

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 236

GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

*According to the eternal purpose
which he purposed in Christ
Jesus our Lord.*

Ephesians 3:11

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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236

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GOD'S GREAT PLAN OF REDEMPTION

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

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.—Ephesians 1:3-4

GOD'S great plan is suggested in [the third] verse. There was a great eternal council held between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The next verse tells us when it was held: "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" (Eph 1:4). Do we realize that our salvation was planned before the world was planned or created? It is the realization of this fact that makes a man stand on tip-toe and shout out praise to God—"chosen before the foundation of the world"!

The three blessed Persons¹ in the eternal council were concerned about us—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...The three Persons met in conference (I speak with reverence, in terms of Scripture) and planned it. Let us forever get rid of the idea that salvation was an afterthought in the mind of God. It was not a thought that came to God after man had fallen into sin—it was planned "before the foundation of the world." The apostle tells us that the work was divided up between the three blessed Persons, each One agreeing to engage in particular tasks. This is what led the old theologians to talk about the "economic Trinity," [that is,] the three blessed Persons in the Trinity divided up the work: the Father planned, the Son put it into operation, and the Holy Spirit applies it.

This is made clear in our chapter. In verses 4–6,² we are told of the Father's part; in verses 7–12,³ we are told about the Son's part; and in

¹ See Free Grace Broadcaster 231, *The Triune God*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

² 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: ⁵ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

³ In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; ⁸ Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; ⁹ Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath

verses 13 and 14,⁴ we are told about the part of the Holy Spirit; and note that in each case the description ends with the phrase, “to the praise of the glory of his grace,” or similar words. The divine council considered everything “before the foundation of the world,” and the work was divided up and planned in that manner. The Father has His purpose; the Son voluntarily says He is going to carry it out, and He came and did it; and the Holy Spirit said He was ready to apply it.

But before we leave it, I must add this: what really happened in that eternal council was that God drew up a great covenant called the covenant of grace or the covenant of redemption.⁵ Why did He do so? Let me ask a question by way of reply. Why does the apostle say, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”? There are those who say that the answer is that [Paul] wants us to know the kind of Father God is. I agree with that...God in His kindness, and in order that we may know the kind of Father He is, says, “I am the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.” The Son is like the Father, but even that does not go far enough; there is much more than that here.

This new description of God is one of the most important statements in the New Testament. Go back to the Old Testament and you

purposed in himself:¹⁰ That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:¹¹ In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:¹² That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

⁴ In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,¹⁴ Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

⁵ Differing views exist among those who believe in God’s eternal purpose of salvation through the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Some believe that God’s plan of salvation is expressed in two covenants: (1) a Covenant of Redemption that was made in eternity among the members of the Godhead, which is the foundation for (2) a Covenant of Grace that is made in history between God and His elect (i.e., John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, Charles Hodge, R. L. Dabney, David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Nehemiah Coxe, R. B. C. Howell, etc.). Of those who hold to a Covenant of Redemption, some believe that it is between the Father and the Son, while others include all the members of the Trinity. However, others believe that God’s plan of salvation is expressed in only one Covenant of Grace, which has an *eternal* aspect between the members of the Trinity and an *historical* aspect between God and His elect (i.e., Edmund Calamy, Thomas Boston, John Brown of Haddington, John Gill, Hugh Martin, Benjamin Keach, etc.). Even so, all agree that God’s eternal plan is revealed in history through God’s historical covenants and culminates in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Charles Hodge suggests, “There is no doctrinal difference between those who prefer the one statement and those who prefer the other; between those who comprise all the facts of Scripture relating to the subject under one covenant between God and Christ as the representative of His people, and those who distribute them under two.”

will find God described as “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Exo 3:6, 15). God also speaks of Himself as “the God of Israel” (Exo 24:10; 34:23); but now we have “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is in order to teach us that all the blessings that come to us come in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, and as a part of that covenant that was made between the three blessed Persons before the foundation of the world.

Even the blessings that came to the Old Testament saints all came to them through the Lord Jesus Christ. Before the foundation of the world God saw what would happen to man. He saw the Fall and man's sin that would have to be dealt with—and there the plan was made and an agreement was made between the Father and the Son. The Father gave a people to the Son, and the Son voluntarily made Himself responsible to God for them. He contracted to do certain things for them, and God the Father on His side contracted to do other things. God the Father said He would grant forgiveness, reconciliation, restoration, new life, and a new nature to all who belonged to His Son. The condition was that the Son should come into the world and take human nature and the sin of mankind upon Himself to bear its punishment, stand for them, represent them, and suffer for them. That was the covenant, that was the agreement that was made, and it was made “before the foundation of the world.” God was able to tell Adam about that in the Garden of Eden when He told him that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head (Gen 3:15). This had been planned before creation, and God began to announce it even there.

Later, certain subsidiary⁶ arrangements were made. A covenant was made with Noah, with Abraham, with Moses. These are not the original covenant, the covenant made with the Son. They were temporary, but all these subsidiary covenants point to this great covenant. The types and ceremonial offerings and sacrifices were all pointing to Christ. “The law was our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ” (Gal 3:24) and His great offering. The Law given to Moses does not annul the covenant made with Abraham, [which], in turn, points back to the great covenant made with the Son Himself in eternity.

Thus, we begin to see why Paul says, “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” God, before time and before the world, saw our predicament⁷ and entered into this agreement with His own Son. He has taken an oath, He has signed, He has pledged Himself in a covenant,

⁶ **subsidiary** – serving to aid, supplement, or support something.

⁷ **predicament** – unpleasant, trying, or dangerous situation.

He has committed Himself. Everything is in Christ. He is our Representative, He is our Mediator,⁸ He is our Guarantor⁹—all blessing comes in and through Him. Who can realize what all this meant to the Father, what all this meant to the Son, what all this meant to the Holy Spirit? But that is the gospel, and it is only as we understand something of these things that we shall begin to praise God!

Look at the matter in this way: here are you and I, miserable worms in this world, miserable worms with our arrogance and our pride and our appalling ignorance. We deserve nothing but to be blotted off the face of the earth. But what has happened is that before the foundation of the world this blessed God, these three blessed Persons, considered us, considered our condition, considered what would happen to us, and the consequence was that these three persons—God—Whom man hath never seen, stooped to consider us and planned a way whereby we might be forgiven and redeemed. The Son said, “I will leave this glory for a while, I will dwell in the womb of a woman, I will be born as a babe, I will become a pauper, I will suffer insult in the world, I will even allow them to nail Me to a cross and spit in My face.” He volunteered to do all that for us; and, at this very moment, this blessed Second Person in the Trinity is seated at the right hand of God to represent you and me. He came down to earth and did all that, rose again, and ascended to heaven; and it was all planned “before the world” for you and for me.

Do you still say that you are not interested in theology? Do you still say that you have not time to be interested in doctrine? You will never begin to praise God or worship or adore Him until you begin to realize something of what He has done for you. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!”

From God's Ultimate Purpose: An Exposition of Ephesians 1 (Edinburgh; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1978), 53-56. Used by permission;
www.banneroftruth.org.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981): Welsh expository preacher and author; born in Cardiff, Wales, UK.



⁸ **Mediator** – one who intervenes between two parties to bring reconciliation; go-between.

⁹ **Guarantor** – somebody who gives a formal promise to be responsible for somebody else's debts or obligations.

GOD'S COVENANT IN ETERNITY

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

To understand a covenant, you must know who the contracting parties are; secondly, what the stipulations of the contract are; thirdly, what the objects of it are; and then, if you would go still deeper, you must understand something of the motives that lead the contracting parties to form the covenant between themselves.

