the proofs are forever vitally defective. He must be the son of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, and of the house of David. No obscurity must rest upon these facts. On these accounts (and they are infinitely wise, and benevolent) this covenant was inaugurated. The family of Abraham was separated from all others, and made a distinct nation. A specified territory was prescribed, where they were to remain under the divine government, and protection. In that land they were to reside, a peculiar, and an isolated people, until Christ should come and establish his claims, and, by one offering perfect forever all them that are sanctified."

The second of these collateral covenants was also made with Abraham, and is known as "the covenant of circumcision."

It looked, unquestionably, to the same end with the covenant which promised to him the land of Canaan. They were auxiliaries of each other. Their design was to certify the fulfilment of "the promise of God in Christ to Abraham." That covenant separated Israel as a *nation*, from every other people. This distinguished them as *individuals*, from all other men. Thus they were more perfectly isolated, and the certainty of the proofs, by which Messiah's claims were to be established, augmented and simplified. The covenant of circumcision was made with Abraham when he was ninety-nine years old; eighteen years after the covenant of the land, and twenty-four years after "the covenant of promise in Christ." Its synopsis is as follows:- "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, for an everlasting

covenant, to be a God unto thee, and thy seed after thee. 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, and I will be their God. And God saith 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 my covenant shall be in your flesh, for an everlasting covenant." "And the uncircumcised man child shall be cut off from his people."

This covenant, which as we said, also includes the grant of the land of Canaan, enjoins the worship and service of God only; it commands circumcision; and it excludes from that family every one who shall be found uncircumcised. Its general bearing in relation to all the Hebrew institutions, is explained by Paul, who says:- "I testify again, to every man that is circumcised, that *he is a debtor to do the whole law.*" This rite was at once received by Abraham; was administered in his family; and was ever afterwards observed by his descendants, until the object which it proposed, had been effectually secured. Christ came; its design was accomplished; the covenant, as all the others of like temporary character, ceased to exist. The gospel now reigns; under which "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." "If ye be circumcised," said Paul to the primitive Christians, "Christ shall profit you nothing." For "whosoever of you shall" seek "to be justified by the law" of Moses, to which circumcision pledges your obedience, to you "Christ has become of no effect." We understand better the plan of salvation. "Through the Spirit," we "wait for the hope of righteousness by faith," in Christ, for the confirmation of which faith, circumcision was instituted. "Jesus Christ" having now come, "and redeemed us by his blood," "neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." It is ours to consider the facts in proof of the Messiahship, laid before us, in the practical operation of this covenant, and to "believe in our Lord Jesus Christ."

The third and last of these collateral covenants, is known as the covenant of Sinai.

This covenant gave to the people of Israel their peculiar *national government*. It was made not with Abraham but appropriately "with the fathers, when God took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt." During several generations, the family of Abraham was far from being prolific. But irrespective of this fact, many years must necessarily pass before they could be sufficiently numerous, or otherwise in a condition, to take possession of the promised land. In the providence of God, they were removed into Egypt. For a season they were honored for the sake of Joseph. Ere long, however, jealousies arose; they were oppressed, and soon after enslaved; and all those events were literally realized, which were revealed to Abraham, in the covenant of the land of Canaan. His seed were strangers in a land that was not theirs; they served the people of that land; and they afflicted them four hundred years. Why did God - the inquiry naturally arises - permit his people to be so long, thus overwhelmed with misery, and suffering? Two infinitely wise, and benevolent reasons at once present themselves to the mind. Their social position as slaves in Egypt, was immeasurably important, since they were thus preserved; and thus only could they have been preserved effectually; from so inter-mingling with the people of the land, or becoming so attached to the soil, or so scattering apart from each other, as to frustrate the purposes of God in making them a nation. When,

therefore, the command came for their removal, they were ready to depart. This was the first reason. The second had respect to their multiplication. To a rapid increase of numbers, servile relations, and habits, all observation and experience prove, are, of all others, the most favorable. Their oppression was, therefore, essential to their prosperity, their deliverance, and the fulfilment of "the covenant of promise in Christ."

The time came when they were to go forth from "the house of bondage," and "become a great nation." Their numbers had increased until now besides their old men, and women, and children, they counted six hundred thousand warriors! They were therefore, ready, and with the blessing of God fully able, whatever obstacles might oppose them, to take possession of the promised land. At the divine command, under the guidance of Moses, and amidst miracles, wonders, and manifest exhibitions of the power, and direction of God, they quitted Egypt, and took their way towards Canaan. As they passed through the wilderness of Arabia, they received this covenant, which organized them as a nation, "at the holy Mount." In synopsis it was written upon "two tables of stone," which Paul calls, "The tables of the covenant;" but in its enlarged form, and with its various rites, and ordinances, it extends through Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. God said, speaking from Sinai, to *all the people*, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar people unto me, above all people." And *the people answered*: "All that the Lord hath spoken, *we will do.*" This covenant is more especially called "*The law*;" not so much because of any peculiar moral principles it promulgates, since these, as we have seen, are the same with those of every other covenant, and must necessarily pervade all God's dispensations, being the inevitable emanations of his own holy nature, as because it constituted the *national government*, which was at the same time *the religion* of the Hebrew people.

You cannot but observe in this covenant, the same obvious purpose which characterized both the others, to keep Israel separate from all other nations, until the coming of Christ. This object was guarded by numerous and most stringent enactments. For example: "Thou shalt not," was the language of one of the laws, "make marriages with them. Thy daughter shalt thou not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son." All their *social*, as well as their domestic intercourse, was so regulated that an Israelite might not, in any sense, be connected as an equal, with a Gentile, of whatever class. On this subject Peter said, addressing his Christian brethren, "Ye know that it is an unlawful thing, for a man that is a Jew to keep company with, or come unto one of another nation." In what appeared to them to be a violation of this covenant—for as yet the Christians seemed not to understand that in the coming of Christ its purposes were consummated, and that it had passed away—this apostle preached the gospel in the house of Cornelius, the Roman Centurion. The disciples instantly, upon learning this fact, upbraided and contended with him, saying: "Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them." The fundamental laws of Israel made all uncircumcised people "unclean" to them. They were not permitted to be socially in the same house with Gentiles, to be companions of such, nor even to eat at the same table with them. All such intercourse was a religious pollution, and a moral degradation. Thus did the covenant of Sinai concur with the other two, in keeping Israel apart from all other nations, until "the covenant of promise in Christ," to Abraham should be fulfilled.

We have now examined "the covenants of the law," and seen their nature, and especially the grand purpose of them all. I have said that this purpose was still further aided, by the *inspired history* contained in the word of God.

This history is for the most part, recorded in the books of Moses, and Joshua, the Judges, and Ruth, Samuel, and the Kings, the Chronicles, and Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Prophets. Often in its perusal, have you perhaps, earnestly desired more of detail. But detail would have rendered the Bible inconveniently voluminous, and was besides unnecessary to the purpose contemplated, which demanded so much only, as that when Messiah should come, the means of establishing his claims should be perfect. That part of inspired history, however, which is most important to this end, is contained in the *genealogies* with which the whole Bible so much abounds. These genealogies had previously been scrupulously observed, but they were subsequently enjoined, and regulated by the law of Moses, which is identical with the covenant of Sinai. A learned Jewish Rabbi, of the last age, who afterwards became a christian, and a minister, writing of the testimony for the Messiahship of Christ, drawn from the genealogies, remarks:- "I cannot proceed without observing, and admiring the wonderful provision which was made for this purpose, in the law of Moses. Our nation [Israel] was not only divided into several tribes, but each tribe into several families. And as every tribe had a distinct inheritance, which obliged them to keep genealogies of their several families, so to make them more exact, and punctual in this record, no alteration of inheritance was allowed, for longer than the year of Jubilee, which returned every fifty years. And then every one that could clear his pedigree, and make out his right to the inheritance of his ancestors, was to be reinstated in the possession of it. This made it every one's interest to preserve his genealogy. But what still further contributed to this end, and made them the more careful in the matter, was the law of *lineal retreats*. By this law, upon failure of an heir in any family, the next of kin was to be heir at law. Thus was every tribe incited not only to take care of its own genealogy, but of that also of the several families of its kindred, that by knowing the several degrees of proximity of their blood, they might be able at any time, upon failure of an heir, to make out their title to the inheritance of their fathers. This was the method to be taken throughout their generations, so that when the fullness of the time should come for Messiah to appear, he might by this means easily, and certainly, prove his lineal descent, from the seed of Abraham, from the tribe of Judah, and from the family of David." How often do thoughtless readers of the Bible, look upon these catalogues as useless impediments, if not positive defects. At most, they inspire them with no special interest. In the light of these facts, however, you perceive that they are really chains of pearls, and to every christian of priceless worth. They are, therefore, recorded at great length, in both the Old and the New Testament, and their freedom from error is vouched by their inspiration. As evincive of the Messiahship of Jesus, they are introduced into two of the gospels. Their testimony is direct and most conclusive. And it is also worthy of remark, that Matthew who writes for the Jews, extends his catalogue back only, as far as Abraham, the father of Israel, to whom the second promise of Messiah was made; but that Luke, who writes for the Gentiles, carries his to Adam, the primeval father of mankind, to whom was given the *original* pledge of a Deliverer from sin. Such was the design of the history, and the genealogies, contained in the divine oracles. They were auxiliaries to "the covenants of the law," to identify and designate the Saviour of men.