Now, in this covenant of redemption,¹ we must first of all observe the high contracting parties between whom it was made. [This covenant] was made before the foundation of the world between God the Father and God the Son; or, to put it in a yet more Scriptural light, it was made mutually between the three divine persons of the adorable Trinity. This covenant was not made mutually between God and man. Man did not at that time exist; but Christ stood in the covenant as man's representative. In that sense, we will allow that it was a covenant between God and man, but not a covenant between God and any man personally and individually. It was a covenant between God and Christ, and through Christ indirectly with all the blood-bought seed who were loved of Christ from the foundation of the world. It is a noble and glorious thought...that long ere the day-star knew its place, before God had spoken existence out of nothing, before angel's wing had stirred the unnavigated ether,² before a solitary song had distributed the solemnity of the silence in which God reigned supreme, He had entered into solemn council with Himself, His Son, and His Spirit and had in that council decreed, determined, proposed, and predestinated the salvation of His people.

Moreover, in the covenant, He had arranged the ways and means, and fixed and settled everything that should work together for the effecting of the purpose and the decree.³ My soul flies back now, winged by imagination and by faith, looks into that mysterious council chamber,

¹ **EDITOR'S NOTE:** The author originally used the term *Covenant of Grace*, holding to one covenant with an eternal and historical aspect (see page 2, footnote 5). For the sake of continuity between the articles, the *Covenant of Redemption* has been used to express the eternal aspect of God's plan of salvation.

² **unnavigated ether** – upper regions of space beyond the clouds where none have journeyed.

³ **decree** – “What are the decrees of God? The decrees of God are His eternal purpose according to the counsel of His own will, whereby for His own glory He has foreordained whatever comes to pass.” (*Spurgeon's Catechism*, Q. 7; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY)

and, by faith, I behold the Father pledging Himself to the Son, and the Son pledging Himself to the Father, while the Spirit gives His pledge to both, and thus that divine compact, long to be hidden in darkness, is completed and settled—the covenant that in these latter days has been read in the light of heaven and has become the joy, hope, and boast of all the saints.

And now, what were the stipulations⁴ of this covenant?...God had foreseen that, after creation, man would break the covenant of works;⁵ that however mild and gentle the tenure⁶ upon which Adam had possession of Paradise, yet that tenure would be too severe for him, and he would be sure to kick against it and ruin himself. God had also foreseen that His elect ones, whom He had chosen out of the rest of mankind, would fall by the sin of Adam, since they, as well as the rest of mankind, were represented in Adam. The covenant therefore had for its end the restoration of the chosen people.

And now we may readily understand what were the stipulations. On the Father's part, thus ran the covenant. I cannot tell it [to] you in the glorious celestial tongue in which it was written, [but] I am fain⁷ to bring it down to the speech that suiteth to the ear of flesh and to the heart of the mortal. Thus, I say, ran the covenant, in lines like these: "I, the Most High Jehovah, do hereby give unto My only begotten and well-beloved Son, a people, countless beyond the number of stars, who by Him shall be washed from sin; by Him preserved, kept, and led; and by Him, at last, presented before My throne, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph 5:27). I covenant by oath and swear by Myself, because I can swear by no greater, that these whom I now give to Christ shall be forever the objects of My eternal love. Them I will forgive through the merit of the blood. To these will I give a perfect righteousness; these will I adopt and make My sons and daughters, and, through Christ, these shall reign with Me eternally."

Thus ran that glorious side of the covenant. The Holy Spirit also, as one of the high contracting parties on this side of the covenant, gave His declaration. "I hereby covenant," saith He, "that all whom the Father giveth to the Son, I will in due time quicken.⁸ I will show them

⁴ **stipulations** – agreements to do something.

⁵ **Covenant of Works** – agreement or administration that God established with Adam in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:15-17) before his fall into sin (Gen 3:1-7). It established man's obligation to obey God with the penalty of death for disobedience (Gen 2:16-17).

⁶ **tenure** – conditions under which land is held, in this case, the Garden of Eden.

⁷ **fain** – eager.

⁸ **quicken** – make alive, that is, regenerate. See FGB 202, *The New Birth*.

their need of redemption; I will cut off from them all groundless hope and destroy their refuges of lies. I will bring them to the blood of sprinkling; I will give them faith whereby this blood shall be applied to them. I will work in them every grace. I will keep their faith alive. I will cleanse them and drive out all depravity from them, and they shall be presented at last spotless and faultless.” This was the one side of the covenant that is at this very day being fulfilled and scrupulously⁹ kept.

As for the other side of the covenant, this was the part of it engaged and covenanted by Christ. He thus declared and covenanted with His Father: “My Father, on My part, I covenant that in the fullness of time I will become man. I will take upon Myself the form and nature of the fallen race. I will live in their wretched world; and, for My people, I will keep the Law perfectly. I will work out a spotless righteousness, which shall be acceptable to the demands of Thy just and holy Law. In due time, I will bear the sins of all My people. Thou shalt exact their debts on Me; the chastisement of their peace I will endure, and, by My stripes, they shall be healed. My Father, I covenant and promise that I will be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. I will magnify Thy Law and make it honorable. I will suffer all they ought to have suffered. I will endure the curse of Thy Law, and all the vials of Thy wrath shall be emptied and spent upon My head. I will then rise again;¹⁰ I will ascend into heaven; I will intercede for them at Thy right hand; and I will make Myself responsible for every one of them, that not one of those whom Thou hast given Me shall ever be lost; but I will bring all My sheep of whom, by My blood, Thou hast constituted Me the shepherd. I will bring every one safe to Thee at last.”

Thus ran the covenant! And now, I think, you have a clear idea of what it was and how it stands—the covenant between God and Christ, between God the Father, God the Spirit, and God the Son as the covenant Head and representative of all God's elect. I have told you, as briefly as I could, what were the stipulations of it. [Please observe,] my dear friends, that the covenant is, on one side, perfectly fulfilled: God the Son has paid the debts of all the elect. He has, for us men and for our redemption, suffered the whole of wrath divine. Nothing remaineth now on this side of the question except that He shall continue to intercede that He may safely bring all His redeemed to glory.

⁹ **scrupulously** – diligently, thoroughly, and extremely attentive to details.

¹⁰ See FGBs 234, *The Incarnation*; 219, *The Person of Christ*; 225, *The Work of Christ*; 207, *Substitution*; 235, *Resurrection*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

On the side of the Father, this part of the covenant has been fulfilled to countless myriads.¹¹ God the Father and God the Spirit have not been behindhand¹² in their divine contract. And mark you, this side shall be as fully and as completely finished and carried out as the other. Christ can say of what He promised to do, “It is finished!” (Joh 19:30)...All for whom Christ died shall be pardoned, all justified, all adopted. The Spirit shall quicken them all, shall give them all faith, shall bring them all to heaven, and they shall, every one of them, without let¹³ or hindrance, stand accepted in the beloved in the day when the people shall be numbered, and Jesus shall be glorified.

Now having seen who were the high contracting parties and what the terms of the covenant made between them were, let us see what the objects of this covenant were. Was this covenant made for every man of the race of Adam? Assuredly not. We discover the secret by the visible. That which is in the covenant is to be seen in due time by the eye and to be heard with the ear. I see multitudes of men perishing, continuing wantonly in their wicked ways, rejecting the [call] of Christ that is presented to them in the gospel day after day, treading underfoot the blood of the Son of Man, defying the Spirit Who strives with them. I see these men going on from bad to worse, at last perishing in their sins. I have not the folly to believe that they have any part in the Covenant of Redemption. Those who die impenitent,¹⁴ the multitudes who reject the Savior, are clearly proved to have no part and no lot in the sacred covenant of divine grace; for if they were interested in that, there would be certain marks and evidences that would show us this. We should find that, in due time in this life, they would be brought to repentance, would be washed in the Savior’s blood, and would be saved. The covenant—to come at once straight to the matter, however offensive the doctrine may be—the covenant has relationship to the elect and none besides.

Does this offend you? Be ye offended even more. What said Christ? “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine” (Joh 17:9). If Christ prayeth for none but for the chosen, why should ye be angry[?]...As many as shall believe, as many as shall trust in Christ, as many as shall persevere unto the end, as many as shall enter into the eternal rest, so many and no more are interested in the covenant of divine grace.

¹¹ **myriads** – vast numbers.

¹² **behindhand** – late; slow.

¹³ **let** – obstruction.

¹⁴ **impenitent** – not feeling shame or regret about one’s sins; without repentance.

Furthermore, we have to consider what were the motives of this covenant. Why was the covenant made at all? There was no compulsion or constraint on God. As yet, there was no creature. Even [if] the creature could have an influence on the Creator, there was none existing in the period when the covenant was made. We can look nowhere for God's motive in the covenant except it be in Himself; for of God it could be said literally in that day, "I am the LORD, and there is none else" (Isa 45:6). Why, then, did He make the covenant? I answer, "Absolute sovereignty dictated it." But why were certain men the objects of it and why not others? I answer, "Sovereign grace guided the pen." It was not the merit of man; it was nothing that God foresaw in us that made Him choose many and leave others to go on in their sins. It was nothing in them; it was sovereignty and grace combined that made the divine choice... "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy... For it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Rom 9:15-16). His sovereignty elected, His grace distinguished, and [His] immutability¹⁵ decreed. No motive dictated the election of the individuals, except a motive in Himself of love and of divine sovereignty. Doubtless, the grand intention of God in making the covenant at all was His own glory; any motive inferior to that would be beneath His dignity. God must find His motives in Himself: He has not to look to moths and worms for motives for His deeds. He is the "I AM" (Exo 3:14).

He doth as He wills in the armies of heaven. Who can stay His hand and say unto Him, "What doest thou?" Shall the clay ask the potter for the motive for His making it into a vessel? Shall the thing formed before its creation dictate to its Creator? No, let God be God, and let man shrink into his native nothingness... [God] finds His motives in Himself. He is self-contained and findeth nothing beyond nor needeth anything from any but Himself. Thus have I, as fully as time permits this morning, discussed... the covenant. May the Holy Spirit lead us into this sublime truth.

From a sermon delivered on Sabbath morning, September 4, 1859,
at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential English Baptist preacher; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England, UK.



¹⁵ **immutability** – unchangeableness.

THE NATURE OF GOD'S COVENANT

Patrick Gillespie (1617-1675)

THE general nature of this covenant is common with all other covenants.¹ Whatsoever different peculiarity they have,² this is essential and common to all covenants: they are *agreements*. And this is an eternal transaction and agreement between [the Father] and Christ the Mediator about the work of our redemption. The peculiar propriety³ of its nature will appear by inquiring a little into ...the various eternal acts of the will of God that concurred⁴ to make up this agreement.

Supposing that God purposed in Himself not to save man without a satisfaction to His justice, these eternal acts of the will of God...did concur and meet together in this agreement:

(1) **The designation of a person to do this work.** There must needs have been a person set apart and designed⁵ from eternity unto the doing of the work of redemption, and this person was the Son only, not the Father or the Spirit: “Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1Pe 1:20).

(2) **The preparation and fitting of the person set apart to take our Law-place and room so that justice might smite Him in our stead.** [This] also was decreed by an eternal act of the will of God: the Son of God should be Immanuel—“God with us” or “God...manifest in the flesh” (Isa 7:14; Mat 1:23; 1Ti 3:16). Unto this incarnation of the Son of God,⁶ His own words have reference. [And] unto this grand qualification, He was destinated beforehand⁷ that He might be in a capacity

¹ Gillespie wrote two large volumes on God's covenants: *The Ark of the Testament Opened* and *The Ark of the Covenant Opened*. In *Ark of the Testament*, 49-51, he explains, “There be six things that are essential to all covenants.” He then lists the following: 1. At least two parties must be involved. 2. The very nature and essence of a covenant is that it is an agreement. 3. A covenant must have mutual conditions, that is, things that each party promises to perform. 4. A covenant must have mutual obligations upon each party. 5. A covenant must intend mutual good for each party. 6. A lawful covenant, divine or human, is binding and inviolable [*sacred and should not be broken*].

² **whatsoever different peculiarity they have** – whatever differences belong exclusively to a particular covenant.

³ **peculiar propriety** – exclusive character.

⁴ **concurred** – occurred together in time.

⁵ **designed** – appointed.

⁶ See FGB 234, *Incarnation*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁷ **destinated beforehand** – appointed in advance; predestinated.

to do this work. "A body has thou prepared me" (Heb 10:5).

(3) **The calling of the person designed.** Calling is an act different from designation—it is something further. Christ was by an eternal act of God's will called to this work, and that long before He came into the world. "Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people" (Psa 89:19). And, "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles" (Isa 42:6). "So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee" (Heb 5:5).

(4) **The investing of the person designed with offices, powers, and authorities for the doing of this work...** By an eternal act of the will of God, He was set up and vested⁸ with these offices and powers from everlasting and had the glory of the designed, called, invested Mediator. As He plainly insinuates, "I was set up from everlasting," saith Wisdom (Pro 8:23). Several expositors render it, "I was called, or I was anointed." "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (Joh 17:5).

(5) **The mission of the Son.** Christ...was sent to do this work by an eternal act in the counsel of God. He had a solemn, eternal, authoritative mission, a command to go, and was bidden to go. He had the will of God by an eternal act or commission given out to Him concerning all this work, long before He was actually made under the Law, to which He hath respect when He saith, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God" (Heb 10:7)—even that will of God that was in the book of His eternal decrees: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me" (Joh 6:39). And "This commandment have I received of my Father" (Joh 10:18). But in all these, we do not so much multiply the distinction of acts, as we take notice of the distinction and difference of phrase used by the Holy Ghost, speaking of this mystery in the Scriptures.

Upon the other part, [Christ] concurred unto this agreement [with] an eternal, personal consent and compliance unto all these eternal acts of the will of God. For Christ as God, equal with the Father, does not begin to consent and agree unto anything in time, nor can the eternal Son of God will anything in time, which He did not will and consent unto from eternity. But Christ was present with the Father and did from eternity consent and agree to these eternal acts:

⁸ **vested** – endowed with power and authority.

(1) **[He consented to be] the person that should satisfy the justice of God.** He heartily acquiesced and offered Himself; He said, “Lo, I come to do thy will” (Heb 10:5,7). He poured out His soul unto death (Isa 53:12).

(2) **He consented to putting Himself in that low capacity that [accomplishing] this work required.** “Thou madest him a little lower than the angels” (Heb 2:7), to leave the throne of glory and come down to His footstool, there to be in disgrace. The Lord of the Law to be made under the Law (Gal 4:4)! The Holy One that knew no sin to be made “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom 8:3). “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi 2:6-8).

(3) **He consented and agreed unto the eternal act of His calling to this work.** No sooner was it His Father’s will that He should travel in the business, but it was His also. He was as a ready servant...“The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back” (Isa 50:5-6).

(4) **He consented to take on these offices and trusts that the work of our redemption required.** There was no force nor constraint upon, no necessity of nature that He should step in between the disagreeing parties, that He should step into the fire that we had kindled, that He should make Himself a sacrifice for our sins, that He should receive a dispensatory⁹ kingdom; but frankly and freely He consented to do all these things. “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself” (Joh 10:18). “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him” (Joh 17:2). “I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was” (Pro 8:23).

(5) **He consented to His Father’s sending Him [on this] mission and was well content to go [on] that errand.** Yea, so hearty was His consent that He took delight in it: “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:8). “Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (Joh

⁹ **dispensatory kingdom** – this is not Christ’s natural kingdom over which He rules as God the Son; rather, it is the kingdom given to Christ by His Father as a reward for His joyful and complete obedience as Mediator between God and His elect. “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father” (1Co 15:24).

4:34). And to all these things He gives a personal consent from eternity, and with so much delight that He solaced¹⁰ Himself, and took pleasure in the future accomplishment of these eternal acts of the will of God concerning the sons of men: “I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was...Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men” (Pro 8:23, 30-31). This is the nature of this eternal transaction.