One other form of testimony previously provided, demands in this connection, a moment of our attention. The Redeemer himself refers to it when he says, "All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in

the Psalms, concerning me." These together, embrace the whole of the Old Testament, and it is in every part full of Christ. I may not here, descend to particulars. Well do you know how minutely the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, describe the person, and work of our Lord Jesus Christ; his miracles, his teaching; his persecutions, his betrayal, his sufferings, his death, his burial, his resurrection, his ascension, and his glorious intercession at the right hand of the Father on high; not "one jot, nor one tittle" of which has failed; all has been fulfilled. They have received their accomplishment in Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Is it a question of infinite importance to the faith of all nations, by what means Messiah when he comes, shall be known with positive certainty, to be the very Christ promised in the covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, with Jacob, with Judah, and with David? We have now seen how those means were provided, by divine wisdom, and goodness. The result proposed was perfectly secured by the operation of "the covenants of the law;" which are the covenant that gave to Israel a prescribed territory, and made them a separate nation; the covenant of circumcision, by which they were distinguished personally, from all other men; and the covenant of Sinai, which gave them a national government; and by the auxiliaries of these covenants, which are the history, and genealogy of the people of God; and the delineations of Christ, in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms. The forms, ordinances, and rites enjoined in these covenants, were obligatory upon the Hebrews only. Moral principles, I have said, were the same in every dispensation of God. In all these covenants they were identical with each other, and with those of the law under which man was originally created, and to bring us back to which, is the great design of the gospel of Christ. Truth, justice, and purity, are of eternal obligation, and have ever been, and must ever be, binding alike upon all men. Not so the ceremonies of the covenants, which gave outward character to the religion of the Mosaic economy, except in so far as sacrifices, and the Sabbath were involved, which were enjoined in Eden, and belonged to mankind. The forms, ordinances, and rites peculiar to Israel, belonged alone to Israel, and their observance by Gentiles was not obedience to God, because they were not commanded by God. Gentiles were, we have seen, as much interested in the certification of Messiah as was Israel; but he was to spring not from them, but from Israel; therefore, until his appearing, Israel must be distinguished from all other men. "The fullness of the time" at length came, and Messiah appeared. By all these, and many other "infallible proofs," Jesus of Nazareth demonstrated his claims to be received as "The seed of the woman;" "the Son of Abraham;" the promised "Shiloh;" "the offspring of David;" "the King of Israel," "Immanuel, God with us." He is the Messiah.

THE COVENANTS

by R.B.C. Howell

CHAPTER VII

PHILOLOGY OF THE COVENANTS

*Meaning of their terms; authorities; illustrations; expositions
as to the seed of Abraham; the conversion of the nations
to Christ; perpetual possession of Canaan; perpetuity of David's throne.*

"WHATSOEVER things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience, and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope." But how can we have such patience, comfort and hope, unless we correctly understand and properly appreciate the scriptures? This remark is especially applicable in relation to the covenants now under consideration. Let us therefore look somewhat more carefully into the import of the language in which they are expressed. To these covenants all competent Biblical interpreters, of every class, agree in attributing a *peculiar philology*. Their promises were, in one sense, undoubtedly intended to be literally understood, and fulfilled. But their true legitimate import does not terminate here. No one who studies them, can fail to perceive that they convey a second and higher meaning, full of the deepest interest and importance. Examine the covenants themselves, and you will be struck with a phraseology inconsistent with the expectation of only a simple literal fulfillment. Study their various expositions by the prophets, and apostles, and you will at once learn that *they* received and interpreted them, as containing also a *second and higher sense*; a sense which indeed, pervades the substance of the whole kingdom of grace in Jesus Christ. This *higher meaning* of the covenants, it is our present purpose to establish, and ascertain, that by their teachings our faith may be invigorated and our hopes confirmed.

Let us in the prosecution of this design, refer, in the first place, to the teachings on this subject, of some of our most learned and mature divines. I might adduce readily, in support of the doctrine now announced, the testimony of many of the brightest names in the constellation of theological science. I shall however, satisfy myself with the evidence of two only, since "In the mouth of two witnesses every word shall be established." "That the covenant with Abraham," says Dr. Carson, "has a *letter* and a *spirit*, is not a theory formed to serve a purpose. It is consonant to every part of the Old Dispensation, and is the only sense that can harmonize it with the New Testament. The temple was the house of God, in the letter; believers are so in the spirit. To call any house the house of God, is as much below the sense which the same phrase has when it is applied to the church of Christ, as to call the nation of Israel the people of God, is below the sense which that phrase has when applied to the spiritual Israel. Besides, there are many things spoken about the house of God in the letter, in terms that can only fully suit the spirit. "I have surely," said Solomon, "built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide forever." The incongruity of supposing *him*, whom 'the heaven of heavens cannot contain,' to dwell in a *house forever*, as a settled habitation, is removed only by referring it to the spirit." "Christ's body is the only temple of which this is fully true. God did not dwell in the temple built by Solomon forever." That temple ceased to exist twenty five centuries ago. "But in the spirit it is accomplished, in its utmost extent." In

another place, the same distinguished writer observes : -"For the accomplishment of the grand purpose that all nations should be blessed in Abraham, he had three promises. First, a numerous posterity; which was fulfilled in the letter, to the nation of Israel. It was fulfilled in the spirit, by the divine constitution that makes all believers the children of Abraham." "The second was, that he would be a God to him, and his seed; which was fulfilled in the letter, by his protection of Israel in Egypt, his delivering them from bondage," and his subsequent dealings with that nation. "This promise is fulfilled in the spirit, by God's being a God to all believers, and to them alone, in a higher sense than he ever was to Israel" as a nation. "The third promise was of the land of Canaan; fulfilled in the letter to Israel; and in the spirit fulfilled to the true Israel, in the heavenly inheritance," the possession of the Canaan above. "In accordance with this double sense of the covenant," "the typical ordinances, which exhibit the truths of the gospel in a figure, form one of the most conclusive evidences of Christianity, and present spiritual things to the mind, in so definite and striking a manner, that they add the greatest lustre to the doctrines of grace."

Dr. Macknight on this subject, is equally full and explicit. He says :- To understand the covenants in the whole of their meaning, it should be recollected that "in the early ages, the most approved method of communicating, and preserving knowledge, was by making sensible objects which were present, or not very distant in point of time, representations of things which are not the objects of sense, or which are future, but have some affinity to the things made use of to represent them. In this method of instruction, the character and actions of remarkable persons, and the ordinary events of life, were on some occasions, considered prefigurations of more distant persons and events, to which they had a resemblance. Of these facts we have in scripture numerous examples. Abraham, in respect of the faith, and obedience which he exercised, was a type of believers, of all nations." On this account he was declared "the father of all them that believe." "David, in his office, and kingdom, prefigured Christ, for which reason, by the latter prophets, Christ is called David." And further. "In scripture some future events are foretold in such a manner as to show, that they are themselves prefigurations, or predictions of other future events, still more remote. In such cases, when the first events came to pass, in the manner foretold, they were both a proof, and a pledge, that the more remote events, would take place in their season." According to these and kindred principles, are the covenants, and especially the covenants of the law, to be interpreted. "From what our Lord and his apostles have said of them, it appears that these covenants, besides their first meaning, which terminated in the literal persons and events spoken of, had a second and higher meaning, which was to be accomplished in persons and events more remote. Abraham's natural descendants, were considered in the covenants, as types of his seed by faith." All his natural seed were necessarily circumcised; and so to make them such, all his spiritual seed must necessarily be regenerated by the Spirit of God. Isaac's supernatural birth, by the power of God, represented Christ's supernatural birth by the power of God. The land of Canaan promised to the natural seed as their inheritance, was an emblem of the heavenly Canaan, the inheritance of the seed by faith. In short, the temporal blessings promised in the covenants to the natural seed, had all an allegorical, or second meaning, being images of those better things which God intended to bestow upon Abraham's seed by faith." Such then, is the true, and admitted philology of the covenants. Their language has "a letter and a spirit." They were fulfilled literally; but only perfectly fulfilled in their higher and spiritual meaning.