From *The Ark of the Covenant Opened*, in the public domain.

Patrick Gillespie (1617-1675): Scottish minister, Covenanter, and Principal of Glasgow University; died at Leith, Scotland, UK.



God, for the glory of His rich grace, hath revealed in His Word a way to save sinners, *viz.*, by faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, by virtue of and according to the tenor of the covenant of redemption made and agreed upon between God the Father and God the Son, in the council of the Trinity before the world began...The sum of the covenant of redemption is this: God, having freely chosen unto life a certain number of lost mankind for the glory of His rich grace, did give them, before the world began, unto God the Son, appointed Redeemer, that, upon condition He would humble Himself so far as to assume the human nature of a soul and a body unto personal union with His divine nature and submit Himself to the Law as surety for them, and satisfy justice for them by giving obedience in their name, even unto the suffering of the cursed death of the cross, He should ransom and redeem them all from sin and death and purchase unto them righteousness and eternal life, with all saving graces leading thereunto, to be effectually, by means of His own appointment, applied in due time to every one of them. This condition the Son of God (Who is Jesus Christ our Lord) did accept before the world began and in the fullness of time came into the world, was born of the Virgin Mary, subjected Himself to the Law, and completely paid the ransom on the cross: But by virtue of the aforesaid bargain made before the world began, He is in all ages, since the fall of Adam, still upon the work of applying actually the purchased benefits unto the elect; and that He doth by way of entertaining a covenant of free grace and reconciliation with them through faith in Himself; by which covenant, He makes over to every believer a right and interest to Himself and to all His blessings.—*David Dickson & John Durham*

The efficient cause of our salvation consists in God the Father's love; the material cause in God the Son's obedience; the instrumental cause in the Spirit's illumination, that is, faith; the final cause in the glory of God's great generosity.—*John Calvin*

¹⁰ **solaced** – enjoyed.

FATHER AND SON AGREE

Peter Bulkeley (1583-1659)

THAT there is a covenant between the Father and the Son concerning our salvation, I willingly grant and shall open and confirm by Scripture. The whole business of our salvation was first transacted between the Father and Christ before it was revealed to us. Hence, we are said to be given unto Christ (Joh 17:6, 10), as if the Father should say to the Son, “These I take to be vessels of mercy, and these Thou shalt bring unto Me; for they will destroy themselves, but Thou shalt save them out of their lost estate.” And then the Son taketh them at His Father’s hand; and looking at His Father’s will (Joh 6:37-39), He taketh care that none be lost of them that His Father hath given Him.

This covenant is expressed in Scripture, first, on the *Father’s* part:

1. There is a designation and appointment of Christ the Son to the office of Mediator¹ to be a means of bringing us back to God and into a covenant with Him. Hence, Christ is said to be sealed by the Father (Joh 6:27), as marked out for such a purpose (1Pe 1:18). He was ordained in the counsel of the Father, before the foundation of the world. Hence, [He is] also said to be chosen of the Father (Isa 42:1), noting out His designation to this work.

2. There is a commandment from the Father to the Son, which He must submit unto and obey, thereby to effect the salvation of His people. As the Prophet of the Church, He had a commandment what to teach and instruct them in (Joh 12:49). He had a commandment to enlighten the elect with the knowledge of the truth (Isa 42:6-7), to be a light to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, etc. He also had a commandment to lay down His life for those that are given unto Him (Joh 10:18), and to be tender over the lambs, carrying them in His bosom (Isa 40:11).

3. There is a promise from the Father to the Son, [i.e.,] the Father covenants with Him:

¹ **Mediator** – a go-between; “It pleased God in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus His only begotten Son, according to the covenant made between Them both, to be the Mediator between God and man; the Prophet, Priest, and King; Head and Savior of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: unto Whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.” (1689 London Baptist Confession 8.1); also, see FGB 183, *Christ the Mediator*, both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

(1) [He will] give Him the Spirit in an abundant measure. “The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him” (Isa 42:1; 11:1-2).

(2) [He gives] a promise of assistance and help in this great work of our redemption. “I will hold thy hand” (Isa 42:6). What is the meaning of that? God saith of Cyrus, “Whose right hand I have holden,” that is, I have strengthened him to conquer the nations (*see* Isa 45:1). So God promised [that] He would hold the hand of Christ: though He met with strong oppositions, yet [the Father] would so strengthen Him with His power that He should not be discouraged (Isa 42:4).

(3) [He gives] a promise of blessed success that He shall not labor in vain. He shall see His seed (Isa 53:10): the sufferings of Christ were as a woman with child; though she suffers many pains, yet she sees her child at last. So shall Christ see many believing on His name (Isa 55:5). They are the words of promise made by the Father to the Son that nations that know Him not should run unto Him.

(4) [He gives] a promise of rule and dominion that He shall have dominion over all those that are saved by Him. This sovereignty and rule is promised to Him in Isaiah 40:10: The Lord Christ shall come with power “and his arm shall rule for him.” And Isaiah 42:4: “He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law,” to submit themselves unto it. Thence, it is said in Micah 4:3, “And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations...,” that is, rule, order, command, and direct as Judge and Ruler among His people; the which promise is now accomplished, all judgment being committed to the Son (Joh 5:22).

(5) [He gives] a promise of glory to follow, and that, first to Christ Himself and then to the members of Christ. To Christ Himself: “Nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee” (Isa 55:5). They are the words of God the Father to Christ the Son, promising to Him glory—such glory as should make the nations of the world run unto Him! So also to the members of Christ: there is a promise of glory unto them, which promise was made known to Christ from the beginning. Christ brings out that secret, out of the bosom of the Father and reveals it to His disciples. “It is,” saith He, “your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luk 12:32). Christ knew the Father’s will by the covenant passing between the Father and Him, and this will of the Father, concerning the glory promised to them, Christ doth bring forth to light. Thus, we see there is a covenant on the Father’s part.

Now, see it on Christ's part:

1. There is an acceptance of the office to which He was designed by the Father. He did not take the office of Mediator upon Himself, but first the Father called Him unto it; then the Son accepted it and saith, "Lo; I come" (Psa 40:7-8; Heb 10:7).

2. There is a promise on Christ's part to depend and trust upon the Father for help, according to the promise made by the Father. Thus, [in] Hebrews 2:13, the apostle brings in Christ, promising confidence and affiance² in the Father: "I will put my trust in him." And Isaiah brings Him in as looking for help from God: "For the Lord GOD will help me"; "Though I have many against me"—men and devils—"yet the Lord will help me (Isa 50:7-9). He promises to wait upon His Father for support and strength, whereto [He also agrees] in Isaiah 49:5, "My God shall be my strength."

3. A promise of submission to His Father's will, in bearing the reproaches and injuries that should be done unto Him, and to lay down His life for those that were given to Him by the Father (Isa 50:5-6; Joh 10:17-18). And according to all this that Christ thus covenanted with the Father, He was careful to discharge the same (Joh 17:4-6; 12:49-50).

4. According to all this covenant passed between the Father and Christ, Christ expects the glory that was promised to Him and to His members. To Himself: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (Joh 17:5). And to His members: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (Joh 17:24). He expects the accomplishment of both from the Father.

Thus far then, I grant a covenant between God the Father and Christ. Hence it is that God is called "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 1:3), which is by reason of the covenant between them.

From *The Gospel-Covenant, or The Covenant of Grace Opened*,
in the public domain.

Peter Bulkeley (1583-1659): early Puritan minister, who left England for the American colony of Massachusetts; born in Odell, Bedfordshire, England, UK.



² **affiance** – trust.

THE REALITY OF GOD'S PLAN

R. B. C. Howell (1801-1868)

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,¹ for example, given to the Savior 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 (Heb 7:22). And when about to offer up His own life upon the cross, He said, "Lo I come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb 10:7). 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 out of the prison house" (Isa 42:6-7). And again, "Thus saith the LORD...I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people" (Isa 49:8). But more fully, He says of Him, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul"—the fruit—"and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa 53:10-12). 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 host" (Mal 3:1).

From these and similar texts you learn that, by the gracious act of

¹ **Surety** – one who assumes the responsibilities or debts of another; as our Surety, Christ guaranteed a full legal satisfaction for our sin and our pardon upon His payment of our debt upon Calvary's cross.

the Father, Christ the Son was constituted the Surety of His people; that when He “gave himself for us” (Ti 2:14), 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 manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God” (1Pe 1:18-21). Paul bears concurrent testimony in the declaration, “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Ti 1:2). He says, “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2Ti 1:9). 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” (Eph 1:3-4). 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 redemption² 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, justice, and honor alike of all the Persons of the adorable Trinity. It is impossible [that] He could have devised or approved any arrangement that would fail of these ends. 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

² **redemption** – Christ’s saving work viewed as an act of “buying back” sinners out of their bondage to sin and to Satan through the payment of His precious blood.

our subject, however, demands somewhat more of particularity. It is plain that man could not have been one of these parties, since...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" (Isa 42:21) 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, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). 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" (Deu 6:4), and, "There is no God else beside me" (Isa 45:21). 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 [each] 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 that 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 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 "which was, and is, and is to come" (Rev 4:8), 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 his throne" and "from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the

prince of the kings of the earth” (Rev 1:4-5). Each was alike interested, since the covenant in its practical development was 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 [this] 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 that they had brought upon themselves because He had already given of this an ample display in their creation and endowments; 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 [happiness], it was perfectly voluntary and might have as well been withheld. The only necessity that 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” (Joh 3:16). 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 of regeneration, and 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" (Ti 3:5-7).

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. However, it was the prerogative,³ 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" (Psa 40:8).

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 is spiritual, but that which is 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" (1Co 15:45-49). 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 which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:15-17). Thus, the representative character of Adam and of Christ is clearly stated.

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 that of Adam. If the first man had not been our federal head, we should not have suffered by his trans-

³ **prerogative** – exclusive privilege or right.

gression. If the second Man, “the Lord from heaven” (1Co 15:47), had not been our federal head, we should not have been benefitted 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” (Rom 5:19). He, in a word, became our Mediator by this covenant...“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” (1Ti 2:5-6).

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 [and] acting with the same freedom, He 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” (Joh 3:3).

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

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; [and] the parties covenanting...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 join in, with all our heart, 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; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev 1:5-6).

From *The Cross and the Covenants*, Sprinkle Publications,
www.sprinklepublications.net.

Robert Boyte Crawford Howell (1801-1868): American Southern Baptist minister, missionary, and editor; borne in Wayne County, North Carolina, USA.



The covenant between the Father and the Son is the foundation
of the whole of our salvation.—*Herman Witsius*

THE MEDIATOR CHOSEN

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

THE decrees of God, His eternal purpose, the inscrutable counsels of His will are indeed a great deep. Yet this we know, that from first to last they have a *definite relation to Christ*. For He is the Alpha and the Omega in all covenant transactions. Beautifully did Spurgeon express it: “Search for the celestial fountain from which divine streams of grace have flowed to us, and you find Jesus Christ as the well-spring of covenant love. If your eyes shall ever see the covenant roll, if you shall ever be permitted in a future state to see the whole plan of redemption as it was mapped out in the chambers of eternity, you shall see the blood-red line of atoning sacrifice running along the margin of every page, and you shall see that from beginning to end one object was always aimed at—the glory of the Son of God.”¹ It therefore seems strange that many who see that election is the foundation of salvation, yet overlook the glorious *Head of election*, in Whom the elect were chosen and from Whom they receive all blessings.

“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” (Eph 1:3-4). Since we were chosen *in* Christ, it is evident that we were chosen *out of* ourselves; and since we were chosen in *Christ*, it necessarily follows that He was chosen before we were. This is clearly implied in the preceding verse, wherein the Father is expressly designated “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now according to the analogy of Scripture (i.e., when He is said to be “the God” of any one) God was “the God” of Christ first because He chose Him to that grace and union. Christ as man was predestinated as truly as we were, and so has God to be His *God* by predestination and free grace. Second, [it was] because the Father made a covenant with Him (Isa 42:6). In view of the covenant made with them, He became known as “the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob”; so in view of the covenant He made with Christ, He became His “God.” Third, [it is] because God is the author of all Christ’s blessedness (Psa 45:2, 7).

¹ Sermon 546, *Alpha and Omega*, December 27, 1863, Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

“According as he [God] hath chosen us in him” means, then, that in election Christ was made the Head of the elect. “In the womb of election He, the Head, came out first, and then we, the members.”² In all things, Christ must have the preeminence³ (Col 3:18); and therefore He is “the Firstborn” in election (Rom 8:29). In the order of *nature*, Christ was chosen first; but in the order of *time*, we were elected with Him. We were not chosen for ourselves apart, but *in Christ*, which denotes three things: first, we were chosen in Christ as the members of His body. Second, we were chosen in Him as the pattern that we should be conformed unto. Third, we were chosen in Him as the final end, i.e., it was for Christ’s glory to be His fullness (Eph 1:23).

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth” (Isa 42:1). That this passage refers to none other than the Lord Jesus Christ is unmistakably plain from the Spirit’s citation of it in Matthew 12:15-21. Here, then, is the grand original of election: in its first and highest instance, election is spoken of and applied to the Lord Jesus! It was the will of the eternal Three to elect and predestinate the Second Person into creature being and existence, so that as God-man, “the firstborn of every creature” (Col 1:15), He was the subject of the divine decrees and the immediate and principal object of the love of the co-essential Three. And as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son—considered as God-man—to have life in Himself (Joh 5:26), to be a fountain of life, of grace and glory, unto His beloved Spouse, who received her being and wellbeing from Jehovah’s free grace and everlasting love.

When God determined to create, among all the myriad creatures, both angelic and human that rose up in the divine mind to be brought into being by Him, the man Christ Jesus was singled out of them and appointed to union with the Second Person in the blessed Trinity⁴ and was accordingly sanctified and set up. This original and highest act of election was one of pure sovereignty and amazing grace. The celestial hosts were passed by, and the seed of the woman was determined upon. Out of the innumerable seeds that were to be created in Adam, the line of Abraham was selected, then of Isaac, and then of Jacob. Of the twelve tribes that were to issue from Jacob, that of Judah was chosen, God elected not an angel to the high union with His Son, but “one chosen out of the people” (Psa 89:19). What shall those say who so much dislike the truth that the heirs of heaven are

² Thomas Goodwin, “Sermon V” in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, Vol. 1, 74.

³ **preeminence** – first place; the highest rank.

⁴ See FGB 231, *The Triune God*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

elected, when they learn that Jesus Christ Himself is the subject of eternal election!

Nowhere does the sovereignty of God shine forth so conspicuously as in His acts of election and reprobation, which took place in eternity past, and which nothing in the creature was the cause of. God's act of choosing His people in Christ was before the foundation of the world, without the consideration of the fall, nor was it upon the foresight and footing of works, but was wholly *of grace*, and all to the praise and glory of it. In nothing else is Jehovah's sovereignty so manifest: indeed, the highest instance of it was in predestinating the Second Person in the Trinity to be the God-man. That this came under *the decree* of God is clear, again, from the words of the apostle: "Who verily [*says he in speaking of Christ*] was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1Pe 1:20) and Who is said to be laid "in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious" (1Pe 2:6). This grand original of election, so little known today, is of such transcendent importance that we dwell upon it a little longer, to point out some of the reasons why God was pleased to predestinate the man Christ Jesus unto personal union with His Son.