And now, in the second place, we apply ourselves to ascertain this meaning, in several particulars; and since throughout we have the guidance of the prophets and

apostles, we may confidently rely upon being directed to the true scriptural conclusions.

One of the promises to Abraham in these covenants, was that *his seed should be a countless multitude*. "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered;" "Look now towards heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; and he said unto him, so shalt thy seed be;" "In multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore." Was this promise, I ask, fully accomplished in the numbers of Abraham's literal descendants? Their numbers were indeed, very great; but were they as multitudinous as from the language of the covenants you might be led to suppose they would be? You cannot but doubt. Your embarrassment however, is instantly relieved when you recollect that God counts for his seed, those who partake of the *qualities of Abraham's mind*, as well as those who are related to him by *fleshy descent*, and that these promises were to be fulfilled not alone in their literal, but more especially in their second and higher import, which embraces both classes. "They are not," said Paul, in confirmation of this doctrine, "all Israel who are of Israel, neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children." "The children of the flesh, these are not the children of God." "The children of the promise are counted for the seed." "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" in the covenants. Our Lord expresses the sense of this spiritual relationship, when he says to the Jews, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." That the promises in the covenants looked to evangelical blessings, and embraced in their higher import, Gentiles as well as Jews, Paul avers in another place, when he says :- "It is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to *all the seed*; not that only which is of the law, [Jewish] but that also [the Gentile] which is of the faith of Abraham." The covenants contemplated therefore, not his natural seed only, but also all of every age and country, who were, or ever would be, believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

This understanding, of the promises before us, evidently, as is shown by their teaching, was received and acted upon by the prophets, no less firmly than by the apostles. They predicted the great multiplication of Abraham's *spiritual seed*, under the figure of a great increase in his *natural progeny*. "Sing, O heavens," said Isaiah, "and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O ye mountains; for the Lord hath comforted his people and will have mercy upon his afflicted." "Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold! *All these* gather themselves together, and come to thee!" "Thy waste and desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now, be too narrow, by reason of the inhabitants." "The children thou shalt have after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait far me. Give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart," "*These, where had they been?* Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will lift up mine hand to *the Gentiles*, and set up my standard to *the people*; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders; and kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." Again. "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of their habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand, and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." And again. "The dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first, he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, and afterwards did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The *people* that walked in darkness, have seen a *great light*. They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon *them* hath the light shined." "For unto us *a child is born*, unto us *a son* is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful; Counselor; the Mighty God; the Everlasting Father; the Prince of Peace." In these and like terms do the prophets represent the conversion of the Gentiles to Christ, their adoption to augment the number of the seed of Abraham, and thus to accomplish the fulfillment of the promise in the covenants. No longer now, do you hesitate. You feel assured that the divine word is fully justified. And that the saved in Christ of all ages, the seed of Abraham in the higher sense, is really innumerable, John the apostle, bears most pleasing testimony. In anticipation, he beheld the redeemed, when their numbers were complete, and exclaimed, "Lo, a *great multitude* which *no man could number*, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb; "forever and ever." Thus we see perfectly fulfilled, one of the promises of the covenants with Abraham.

Another of these promises guarantees to Abraham and Israel *the perpetual possession of the land of Canaan* :- "Unto thy seed will I give this land;" "I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it;" "I will give to thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession."

But how could Abraham and his seed possess forever, *literally*, the land of Canaan? In the sense intended, God assuredly gave them the land. Personally however, Abraham did not *himself* possess it; nor did his descendants, until after nearly five hundred years. At last they received it, and God protected them in its enjoyment for many ages. But did these events complete the fulfillment of the promise before us? Israel inherited Canaan for a season; they were then driven thence; many centuries have since passed, and they are to this day, wanderers among all nations. The promise is not literally fulfilled in all its extent, nor indeed can it, in the nature of things possibly be, in the present world; since to possess an earthly inheritance forever, men must live forever upon earth, and the things of this life must have no end. The promise evidently contemplated not alone a Canaan upon earth, but more especially a Canaan in heaven, an immortal spiritual life. The former he gave to Abraham's natural seed; the latter he bestows upon his seed by faith; all those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ. And so Abraham and all the early saints understood, and received these promises of the covenant. They took them not alone in their literal import, but also in their higher spiritual signification. Of this fact the apostles give direct testimony. "By faith," said Paul, "Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive as an inheritance obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went. 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 in 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*, that is a *heavenly country*." Their faith was directed therefore, not exclusively to the earthly country, but also, and more especially to the "*heavenly country*," of which the *earthly* was but an emblem, and

which clearly, they understood to be included in the promises of the covenants. The latter, and not the former, was to be, to all who had the faith of Abraham, "*an everlasting possession.*"

But *when*, and *how*, were the promises, according to *this meaning*, to be fulfilled? Not certainly, in this life, nor *fully* until after the resurrection of the body, since previous to that event their realization was evidently impossible.

But were the promises in the covenants understood, in the sense now suggested, by Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and David, and the other saints of literal Israel? Was this one meaning at least, in which they embraced, and believed them? With reference to these inquiries our Lord himself, reasoning with the Sadducees, who denied the existence of separate spirits, and also the resurrection of the body, amply instructs us. He said, "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord, The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; for he is not the God of the dead, but of the living." The souls of these patriarchs were therefore, still living, though their bodies were dead; and the promises in the covenants taught them that their bodies would be raised from the dead, since in their higher spiritual import, they secured to them the enjoyment of the land of Canaan *forever*. If they were not to be raised from the dead to this end, how could the promises ever be fulfilled? And what was true of them, in these respects, was true of all others in similar circumstances. And further. That the Canaan in which they were to dwell after the resurrection, was to be not on earth, but in heaven, is plain from the preceding part of this same conversation of our Redeemer. He expressly calls the *promised* country, "*that world,*" in contrast with the *literal* country, which he calls "*this world:*" - "The children of *this world* [literal Canaan] marry, and are given in marriage. But they who shall be accounted worthy to obtain *that world* [spiritual 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 to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." That the covenants therefore, in their higher meaning, taught the resurrection of the dead, and the glorious realities of heaven, no one can question, since such was their construction by our Lord Jesus Christ himself. And still further. Because they did not understand the covenants in this sense, Messiah directly charges the Sadducees with culpable ignorance;- "Ye do err," said he, "not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." Paul also gives us an exposition of these covenants, and in exact consonance with that which we have just seen, from our Lord Jesus Christ. In his defense before King Agrippa, he hesitated not to say, and in the presence of the Jewish chiefs :- "I stand, and am judged, for the hope of the promise made unto our fathers, unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God, day and night, hope to come." But to what promise made to the fathers, and which when Paul spoke, remained to the twelve tribes unfulfilled, did they hope to come? Paul himself thus explains:- "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you [King Agrippa] that God should *raise the dead?*" And in another place, when before Felix, he said :- "I confess unto thee, that after the way that they [the unbelieving Jews] call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things that are written in the law, and in the prophets, and have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." But where is the promise to the fathers, of the resurrection from the dead, written in the Law of Moses? It is written no where, unless it be in these covenants, nor even here, except in the sense in which they have now been explained. God will raise up from the dead, all the *spiritual seed* of

Abraham, and give them for *an everlasting possession*, that *Canaan above*, of which the *Canaan on earth* was the appointed emblem.

The children spiritually, of Abraham, are found alike, among both Jews and Gentiles, and to them all, are made the promises of the covenants; not to them and to their seed, as they were to Abraham; but to them as the seed of Abraham; nor to them literally, as to his natural descendants; but to them spiritually in their second, and higher meaning. The conversion of the Gentiles, gave to all the lovers of Christ, unbounded joy. The Jews have long resisted the grace of God, but the fullness of the time will ultimately come, and they too shall be converted. This *great event* is predicted by the prophets, under *the figure of the restoration of Israel from a long captivity, to the scenes of their own native home*. For example :- "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O [Messiah] Arm of the Lord." "Art thou not it [He] that hath dried the sea; the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head; they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away." And *when thus converted*, the delight that Israel will experience in Zion - not *literal Zion*, but the *Church of the Redeemer* - are depicted under *the emblems of rebuilding and adorning their cities and enjoying the fruits of their own land*. "They shall build," say the prophets, "their old wastes; they shall raise up the former desolation; and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolation of many generations." "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins; and I will build it, as in the days of old." In other words, I will cause Israel to receive Christ, whom they have so long rejected. "And they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; and they shall make gardens, and eat the fruit of them." Their joy as Christians shall be complete.

The covenants in their full import, further teach *the future glory* of the sanctified in Jesus Christ our Lord.

These all, are spiritually, "Abraham's seed, and" therefore, "heirs according to the promise" in the covenants. Their immortality, and eternal life, are held forth, by both prophets and apostles, under the emblems of *renovated heavens*, and earth, the habitation of *restored and beautified Jerusalem*, and of the *fertile and ornamented land of Canaan*. "Behold," said God, by the prophet, "I create a new heavens, and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." "Be ye glad, and rejoice forever, in that which I create. For behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people. And the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her, nor the voice of crying." What shall we understand by all this? The new heavens, and earth, so excellent that the former are no more even remembered; and the new Jerusalem, in which God himself will rejoice with his people, and in which never more shall be any pain or sorrow? Isaiah speaks of them as if they were here upon earth. John the apostle, repeats the prophecy, and declares that it then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation, and godliness, looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God?" "Nevertheless, we according to his promise, [in the prophets] look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

The same philology, I will further at present, only remark, must also be applied in its interpretation to the covenant as repeated to David. To him God said, and the declaration was frequently repeated:- "Thy seed will I establish forever; and build up thy throne to all generations." He did indeed literally establish David's seed, but not forever; and literally built up David's throne, but not to all generations. The terms of the covenant must be accomplished. In their literal import they have unquestionably failed. It remains only therefore, for us to expect them in their second and higher meaning. And they are accordingly, gloriously fulfilled in the person, and reign of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; "whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and whose dominion is forever and ever." "David's kingdom," says the distinguished Robert Hall, "was renewed and improved into higher glories, in the person of Jesus Christ, the true, spiritual, substantial David; of whose kingdom (it cannot reasonably be doubted by any) that of David himself was a type. The empire of Christ was the sequel, and continuation of that which had originated in the son of Jesse; and hence the Saviour is so often styled 'The son of David.' The angel at his nativity announced him as 'He who should be great,' who should sit upon the throne of his father David, and of whose kingdom there should be no end." Already in a previous chapter, I have spoken of this covenant somewhat at length. I have referred to it here again, only to show that its promises are of such a nature that their perfect fulfillment is impracticable, except in their higher sense, and in which they bring prominently before us, the everlasting kingdom, and perpetual dominion of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Thus we have seen as briefly as possible, *the philology of the covenants*, in the progress of our investigation of which, we have shown that while they must be understood in their plain literal sense, they have palpably also, a second and higher meaning, which to comprehend them truly, you must study, and understand; this meaning we have traced, explained, and illustrated, as contained in the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and in the covenants of the law, all of which guaranteed to Abraham, an innumerable seed, and perpetual possession and enjoyment of the land of Canaan; and we have seen how these promises were, and are yet to be fulfilled, in the conversion of all nations, in the happiness of men upon earth, in the resurrection of the body, and in the everlasting glory in heaven of all the sanctified; and we have also seen how the covenant as repeated to David, is consummated in Jesus Christ our Lord, "In whom we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." "Of him, and through him, are all things; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

THE COVENANTS

by R.B.C. Howell

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OLD COVENANT AND THE NEW COVENANT.

The two classes of covenants, resolved into two covenants; their nature, and contrast; old covenant fulfilled, and superseded by the new; preparation of the Gentile world for Messiah's coming; nature and excellence of the gospel.

In addition to the covenant of works, which, as has been said, is peculiar in its character, and stands by itself, we have traced in the preceding chapters, *two classes* of covenants, of *three* each, and seen their nature, their purpose, their mutual relations, and their true interpretation. To all who study them attentively and intelligently, it must be apparent that they resolve themselves into substantially, *two* covenants; the one relating to Christ *directly*, and the other relating to him *indirectly*, being embodied in the *circumstances* which preceded his coming, and prepared the minds of men to receive him. You turn to the teachings of the evangelists and apostles, and your convictions on this subject are established and confirmed. Everywhere they speak of the one class (that which embraces all the covenants of the law) as *the old covenant*; and of the other class (that which includes all the covenants of the gospel) as *the new covenant*; and which to us are more familiarly known, as the *Old Testament* and the *New Testament*. The *three* covenants which composed the *law*, and which are therefore, one in effect, fixed the circumstances of which I have spoken, which preceded and prepared for the coming of Messiah. They grew naturally out of the promise to Abraham, that the Saviour should spring, according to the flesh, from his family. This promise of God in Christ to him, bore, consequently, the same relation to the covenants of the law, or the old covenant, that a constitution does to legislative enactments; the latter being designed to carry out in the best possible manner, the provisions of the former. With these facts before us, the reasons are obvious, why the whole dispensation of Moses is so often, and so appropriately denominated "*the law*;" not eminently the "*moral law*," but especially that law which was contained in "*ordinances*," and which the Saviour removed, "*nailing it to his cross*." In like manner, the three covenants that comprise the gospel, and which, also, in substance, are one, form the new covenant in the blood of Christ ;" "*the everlasting gospel*;" older than the law, but not visibly administered until after the law had been perfectly fulfilled, and had consequently passed away. As previously determined, "All the prophets, and the law, prophesied until John "the Baptist." "Since that time the kingdom of God [the gospel] is preached, and every man presseth into it."

If this statement of the subject needs further confirmation, the evidence is abundant, and at hand. Of the law, and the gospel—the Old, and New covenants—Paul speaks in language which can hardly be misunderstood. He characterises them, not as *one* covenant, developing itself in different forms; nor as *two* of the covenants which marked the history of the divine government; but as "*the two covenants*" of God. Both were in their place supremely excellent, and perfectly adapted to secure the ends for which they were respectively designed. Both were made necessary, by the

original violation of the covenant of works. Both were predicated upon the infinite grace of God. The one was the auxiliary of the other. But they were not both alike exalted. The gospel was unspeakably more glorious than the law, since *this* was the very soul of the plan of salvation, while *that* was a temporary institution only, "added because of transgression, till the seed [Christ] should come." Such were their nature and reciprocal relations. They are by an apostle, held up before you *in contrast*. "If," says Paul, "the ministration of death, [the old covenant; the law] written and engraven on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit [the new covenant; the gospel] be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious."

No part of the old covenant failed of its purposes. The law, and the prophets, were designed, as we have seen, to bear witness to Christ. When that office was performed, their mission was ended. Therefore, said our Redeemer, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." They were fulfilled. Messiah finished his work. The old covenant existed no more. The dispensation of Moses terminated. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Faithfully were all these truths taught in the days of the apostles, and yet it was then, and it is still difficult, to withdraw the minds of even intelligent Christians, from the observances of the old covenant, and fix them unwaveringly upon a present Messiah. They "cannot steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished." "Their minds are blinded." The disposition is perpetually manifesting itself, "to engraft Judaism upon the gospel of Christ." To all such Christians Paul addresses himself thus:—"It is written that Abraham had two sons; the one by a bond maid, the other by a free woman. But he of the bond woman was born after the flesh; and he of the free woman by promise. Which things are an allegory; for these are *the two covenants*; the one [the law, or old covenant] is from Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar; for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem that now is, and is in bondage with her children." The other [the gospel, or new covenant] is from Mount Zion, which gendereth to freedom, which is Sarah; for Sarah answereth to "Jerusalem which is above, which is free, and which is the mother of us all," who believe. In other words, Ishmael, although the son of Abraham, could not legally inherit his father's estate, because he was born of a slave, and was, therefore, himself a slave. So Israel after the flesh, were the children of Abraham, but were not on that account entitled to the gospel inheritance. "The children of the promise," not of the flesh, "were counted for the seed." Under the law, the children of the flesh, were the sons of the covenant of Sinai, and remained in bondage. Therefore, when introducing the gospel, John the Baptist said to the Pharisees and Sadducees, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance; and think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stone; to raise up children unto Abraham." Isaac was by promise. He was the son of a lawful wife, answering to the new covenant. He was free, and the legitimate heir of all. As he was, so are all true Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles—the children of promise. For with God there is no difference; "no respect of persons." They are free. They are the true "heirs of God, and joint heirs with our Lord Jesus Christ," of all that constitutes the kingdom of glory. Among the many that

are found in the epistles, I will offer but one other apostolic exposition of the "two covenant;" and which will also serve to show the abrogation of the law, and the independent, and effective character of the gospel:- "Christ hath obtained a more excellent ministry [than that of Moses] by how much also, he is the Mediator of a better covenant [than that of the law, and] which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. But finding fault with them, he saith, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make [bring into visible administration] a new covenant, with the [spiritual] house of Israel, and the [spiritual] house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, [the old covenant] when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they continued not in my covenant, [did not obey it] and I regarded them not [cast them off] saith the Lord. For this is the covenant [a gracious gospel 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 heart; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, 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. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth, and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away."