Christ was predestinated for higher ends than the saving of His people from the effects of their fall in Adam. First, He was chosen for God Himself to delight in, far more so and infinitely above all other creatures...Second, Christ was chosen that God might behold the image of Himself and all His perfections in a creature, so that His excellences are seen in Christ as in no other: "Who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person" (Heb 1:3), which is spoken of the person of Christ as God-man. Third, by the union of the man Christ Jesus with the everlasting Son of God, the whole fullness of the Godhead was to dwell personally in Him, He being "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15, 19).

The man Christ Jesus, then, was chosen unto the highest union and communion with God Himself. In Him the love and grace of Jehovah shine forth in their superlative⁵ glory...Descending now to a lower plane, the man Christ Jesus was also chosen to be a Head to an elect seed, who were chosen in Him...blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings.

If God will love, He must have an object for His love; and the object must have an existence before Him to exercise His love upon, for He cannot love a non-entity. It must therefore be that the God-man, and the elect in Him existed in the divine mind as objects of God's

⁵ **superlative** – of the highest degree.

everlasting love before all time. In Christ, the Church was chosen from everlasting: the one the Head, the other His body; the one being the bridegroom, the other His bride: the one being chosen and appointed for the other. They were chosen together, yet Christ first in the order of the divine decrees. As, then, Christ and the Church had existed in the will, thoughts, and purpose of the Father from the beginning, He could love them and rejoice in them. As the God-man declares, “Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me...For thou lovest me before the foundation of the world” (Joh 17:23-24)...

“Christ was first elected as head and mediator, and as the cornerstone to bear up the whole building; for the act of the Father’s election in Christ supposeth Him first chosen to this mediatory work, and to be the head of the elect part of the world. After this election of Christ, others were predestinated to be conformed to this image of His: ‘Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren’ (Rom 8:29), i.e., to Christ as Mediator and taking human nature; not to Christ barely considered as God, for, as God, Christ is nowhere said to be the first-born among many brethren. This conformity being specially intended in election, Christ was in the intention of the Father the first exemplar and copy of it. One foot of the compass of grace stood in Christ as the center, while the other walked about the circumference, pointing out one here and another there, to draw a line, as it were, between every one of those points and Christ. The Father, then, being the prime cause of the election of some out of the mass of mankind, was the prime cause of the election of Christ to bring them to the enjoyment of that to which they were elected. It is likely that God, in founding an everlasting kingdom, should consult about the members before He did about the head. Christ was registered at the top of the book of election and His members after Him. It is called, therefore, ‘the book of the Lamb.’”⁶...

There is a certain class of people—despising all doctrine, and particularly disliking the doctrine of God’s absolute sovereignty—who often exhort us to “preach Christ,” but we have long observed that *they* never preach Christ in His *highest* official character, as the Covenant Head of God’s people, that they never say one word about Him as God’s “elect, in whom my soul delighteth!” (Isa 42:1). Preaching Christ is a far more comprehensive task than many suppose, nor can it be

⁶ Stephen Charnock, “A Discourse of God’s Being the Author of Reconciliation” in *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, Vol. 3, 358.

done intelligently by any man until he begins at the beginning and shows that the man Christ Jesus was eternally predestinated unto union with the Second Person of the Godhead. “I have exalted one chosen out of the people” (Psa 89:19). That exaltation commenced with the elevation of Christ’s humanity to personal union with the eternal Word—unique honor!

The very words “chosen in Christ” necessarily imply that He was chosen *first*, as the soil in which we were set. When God chose Christ it was not as a single or private person, but as a public person, as Head of His body, we being chosen in Him as the members thereof. Thus, inasmuch as we were then given a representative subsistence before God, God could make a covenant with Christ on our behalf...

Let those, then, who desire to preach Christ, see to it that they give Him the preeminence in *all* things—election not excepted! Let them learn to give unto Jesus of Nazareth His full honor, that which the Father Himself hath given to Him. It is a superlative honor that Christ is the channel through which all the grace and glory we have, or shall have, flows to us, and was set up as such from the beginning. As Romans 8:29 so plainly teaches, it was in connection with *election* that God appointed His own beloved Son to be “the firstborn among many brethren.” Christ being appointed as the masterpiece of divine wisdom, the grand prototype, and we ordained to be so many little copies and models of Him. Christ is the first and last of all God’s thoughts, counsels, and ways.

From *Studies in the Scriptures*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

A.W. Pink (1886-1952): Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, author; born in Nottingham, England, UK.



The Lord Jesus is to be considered not as the friend of a day or our Savior only in His life on earth, but as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, the anointed Mediator set up from everlasting days. By faith, I see Him as the eternal Son of God; I see Him standing in the purpose of the Father as the covenant head of the elect. I see Him in due time born of a woman, but I do not forget that His goings forth are of old from everlasting, and that before the day-star knew its place, His delights were with the sons of men. I see Him. He cries, “It is finished!” He bows His head. I do not, however, forget that He is not dead, but that when the world shall die and time shall conclude its reign, then He Who is the Ancient of days shall live and shall flourish in immortal youth.

Alpha and Omega is Jesus Christ, then, in the eternal purposes
and in the covenant transactions of God.

—Charles H. Spurgeon

GREAT HOPE IN GOD'S PURPOSE

Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

BELOVED in our Lord, in the first part of my *Golden Key*,¹ I have shewed you seven several pleas² that all sincere Christians may form up, as to those several Scriptures in the Old and New Testament that refer either to the great day of account or to their particular days of account. In this second part,³ I shall go on where I left [off], and shew you several other choice pleas that all believers may make in the present case...

The tenth plea that a believer may form up, as to the ten Scriptures that are in the [footnote]⁴ that refer to the great day of account or to a man's particular account,⁵ may be drawn up from the consideration of that compact,⁶ covenant, and agreement that was solemnly made between God and Christ, [concerning] the whole business of man's salvation or redemption.

We may present it to our understanding in this form: God the Father saith to Christ the Mediator, "I look upon Adam and his posterity as a degenerate seed, 'a generation of vipers,' of apostates and backsliders, yea, traitors and rebels, liable to all temporal, spiritual, and eternal judgments. Yet I cannot find in my heart to damn them all: 'Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger...for I am God, and not man' (Hos 11:8-9). Therefore, I have determined to shew mercy upon many millions of them, save them from wrath to come, and bring them to glory (Rev 7:9-10). But this I must do with a salvo to⁷ my law, justice, and honor: if, therefore, thou wilt undertake for

¹ Thomas Brooks, "The Golden Key to Open Hidden Treasures" in *The Complete Works of Thomas Brooks*, Vol. 5, 1-261.

² Brooks explains in *The Golden Key* that he gives "eleven serious singular pleas that all sincere Christians may safely and [on good grounds] make to those ten Scriptures in the Old and New Testament that speak of the general judgment and of that particular judgment that must certainly pass upon them all immediately after death," that is, all true believers may plead the biblical truths he presents when they stand before God.

³ Brooks, "Paradise Opened" in *Complete Works*, Vol. 5, 263-414.

⁴ Ecclesiastes 11:9, 12:14; Matthew 12:14, 18:23; Luke 16:2; Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27, 13:17; 1 Peter 4:5.

⁵ **the great day...particular account** – the Day of Judgment in general or an individual's account given at the judgment seat of Christ (2Co 5:10).

⁶ **compact** – covenant or contract made between two or more persons or parties.

⁷ **salvo to** – explanation of a difficulty regarding.

them and become a curse for their sakes (Gal 3:10, 13) and so make satisfaction to My justice for their sins, I will give them unto Thee (Joh 17:2, 6, 11) to take care of them and to bring them up to My kingdom for the manifestation of the glory of My grace.” “Well,” saith Christ, “I am content: I will do all Thou requirest with all My heart, and so the agreement is made between Thee and Me.”⁸

This may be gathered from the Scriptures in [Psalm 2:7-9 and 40:6-8]. Christ the Son speaks in both places. In the first, He publisheth the decree or ordinance of heaven [concerning] Himself and bringeth in the Father, [Who installs] Him into the priesthood or office of Mediator. For so the apostle applieth that text, “Thou art my son” (Heb 5:5), and also avoucheth⁹ this covenant and agreement in the two main parts of it...But for a clearer, [more] distinct, and fuller opening of the covenant of redemption, or that blessed compact between God the Father and Jesus Christ, which is a matter of grand importance to all our souls; and considering that it is a point that I have never yet treated of in pulpit or press, I shall therefore take the liberty at this time to open myself as clearly and as fully as I can. And therefore thus...