Thus have we seen that the old covenant, or law, was fulfilled, and superseded by the new covenant, or gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Permit me in passing, briefly to observe, that there was also a preparation for the coming of Christ, necessary among the Gentile nations, as well as among the Hebrew people. This preparation was peculiar, and essential to the ends proposed by divine grace.

The truths of the gospel, and especially those which teach that by the deeds of the law, whether of the original moral code, common to all the covenants, and which our first parents transgressed, or of the law of Moses, "no flesh living can be justified; that if man be saved at all, it must be by the intervention of another; that all even the holiest of his acts, are sinful since they are defective, either in themselves, or in their motives; and that even if it could be shown that any single acts are perfect, there are others that are sinful; these are the last truths that men are disposed to believe or admit. They needed to be proved by experiment. And their practical demonstration is found, in the history of all nations, and ages. The world was not without some light from heaven; but this light was disregarded. Four thousand years past, and who sought after God? The Gentiles did not like to retain God in their knowledge; and the Jews corrupted, and abused the revelation with which they were entrusted. So far was man everywhere, from showing any tendency to

Regain, self-raised, his native seat,

that in all places his depravity became more and more intense, until at the time of the advent of Messiah, the world, and the civilized world especially, had reached an unsurpassed pre-eminence in wickedness. "*Civil Government* had no power to reclaim men from sin. The experiment had been tried under every form, and all were found alike incapable of raising him from his corruptions. Unless, therefore, help could arise from some other source, it was evident that his condition was hopeless. *Learning* was fully tested. From Pythagoras to Socrates, questions of physical, and moral truth, had been incessantly discussed. The wisdom of that age of the world reached its perfection, in the intellectual and moral reign of the Sophists. And what

were the results? The noblest of all their philosophers, who proved 'from the things that are made,' the existence and attributes of God; and from his character, the relations he sustains to men, paid for his fidelity to his principles, with the forfeiture of his life. His sentiments revived in the teachings of Plato, whose themes were indeed beautiful, but like the stars, they were too high above us to be of any real use. Aristotle too, with all his strength, and clearness of intellect, contributed nothing to practical morals and religion? What could philosophy do? It could analyse with matchless skill, the passions that sway the human heart, but it had no power to break the bondage of sin. And *sculpture*, and *poetry*, and *eloquence*, had all framed their faultless models, and had all ministered to vice. *Taste* presided in every department of life; but it was taste revelling in licentiousness. Forms of government, learning, art, poetry, eloquence, taste, all had failed to win men from sin, and the proof was complete that 'the world by wisdom knew not,' and never could know God.

Yet science, literature, cultivation, which thus in the providence of God had arisen, were, in another aspect, of unspeakable value. They were indispensable as a preparation of the Gentiles for Messiah's advent. The new covenant—the gospel—to be promulgated by "God manifest in the flesh," embodies a system of spiritual truth, which without such training, the people could never have understood, nor appreciated. While, therefore, all these advantages clearly proved that something higher was needed, they placed men in an attitude to examine, and intelligently to receive that exalted boon. The claims of the gospel must, for example, be tested by miracle. But the state of knowledge in a barbarous age, would have rendered miracles— which in all cases, must suspend, or change, or reverse the laws of nature—wholly useless, since unless these laws are to a certain extent known, it cannot be determined when, in specified instances, any of these results actually occur. Therefore the people could not have known whether the wonders they saw, were really miracles, the proper results of certain natural laws, or mere delusions practiced upon their credulity. And so in regard to other forms of testimony, by which the gospel is sustained. An uncultivated community would have been incompetent judges; and even had they been convinced themselves, their witness would have been met by others, with utter incredulity. The cultivation of *philosophy* therefore, and the sciences generally, prepared men to examine, approve, and embrace the glorious Messiah. And a highly cultivated *literature* was also equally demanded. The language of an ignorant people, would have been unequal to the task of embodying, and transmitting the sublime conceptions of Christianity. This could have been done only by a language which had reached the highest point of cultivation of which language is capable. The Greek was selected, as the medium of the New Testament, and in every excellence, never has it been surpassed. Indeed for strength, and flexibility, for the expression of logical distinctions, and of the tenderest sentiment, for lyrical softness, the highest imagination and the full power of eloquence, it is inimitable. This language had immediately preceding Messiah's advent, become the passion, and was the prevailing speech of the civilized, and especially of the learned world. Whatever was written in Greek, was at once studied by all who were familiar with books. These successive advances necessarily tardy, in science, literature, and art, which had now reached their highest point of excellence, were thus rendered effective preparations among the Gentiles, for his coming, whose claims were to be so tested as never afterwards to be called in question, and whose doctrines are to be examined, and believed by the whole world.

We now for a moment, in conclusion, consider the exalted design, and nature of this new covenant— the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These are presented in a single sentence, by the Saviour himself:—"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And Paul said to the Corinthian; "I declare unto you *the gospel*, which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand, by which also ye are saved;" "how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures." To Timothy he said, "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "We preach," said he, in another place, "Christ crucified; to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." But still more fully and explicitly;—"The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live, should not, henceforth, live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." "Therefore, if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away; behold all things have become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ." "For God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" and "hath made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." In these, and like inspired expositions, we have a true representation of the gospel covenant. It teaches us that we are depraved, and sinful, and that while we remain in this condition, we must continue under the wrath of God, and thus wholly disqualified for happiness, and heaven; it teaches us that the mercy of God, originating exclusively in himself, could reach the estate of guilty and lost men, only through the great sacrifice of his Son, our adorable Redeemer, who came into our world, fulfilled in our behalf all the claims of divine justice, and through his own mediation offers us salvation, and eternal life; it teaches us that "with this sacrifice God is well pleased," and can through him, consistently pardon the sinner, and does pardon all, however guilty, who believe in his Son our Saviour; and it teaches us that he sends into the heart of every true penitent, the Holy Spirit, by whose ministry he is regenerated, sanctified, and prepared to be an eternal inhabitant of the kingdom of glory.

Thus have we seen that the two classes of covenants, which have passed in review before us, are resolved in effect, into two covenants; that they are so received, and expounded by Christ, and his apostles; that the old covenant, or testament—the Mosaic law—was in its nature, although glorious in itself, and in its purposes, necessarily temporary, and superseded by the gospel—the new covenant, or testament; that the Gentile, as well as the Jewish world, needed a preparation, and what that preparation was, for the coming of Messiah; and the nature and excellence of that new covenant, which is "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." Thanks to "the Father of all our mercies," redemption is now no longer a matter of promise merely. It is a joyful reality. Christ Jesus, the Messiah, the Deliverer, has come, and accomplished his exalted mission. The work is done. It is our privilege, and honor, to live in the midst of the light and glory of the gospel.

THE COVENANTS

by R.B.C. Howell

CHAPTER IX.

THE TEACHINGS OF THE COVENANTS.

Messiahship of Jesus; form of the Christian Church; purposes of God in relation to the Israelites; Church not visible until the coming of Christ; qualifications for membership; signs and seals of the covenants; consummation of the covenant in Christ's second coming.

ALL the covenants recorded in the word of God, having reference directly, and indirectly, to our redemption from sin, and salvation by Christ, are now before you. It remains only that we consider briefly some few of their doctrinal, and practical teachings. I say some few, and briefly, because to refer to them all, and in detail, would require more time and space than can now be commanded, and I must compress them into a single chapter. How vividly do these covenants illustrate the grace of God in your redemption; the miserable condition of men in their fallen state; the love, and goodness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! How affecting the appeal which they wake to your gratitude, and obedience! With a full soul, as you contemplate them, you exclaim with Paul; "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"¹ But all these, and many other like considerations, we must pass over in silence.

1. One among the most impressive lessons taught us by the covenants is, I remark, in the first place, the demonstration they give of the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth.