This Scripture, Isaiah 53, among many others, gives us very clear intimations of a federal transaction¹⁰ between God the Father and Jesus Christ, in order to [achieve] the recovery and everlasting happiness of poor sinners. The glorious gospel seems to be [summarized] in this

⁸ How deeply thankful we ought to be for the glorious gospel of the grace of God! There is a remedy revealed for man's need, as wide and broad and deep as man's disease. We need not be afraid to look at sin and study its nature, origin, power, extent, and vileness, if we only look at the same time at the Almighty medicine provided for us in the salvation that is in Jesus Christ. Though sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded. Yes, in the everlasting covenant of redemption, to which Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are parties; in the Mediator of that covenant, Jesus Christ the righteous, perfect God and perfect Man in one person; in the work that He did by dying for our sins and rising again for our justification; in the offices that He fills as our Priest, Substitute, Physician, Shepherd, and Advocate; in the precious blood He shed that can cleanse from all sin; in the everlasting righteousness that He brought in; in the perpetual intercession that He carries on as our Representative at God's right hand; in His power to save to the uttermost the chief of sinners, His willingness to receive and pardon the vilest, His readiness to bear with the weakest; in the grace of the Holy Spirit that He plants in the hearts of all His people, renewing, sanctifying, and causing old things to pass away and all things to become new; in all this—and oh, what a brief sketch it is!—in all this, I say, there is a full, perfect, and complete medicine for the hideous disease of sin. Awful and tremendous as the right view of sin undoubtedly is, no one need faint and despair if he will take a right view of Jesus Christ at the same time. No wonder that old [John] Flavel ends many a chapter of his admirable *Fountain of Life* with the touching words, “Blessed be God for Jesus Christ.” (J. C. Ryle, *Holiness*, 13-14)

⁹ **avoucheth** – acknowledges.

¹⁰ **federal transaction** – expressing a covenant arrangement, entered into by someone, in this case the eternal Son, with God.

chapter. The subject-matter of it is the grievous sufferings and dolorous¹¹ death of Christ and the happy and glorious [outcome] thereof. Of all the prophets, Isaiah was the most evangelical prophet, and of all the prophecies of this prophet, that which you have in this chapter is the most evangelical prophecy. In this chapter you have a most plain, lively, and full description and representation of the humiliation, death, and passion of Jesus Christ; which indeed is so exact and so consonant to what hath fallen out since, that Isaiah seems here rather to pen a history than a prophecy...Out of this chapter, which is worth more than all the gold of Ophir, yea, than ten thousand worlds, observe with me these eight things:

First, observe that God and Christ are sweetly agreed and infinitely pleased in the conversion of the elect (53:10). “He shall see his seed,” that is, He shall see them called, converted, changed, and sanctified. “He shall see his seed,” that is, an innumerable company shall be converted to Him by His Word and Spirit, in all countries and nations, through the mighty workings of the Spirit and the incorruptible seed of the Word (Psa 110:3; 1Pe 1:23). Infinite numbers of poor souls should be brought in to Jesus Christ, which He should see to His full content and infinite satisfaction (Rev 7:9; Heb 2:10, 13). “He shall see his seed,” that is, He shall see them increase and multiply; He shall see believers brought in to Him from all corners and quarters, and He shall see them greatly increase and grow by the preaching of the everlasting gospel, especially after His ascension into heaven and a more glorious pouring forth of the Holy Ghost upon His apostles and others (Act 2:37, 41; 4:1-4, 8). No accountants on earth can count or reckon up Christ’s spiritual seed and issue. But,

Secondly, observe with me that in the persons redeemed by Jesus Christ, there was neither weight nor worth, neither portion nor proportion, neither inward nor outward excellences or beauties for which the punishment due to them should be transferred upon dear Jesus (53:4). If you look upon them in their sins, in their guilt, you shall find them despisers and rejecters of Christ: “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” Christ took upon Him not our nature alone, but the infirmities also of it, and became liable to such sorrows, afflictions, pains, and griefs, as man’s sinful nature is exposed and subject to. They are called *ours* because they were procured to Him by our sins, and sustained by Him for the discharge of our sins; unto the

¹¹ **dolorous** – sorrowful; painful.

guilt whereof, out of love to us undertaken by Him, they were deservedly due (Rom 8:3; Heb 4:15). Christ, for our sakes, hath taken all our spiritual maladies upon Himself, that is, all our sins, to make satisfaction for them; and [hath taken them upon Himself] as our surety to pay the debt that we had run into. Christ, in the quality of a pledge for His elect, hath given full satisfaction for all their sins, bearing all the punishments due for them, in torments and extreme griefs, both of body and soul. The reason why they so much disesteemed Christ was because they made no other account, but that all those afflictions that befell Him were inflicted by God upon Him for His own evil deserts.¹² They accounted Him to be one out of grace and favor with God, yea, to be one pursued by [God] with all those evils for His sins. When the Jews saw what grievous things Christ suffered, they wickedly and impiously¹³ judged that He was thus handled by God, in way of vengeance for His sins. By all which, you may see, that in the persons redeemed by Christ, there was nothing of worth or honor to be found, for which the punishment, due to them, should be transferred upon our Lord Jesus Christ. But,

Thirdly, observe with me that no sin nor meritorious cause of punishment is found in Jesus Christ, our blessed Redeemer, for which He should be stricken, smitten, and afflicted by God (53:5, 9). “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with his stripes we are healed...He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.” Sin had cast God and us at infinite distance. Now Christ is punished that our sins may be pardoned; He is chastised that God and we may be reconciled. Guilt stuck close upon us, but Christ, by the price of His blood, hath discharged that guilt, pacified divine wrath, and made God and us friends. God the Father laid upon dear Jesus all the punishments that were due to the elect, for whom He was a pledge. And by this means, they come to be acquitted and to obtain peace with God. Christ was “holy, harmless, undefiled” (Heb 7:26). No man could [convict] Him of sin; yea, the devil himself could find nothing amiss in Him either as to word or deed. Christ was without original blemish or actual blot. All Christ's words and works were upright, just, and sincere. Christ's innocence is sufficiently vindicated. It is true: Christ suffered great and grievous things, but not for His own sins—“He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth” (53:9)—but for ours. Christ had now put Himself in

¹² **deserts** – punishments deserved for wrongdoing.

¹³ **impiously** – in an irreverent, profane way.

the sinner's stead and was become his surety. [He was, therefore,] obnoxious¹⁴ to whatever the sinner had deserved in his own person; and upon this account, and no other, was He wounded, bruised, and chastised. The Lord Jesus had no sin in Him by *inhesion*,¹⁵ but He had a great deal of sin upon Him by *imputation*:¹⁶ "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2Co 5:21). It pleased our Lord Jesus Christ to put Himself under our guilt, and therefore it pleased the Father to wound Him, bruise Him, and chastise Him. But,

Fourthly, observe with me that peace and reconciliation with God, the healing of all our sinful maladies, and our deliverance from wrath to come are all such noble favors as are purchased for us by the blood of Christ (53:5). "The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Christ was chastised to procure our peace by removal of our sins that set God and us asunder. The guilt [of our sins was] discharged with the price of His blood, and we [were] reconciled to God by the same price. Christ was punished that by Him we might obtain perfect peace with God, Who was at enmity with us by reason of our sins. By Christ's stripes, we are freed both from sin and punishment. Now, because some produce this Scripture to justify that corrupt doctrine of universal redemption, give me leave to argue thus from it. The chastisement for sin that was laid upon the person of Jesus Christ procured peace for them for whom He was so chastised (Isa 57:21; Eph 2:14)...But,

Fifthly, observe with me that the great and the grievous sufferings that were inflicted upon Jesus Christ, He did endure freely, willingly, meekly, patiently, according to the covenant and agreement that was made between the Father and Himself (53:7). "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth"...That is, the penalty due to God's justice for our sins was exacted of Christ, and He sustained the same for us. The prophet doth not speak of one and the same party or parties, both sinning and suffering or sustaining penalties for their own defaults; but as one suffering for the sins of another and sustaining grievous penalties for faults made and faults committed by other persons. The words, rightly read and understood, do sufficiently confirm the doctrine of satisfaction made to God's justice by Christ's sufferings for

¹⁴ **obnoxious** – subject to.