Of all the covenants of the law especially, this was the primary purpose. These, as we have seen, provided, to a great extent, the testimony required, to place the faith of both Jews and Gentiles upon an immovable foundation. Is not the proof of his Messiahship given by them, and their auxiliaries, perfectly conclusive? Was not Jesus the Christ? Is the promised Deliverer yet to come? Then all is lost irrecoverably. Come when he will, it never can be certainly known that he is the promised Messiah. No means exist—no means ever can exist— by which his claims may be satisfactorily established. The Jews from whom he was to spring are no longer a nation, but driven centuries since, from their country, are in hopeless exile. Their laws which God pledged himself to maintain until his advent, ceased to be administered eighteen hundred years since. Long ago has past the prophetic period for his appearing. The genealogies of the tribes are all wholly lost. Not a Jew can be found on earth, who, as they themselves confess, knows, or ever can know, whether he is a descendant of David, or of some other Hebrew family. Messiah not yet come! Then all prophecy, and all history must be discredited. The Bible itself is a fable, and no confidence can be placed in its revelations. Religion, in all its forms, is only a delicious dream! But, happily, we labor under no such uncertainties. God himself has provided, in these covenants, and their auxiliaries, against all indefiniteness. The proof that Jesus is the Christ, is full and "infallible." He came at the precise time, and in the very place, fixed by prophecy, for the coming of Messiah; all the collateral events occurred which

were predicted to transpire at his appearing; the family from which he sprung; the place of his birth, and of his teaching; the works which he did; the events previously predicted, of his life, betrayal, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension; all these leave upon the intelligent, and unprejudiced mind, no doubts. It is absolutely certain that Jesus is the Christ, the Saviour of men.

2. The teachings of the covenants, truly interpreted, give us, secondly, important aid in determining the character, and form of the visible Christian church.

They concur with the New Testament, in establishing the fact, that it is "A congregation of faithful men, in which the true word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered, according to Christ's ordinances, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."² It is therefore, a purely spiritual body, *called out of the world, by the gospel*³ and formally organized for the service of Christ, according to his own laws. In professed agreement with these doctrines, but practically, in direct opposition to them, it has been very generally assumed, that "The Jewish society before Christ, and the Christian society after Christ, are one, and the same church, under different dispensations." This proposition, you must, from the examination through which we have passed, be convinced cannot be sustained. The covenants themselves, plainly show that the Jewish church, and the Christian church, are organized upon different, and dissimilar covenants; that they are composed of wholly unlike materials—the one of the entire Hebrew nation, the other of "faithful men," believers only; that one was a figure of the other; and that when the gospel church, the reality, was visibly organized, the Jewish church, the figure, ceased to exist. The covenants of the law, were the charter of the Jewish church. They were designed, as we have seen, to bear witness to Christ. When he came, and was acknowledged, their purpose being accomplished, they were superseded, since when the charter expired, then of course, expired with it, all the peculiar privileges it conferred. The Jewish church, therefore, was not continued in any form. The *new covenant* was now introduced into visible administration. This is the charter of the Christian church. If the apostles teach us truly, these churches were so unlike, that the removal of the Jewish was necessary to the introduction of the Christian:- "He *taketh away* the first [covenant says Paul,] that he *may establish* the second."⁴ And David speaking prophetically of Messiah, says:- "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent; Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedeck."⁵ In exposition of this passage, Paul remarks:- "If perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should arise, after the order of Melchizedeck, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity, a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of whom no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah, [such is the stipulation of the covenant] of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is far more evident," that "there is a disannulling of the commandment going before [the old covenant] for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law [the Jewish covenant] made nothing perfect; [being figurative merely] but the bringing in of a better hope [the gospel covenant] did; by the which hope we draw nigh unto God."⁶ Can that which is removed, and that which is placed in its stead, be after all, substantially the same thing? Can the law be changed, and still continue to be the same law? If not, then the covenant of the Christian church, is another covenant than that of the Jewish church; having a new Mediator, a new order of priests, new sacrifices, and a new service. It follows, therefore, that "The Jewish society before Christ, and the Christian society after Christ, are *not* one and the same church under different

dispensations." Consequently all the deductions from this source to which men are wont to resort, in reference to the nature, form, and ordinances of the Christian church, are baseless, and necessarily fall to the ground.

These conclusions, so obviously scriptural, and true, are, I am glad to find, beginning to be acknowledged by the learned, and candid, even in the ranks of our Pedobaptist brethren. I might introduce several authorities, but will satisfy myself with one only. Dr. Hodge, one of the Professors in the Princeton Theological Seminary says:- "It is to be remembered that there were two covenants made with Abraham. By the one his natural descendants through Isaac, were constituted a commonwealth— an external community; by the other his spiritual descendants were constituted into a church, [invisible of course, since, at that time, the only formal organization was that of the law.] The parties to the former covenant, were God, and the nation; to the other, God, and his true people. The promises of the national covenant, were national blessings; the promises of the spiritual covenant (i.e. the covenant of grace) were spiritual blessings, as reconciliation, holiness, and eternal life. The conditions of the one covenant [the old] were circumcision, and obedience to the law; the conditions of the other were, and ever have been, faith in the Messiah, as 'the seed of the woman,' the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. There cannot be a greater mistake than to confound the national covenant with the covenant of grace, [that is, the old covenant with the new] and the commonwealth founded on the one, with the church founded on the other. When Christ came, the commonwealth was abolished, and there was nothing put in its place. The church [now made visible] remained. There was no external covenant, nor promise of external 'blessings, on condition of external rites, and subjection. There was a spiritual society, with spiritual promises, on condition of faith in Christ." "The church is, therefore, in its essential nature, a company of believers, and not an external society, requiring merely external profession as the condition of membership."⁷ This is the true testimony. It must be so. It cannot be otherwise. The Jewish church which rejected, and cast out the Christian church, could not be substantially that very Christian church which it cast out, and rejected. The Jewish church into which its members were born by natural birth, could not be the same church with the Christian into which none can lawfully enter but such as are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."⁸ Was the church which contained the Scribes, and Pharisees, and Sadducees, the most open, determined, and malignant enemies of Christ, the same church with that into which none can enter, but those who love Christ with all their soul, and mind and strength?

The church of Israel, was the nation of Israel, and, as a whole, could no more be the church of Christ, in the New Testament sense of that phrase, than the American nation, can be called the church of Christ.

3. The covenants, thirdly, clearly teach us that all the peculiar purposes of God in relation to the Jewish nation, are now fully accomplished.

Their separate nationality was, as we have seen, secured, and perpetuated, as an essential part of those means by which the fulfilment was certified, of the "promise of God in Christ to Abraham." When Christ came, and the proof of his Messiah-ship was established, that end was gained perfectly. They, in the providence of God, were soon afterwards dispersed, and have never since enjoyed a national being. And why should they? What is to be gained by it? Yet it is believed by them, and the opinion prevails very generally among Christians, that they will at some future day, be

restored to Canaan, and there yet become a great nation. Are the Jews really to be restored as a nation, to Canaan? If they are restored, by what laws will they there be governed? By those of the old covenant? They are all fulfilled, and superseded. As the laws of God, they no longer exist. Sacrifices, oblations, priesthood, circumcision, are not now even when practised by Jews, obedience to God. Will they be governed by the new covenant. Then they will be Christians, and why should they be separated from other Christians of different races? But do not the prophecies declare that they will be restored? Let us examine them. Among the passages which are considered most conclusive on this subject, are such as these:- "Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen whither they have gone, and gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall reign over them all; and they shall no more be two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all; neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions. But I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them. So shall they be my people; and I will be their God; and David my servant, shall be king over them; and they shall all have one Shepherd; and they shall walk in my judgments, and obey my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children forever; and my servant David shall be their prince forever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; and I will place them, and multiply them; and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them forever more."⁹

The nation, and kingdom, that will not serve thee, shall perish; yea, they shall be utterly wasted. "Thy people shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever."¹⁰ If these, and similar passage, guaranty the restoration of Judah and Israel to the land of Canaan, literally as a nation, they must of course be interpreted literally. But is such an interpretation reasonable? Will legitimate Biblical criticism tolerate it? Where are the ten tribes of Israel? They do not exist upon the earth. How then can they return literally? Will the restored twelve tribes in their land, where they are to increase, and multiply, be all righteous? If so, they will be what no nation ever has been. Will all other nations be either tributary to them, or refusing such subjection, be utterly destroyed? Is David to rise from the dead, and to reign over united Judah, and Israel, forever? Is this earthly state to continue without end? And that covenant of peace, and that sanctuary, or temple, which they are to enjoy forever, what are they? Something different from the gospel, and its blessings? Will all this occur *literally*? To believe it is wholly out of the question, not only because it is unreasonable, but also because it directly contradicts many of the most important teachings of the New Testament. How then is it to be interpreted? Plainly, like all other similar portions of the old testament, according to its figurative sense. Having seen thus much, the meaning is at once obvious. All these texts, under the gorgeous figures which enshroud them, of the return to Canaan of all Israel, their prosperity, and their triumphs, predict simply, *their ultimate conversion to christianity*, their union with the people of God, that Messiah, (the spiritual David, unto whom all nations shall be subdued,) shall reign over them, and that purged from their sins by his blood, they shall rejoice in the covenant of peace, (the gospel of Christ,) and in their king Messiah, and in their glorious sanctuary, (the church of the Redeemer,) forever more.

Thus have we seen that there is no reason for the further separate nationality of the Jews, and no scripture in support of the opinion that they will ever be restored

literally to Canaan. And, besides, the gospel has long ago, "broken down the middle wall of partition" between the Jews, and the Gentiles. Henceforth "they are one fold," and have but "one Shepherd." "God is no respecter of persons." In his sight there are no distinctions among men; "neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free."¹¹ The rejection of Christ's doctrine by the Jews, led to the persecution, and dispersion of the disciples, and thus became "the riches of the world." What now shall be their conversion, "but life from the dead?"¹² When "the fullness of the Gentiles shall have come in;" that is, when Christians of all nations, shall become Christians indeed; shall act towards Israelites as they do towards other men ; their prejudices will cease, they too will be converted, and make up their part of the fullness of the riches of Christ. The Jews were the "true olive tree," of which Christ is the root and fatness. When they rejected him, they as branches, were broken off, and the Gentiles, branches of the wild olive, were grafted in; or took their place in relation to Christ. But when their unbelief shall cease, they shall be restored to the favor of God, as humble followers of him "who died for all, that those who live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again."

4. From these covenants, together with the history of Israel, and instructions of the prophets, you learn, fourthly, that the gospel church was not visible until the coming of Christ.

Men eminently pious; deeply imbued with the spirit of true religion, existed in every age; not among the Jews only, but also among the Gentiles. They were all believers in the Messiah promised as yet to come. But they were not visibly organized as the kingdom, or church of the Redeemer. The gospel covenant, which was their guide, and support, has existed, as we have seen, from "before the foundation of the world." It is, therefore, really the oldest of all the covenants. It is consequently, called the new covenant, not in respect of the date of its origin, but of the period of its visible administration, which did not commence until after the old covenant had served its purposes, was fulfilled, and had passed away. For all that concerned holiness, and salvation, it was, nevertheless, fully as effective immediately after the fall, as it is at this hour. Christ Jesus was "A Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."¹³ All who in any age have been saved, have obtained their deliverance through faith in him. Up, however, to the time of his personal appearing upon earth, there was no formal outward organization. The only external administration was legal, and typical. To any one who will maturely examine the subject, these facts must be apparent. Readily may you trace the approach of the church to the period of its visibility. Previous to the advent, the covenant, and kingdom of Christ, are ever spoken of, as being in the future. By Ezekiel Jehovah said, "I *will establish* unto you an everlasting covenant."¹⁴ And, in another place, "I *will bring* you into the bonds of the covenant."¹⁵ By Daniel he said, "In the days of these kings [the Roman Emperors] will the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms; and it shall stand forever"¹⁶ Thus did all the prophets speak of the church, up to that moment when the Old Testament dispensation was closed. The kingdom was not yet formally inaugurated. You open the new Testament, and what do you there find? John the Baptist comes, "preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is *at hand*."¹⁷ "Messiah the prince" appears. He is recognized in his baptism, as the "Son of God."¹⁸ Having entered upon his ministry, he proclaims of the kingdom, "It is *nigh* thee, even *at the doors*;" at this moment, "the kingdom of God is within you."¹⁹ To which an apostle adds, "Now *is come* the kingdom of our God."²⁰

It may be instructive to mark the precise point of time at which the church of Christ became a visible organization. To do this we must ascertain what it is exactly, which places the church in this visible *state*. It is as you will at once see, upon reflection, not spirituality, nor orthodoxy, nor both these together, but external form. Without spirituality, and orthodoxy, there can certainly be no true church. They are essential to its very existence. Yet these alone, do not constitute its visibility, since in that case it would have been visible long before the days of Abraham. And there are many men eminently pious, in the present day, who whatever may be their devotion to God, are not literally connected with the visible church; which could not be the case if spiritual qualities only, were necessary to that union. What more is required then, to make these good men members of the church? They must, I answer, be baptised, and receive the Lord's supper. These ordinances, therefore, mark the line of separation between the church and the world. In the truth of this statement, we have, happily, the concurrence of every denomination of Christians. They all teach that those who are baptised, and received at the Lord's table, are thus united with the church, and that those who are not so baptised, and received, whatever may be their piety, or excellence in other respect; are out of the visible church. These ordinances, doubtless, do not draw the line of distinction between the church and the world, exactly where God will place it at the last day, because they are administered by fallible men, who are liable to mistake the claims of those who receive them. Many, we have reason to fear, are in the visible church, who will not, at the last day, be found on the right hand of the Judge; and many are probably, not in the visible church, who will have a place then in the church triumphant. It is, nevertheless, true, that the ordinance, usually called sacraments, mark the established boundaries between the world and the visible church.

These principles are settled. Let them now be applied. John the Baptist began to draw the line of separation, by the administration of baptism to the repenting Israelites, thus making "ready a people prepared for the Lord." The disciples by their baptisms, made it still more distinct. Now the visibility began dimly to appear, as in the distant horizon, the faint outline of a towering mountain. Christ himself finished it when in an upper room, the same night in which he was betrayed, he instituted, and administered the sacred supper. At that hour the separation was complete, the kingdom set up, and the church arose visible and bright, like the morning sun, shining without a cloud. The next day he died for his people, upon the cross; he was buried; he rose again; he "ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, that he might give gifts unto men." Thenceforward when disciples were united with his followers, it is said of them, "The Lord added to the church daily, the saved."²¹ The exact point of time, therefore, at which the church of Christ became visible, was on the night of his betrayal, and at this moment of the conclusion of the sacred supper. From that moment it was the visible church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

5. From the covenants now before you, is derived, fifthly, rich information regarding the scriptural qualifications for membership in the visible church of the Redeemer.

Dr. Hodge, in the article already noticed,²² justly say; that "In no part of the New Testament is any condition of membership prescribed, other than that contained in the answer of Philip to the Eunuch who desired baptism, 'If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest.' Nor in the Old Testament is there any other condition prescribed." Only believers in Jesus Christ are entitled to the distinction. Unhappily, however, this fact does not command universal concurrence, and these covenants are appealed to, as proof that infants, as well as believers, are to be baptised, and

received into the church! And do they really furnish the authority claimed? It is assumed that "the covenant of promise to Abraham, of God in Christ," for him, and his seed, is equally, and in all ages, literally a covenant with every other believer, for him, and his seed! But can this proposition be true? If God fulfils the covenant with Abraham, and his seed, to every other believer, and his seed, he does so, of course, in accordance with the terms of the covenant. Now turn back to that covenant, if you please, and examine it closely, that you may see what its promises are, and ascertain how, in the first place, they are to be *fulfilled to every other believer*, as well as to Abraham. These promises were, that God would make of Abraham a great nation; that kings should descend from him; that he, and his posterity, should possess the whole land of Canaan; that he would bless him, and make him a blessing; and that he should be the father of Messiah. These are its promises. And you are told by grave and learned men, that these are equally promises to every other believer! And are you expected to believe a proposition so preposterous? That there are multitudes who do credit it, is to me wholly unaccountable, except upon the supposition that they have never examined the subject.

And now, in the second place, determine if you can, how these promises apply to *the literal seed of believers*. The connection with this covenant, claimed for them, on the ground that they are the children of believers, is not less preposterous than that advocated for their parents. It assumes that the covenant established a spiritual relation between Abraham, and his infant offspring; and that it establishes now, the same relation between every believer and *his* infant offspring! Need I say that this whole category is a mistake, from beginning to end? It is certain that no spiritual relation not before existing, was established by this covenant, between *Abraham* and his infant seed. He was made the father, not of all the *redeemed*, as some have imagined, but "of all them that *believe*," of whatever nation. Infants are redeemed; but infants do not believe. To his own descendants he was "the father of circumcision." He was the *spiritual* father, so far as we know, of no one, assuredly not of *his own infant seed*, unless the absurdity can be admitted that spiritual qualities (that is, that religion) may be propagated by natural generation. The covenant therefore established no new spiritual relations between even Abraham and his infant seed. Much less does it establish now, any such relations between *believers* and *their* infant seed. "The blessing of Abraham has indeed, come upon the Gentiles," but in no such acceptations as these. That blessing consists not in creating any spiritual relations between believers and their infant offspring, but for *themselves*, in having their faith counted to them for righteousness, as Abraham's faith was counted to him for righteousness. As to *their children*, if they die in infancy, they *are*, and ever *have* been, and ever will be saved, by the merits and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, independently of parentage, or ordinances, of any character whatever. If they grow *up* to maturity, they are blessed in being taught by Christian parents the way of life and salvation through Jesus Christ. The covenant with Abraham, for him, and his seed, is not therefore, equally a covenant with every other believer, for him, and his seed. To *presume* consequently, that the infant seed of believers, because they are such, are entitled without repentance, and faith, to the ordinances of the gospel, and to membership in the visible church, is a derogation of the covenants, a violation of the analogy of the Old and New Testaments, in opposition to the word of God, and destructive to all the best interests of religion.

What then, is the true teaching of the covenants on this subject? It is most plain and obvious. In the Jewish, or typical church, all was external, and earthly. The church itself was national and confined in its membership to the Hebrews. Literal descent

from Abraham, with circumcision, conferred a full right to all its privileges. Its services were symbols. Nor did its worship necessarily demand any spiritual qualifications. The Christian Church, the reality, is internal and spiritual. It is not national, but individual, and extends its blessings to all men, irrespective of races. The spiritual seed of Abraham (believers) who have the spiritual circumcision (the regeneration of the soul) are alone entitled to its privileges. Its worship demands the homage of the heart; for "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."²³ This is the true and only scriptural analogy between the Jewish Church and the Christian Church. The covenants therefore, prove conclusively, that repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, are essential qualifications for membership in the Church of the Redeemer.

6. These covenants teach you, sixthly, that the entire series of "signs and seals of grace," which our brethren have engrafted upon them, is not only wholly imaginary, but also highly pernicious.

And what are these "signs and seals," which you have been so often told, are invariable appendages of the covenants? Dr. Dick says: "A *seal* has been defined to be the *visible sign* of an *invisible grace*; and may be more generally described as an *institution* of which it is the design to signify the blessings promised in the covenant, and to give an *assurance* of them to those by whom its terms are fulfilled."²⁴ Our brethren proceed accordingly, to find *seals* of some sort, for all the covenants, which they do not fail to account as so many "*signs* of invisible grace!" Of the law, or "covenant of works," under which man was originally created, they affirm that "The tree of life" was the seal. But in this conclusion all are not agreed, some insisting that "The tree of the knowledge of good and evil" was the seal; others that it was "Paradise;" and still others that it was "the Sabbath day."²⁵ The learned Witsius however, takes bold ground, and assumes that all these four things were legitimately, so many seals of the covenant.²⁶ For the sign and seal of the covenant with Noah, they point you to the rainbow; and for the sign and seal of "the covenant confirmed of God in Christ," to Abraham, they refer you to circumcision. Under the New Testament, baptism and the Lord's supper, they teach you are the *seals* which signify, and the signs of the blessings, promised in the gospel covenant!

It must, I think, be plain to you, that no such "*institution*" as this appears in the word of God. What! A mere ordinance, administered by men, and having the effect "to give *assurance* to those who receive it," that they shall be recipients of all the blessings promised in the gospel covenant! Can this be reconciled with the teachings of evangelical religion? Never. It attributes to baptism and to the Lord's supper, vastly more of efficacy than ever was assigned them by the great author of our salvation. But as to the alleged "*institution*" *itself*; where were "the signs and seals" of the covenant of Eden, in which we have the original announcement of a Deliverer from sin? There were none. Where were the "signs and seals" of "the *covenant* confirmed of God in Christ" to Abraham, and which has been called "the covenant of grace?" There were none. To find them our brethren are obliged to resort to quite another covenant—the covenant of circumcision—a license not allowable in Biblical interpretation. Where were "the signs and seals" of the covenant which gave to Abraham the land of Canaan, and made him a separate nation? Where the "signs and seals" of the covenant of Sinai? No such "*institutions*," appear. The rainbow was no *seal*, or "visible sign of an invisible grace," to Noah, or to any one else. It was simply a *token*" pledging God, according to his promise, not again to destroy the world by a flood of waters. Nor was *circumcision itself*, of which our brethren have

made so much, either a sign, or a seal, in the popular theological sense, of any thing, to any one, beyond Abraham himself. "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."²⁷ This is Paul's exposition of the subject. If he is *right*, then circumcision was to Abraham himself, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had before his circumcision. But it was no seal, or "visible sign of invisible grace," to any one else, even among the Hebrews, either in his day, or afterwards. Thus baseless, not to say mischievous, is this whole doctrine of "signs and seals of the covenants," in its application even to circumcision. How much more baseless is it, and mischievous, when it is made to refer to baptism and the Lord's supper! These ordinances are to their recipients, signs and seals of nothing whatever. They bear glorious testimony that "Christ died for our sins" according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he rose again from the dead, the third day, according to the scriptures."²⁸ But they are no "*institution of which it is the design to signify the blessings promised in the [gospel] covenant, and to give an assurance of them, to those by whom its terms are fulfilled*"²⁹ The whole doctrine "of signs and seal" is utterly destitute of authority; and all its teachings manifestly in conflict with evangelical christianity; since they attribute to these ordinances, results which belong exclusively to the work of the Holy Spirit.

7. All these covenants, both those which promised the coming of Messiah, and those which so carefully directed the circumstances in relation to his advent, point, in the last place, for their complete and final consummation, to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation."³⁰ The mediatorial work, to which he was assigned, by the covenant of redemption, will one day be finished. He will at last have "made up his jewels." Then will he "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father;" having "put down all rule, and all authority, and power; for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet."³¹ He himself said:- Hereafter shall ye "see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."³² His apostles take up this declaration, and repeat it; assuring us that at his second coming, "he shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and [that] the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be ever with the Lord."³³ How great is that grace which by his first coming, you have already received! And how unspeakable will be "the glory which will be revealed in you," when he shall come again! Characteristic of the one advent it is said:- "The grace of God which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world." By the other, we are authorised to look "for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour, Jesus Christ,"³⁴ "who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."³⁵ To what amazing events then, are we destined. They shall not however, occur until the gospel has achieved all its earthly triumphs. "The kingdoms of this world must" first "become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." "Then cometh the end." Time ceases. Christ, and his people, are glorified together. Heaven is filled with everlasting rejoicing.

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- ¹Rom xi :33
² XXXIX Articles, Art. IX.
³Ekkaleo, ekklesia (Greek)
⁴Heb. x : 9
⁵ Ps cx : 4.
⁶ Heb vii : 11 - 19.
⁷ Princeton Review, October, 1853.
⁸ John i : 13.
⁹ Ezek. xxxvii : 21-26
¹⁰ Isa. ix : 12 - 21
¹¹ Col iii : 11
¹² Rom xi : 11-15
¹³ Rev xiii : 8
¹⁴ Ezek. xvi: 60
¹⁵ Ib xx : 37
¹⁶ Dan ii : 44
¹⁷ Matt iii : 1
¹⁸ Matt.iii: 16,17
¹⁹ Luke xvii : 21
²⁰ Rev xii : 10
²¹ Acts ii: 47 — ` O de Kyrios prosetithei tous sozomenous kath emeran te (Greek).
²² Princeton Review, ut supra.
²³ John iv: 24.
²⁴ Theol. Vol. 1. p. 474: Is it not a little surprising that a Calvinist as was Dr. Dick, should teach that doctrine?
²⁵ Dick's Theol. Vol. 2, p. 556.
²⁶ Dr. Oecon. Fed. Lib. 1 cap. 6.
²⁷ Rom iv : 10 - 71
²⁸ 1 Cor xv : 3, 4
²⁹ Dick ut supra.
³⁰ Heb. ix : 27, 28.
³¹ 1 Cor xv : 24, 25.
³² Matt xxxiv : 30, 31
³¹ 1 Thess. Iv : 16, 17.
³² Tit. ii : 11 - 18.
³³ Phil. iii : 21