¹⁵ **inhesion** – existing in as a basic and essential feature.

¹⁶ **imputation** – putting to one's account.

our sins. The penalty due to us was in rigor of justice exacted of Him, and He became a sponsor or surety for us by undertaking in our behalf the discharge of it. Christ did voluntarily undertake and engage Himself unto God His Father in our behalf, as a surety for the payment of all our debts. They were exacted of Him, and He answered for them all; that is, He not only undertook them, but He also discharged us of them. We use the word commonly in our English tongue: to answer a debt [is] to discharge it; and this is most true of our dear Lord Jesus; for He answered our debt and caused our bond to be cancelled that it might never come to be put in suit against us, either in this or that other world (Joh 19:30; Rom 4:25; Col 2:14)... But,

Sixthly, observe with me that the original cause of this compact or covenant between the Father and the Son, by virtue of which God the Father demands a price, and Jesus Christ pays the price according to God's demands, is only from the free grace and favor of God (53:10). "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." God the Father looks upon Jesus Christ as sustaining our person and cause; He looks upon all our sins as laid upon Him, and to be punished in Him. Sin could not be abolished, the justice of God could not be satisfied, the wrath of God could not be appeased, the terrible curse could not be removed, but by the death of Christ. Therefore, God the Father took pleasure in bruising Him and in putting Him to grief, according to the agreement between Him and His Son. It must be readily granted that God did not incite or instigate the wicked Jews to those vile and cruel courses and carriages¹⁷ of theirs to Jesus Christ. But yet that His sufferings were by God predetermined for the salvation of mankind is most evident by [Acts 2:23 and 4:28]; and, accordingly, it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, and to put Him to grief. The singular pleasure that God the Father takes in the work of our redemption is a wonderful demonstration of His love and affection to us.

Seventhly, observe with me that it is agreed between the Father and the Son that our sins should be imputed unto [the Son], that His righteousness should be imputed unto us, and that all the redeemed should believe in Him and so be justified (53:11). "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge (or faith in Him) shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." Some render it, "He shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied," that is, Jesus Christ shall receive and enjoy the effect and issue of all the great pains that He hath taken and

¹⁷ **courses and carriages** – actions and behaviors.

all the grievous things that He hath suffered, as shall give Him full content and satisfaction. When Christ hath accomplished the work of redemption, He shall receive a full reward for all His sufferings. Christ takes a singular pleasure in the work of our redemption and doth herein, as it were, refresh Himself, as with the fruits of His own labors. God the Father engages to Jesus Christ that He should not travail in vain, but that He should survive to see with great joy a numerous issue of faithful souls begotten unto God. You know when women, after sore, sharp, hard labor, are delivered, they are so greatly refreshed, delighted, gladdened, and satisfied that they forget their former pains and sorrow, “or joy that a man is born into the world” (Joh 16:21). God the Father undertakes that Jesus Christ should have such a holy seed, such a blessed issue, as the main fruit and effect of His passion, as should joy Him, please Him, and as He should rest satisfied in. Certainly there could be no [greater] joy and satisfaction to Christ [than] for Him to see poor souls reconciled, justified, and saved by His sufferings and satisfaction; [just] as it is the highest joy of a faithful minister to see souls won over to Christ and to see souls built up in Christ (1Th 2:19-20; Gal 4:19)...But,

Eighthly, observe with me that it is agreed between the Father and the Son that for those persons for whom Jesus Christ should lay down His life, He should stand intercessor for them also, so that they may be brought to the possession of all those noble favors and blessings that He has purchased with His dearest blood (53:12). “He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors,” saying, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luk 23:34)... For those very transgressors, by whom He suffered, He does intercede, which intercession continues still and shall do to the end of the world (Heb 7:25).

From “Paradise Opened” in *The Complete Works of Thomas Brooks*, Vol. 5, in the public domain.

Thomas Brooks (1608-1680): Nonconformist preacher and advocate of the Congregational way; buried in Bunhill Fields, London, England, UK.



One should not be of the opinion that all this is mere intellectual speculation and that, having perceived all this, one can let the matter rest; for it is the foundation for all sure comfort, joy, holy amazement, and the magnification of God.—*Wilhelmus à Brakel*

GOD'S DESIGN IN JESUS' DEATH

A. A. Hodge (1823-1886)

CHRISt died in execution of the terms of an eternal Covenant of Redemption, formed between the Father and the Son. The conditions assumed by Christ on His part were that He should, in living and dying, by action and suffering, fulfil all the legal obligations of His people. The conditions promised by the Father were that Christ should “see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied” (Isa 53:11).

That there was such a covenant formed in eternity is plain. (1) God always acts on a plan, and there must therefore have been a mutual counsel and design on the part of the several persons of the Godhead distributing their several functions in the economy of redemption. (2) The Scriptures explicitly state all the elements of a true covenant in this relation, giving the mutual promises and conditions of the two parties. “I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes...” (Isa 42:6-7). “I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations” (Psa 89:3-4). “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great” (Isa 53:10-12). (3) Christ, while accomplishing His work on earth, makes constant reference to a previous commission He had received of the Father Whose will He has come to execute. “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (Joh 6:38). “This commandment have I received of my Father” (Joh 10:18). “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me” (Luk 22:29). (4) Christ claims the reward that had been conditioned upon the fulfilment of that commission. “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world...I pray for them: I pray not

for the world, but for them which thou hast given me” (Joh 17:4-6, 9). (5) Christ constantly speaks of those that believe as having been previously given Him by the Father. His Father had given them—“I lay down my life for the sheep” (Joh 10:15). They were given Him by the Father. He knows them. They hear His voice. *They* shall never perish. The reason that the reprobate¹ do not believe is because they are *not* His sheep (Joh 10:26). He prays not for the world: He prays only for those the Father had given Him out of the world. If He died in pursuance of a mutual understanding between Himself and the Father, if He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, and if everyone that the Father gave Him in that covenant shall be saved, then surely those who are not saved are not those for whom He died.

The Scriptures habitually affirm that the motive that led the Father to give His Son, and the Son to die, was not a mere *general philanthropy*, but the highest, most peculiar, and personal love. Christ’s true purpose in dying can certainly have no more exact and complete expression than His outpourings of soul in the ear of His Father on the terrible night preceding His sacrifice, recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John. If ever the real design of His death was uppermost in His heart and speech, it must have been then. If ever the motives that led to His dying were in strong action, it must have been then. But all that He says of the world is that He *does not pray for it*. All the unutterable treasures of His love are poured forth upon those whom the Father gave Him out of the world. “For their sakes,” He said, “I sanctify myself”—that is, devote Myself to this awful service. “That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves” (Joh 17:13). “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Joh 15:13). “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). “That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:17-19). “Hereby perceive we the love of God...In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him...” (1Jo 3:16; 4:9-10.) This love of Christ for His Church has for its type the personal and exclusive love of the husband for the wife (Eph 5:25-27).

It is inconceivable that this highest and most peculiar love, which

¹ **reprobate** – unbelievers left in their sins and abandoned by God to judgment.

moved God to give His only-begotten and well-beloved Son to undergo a painful and shameful death, could have had for its objects the myriads from whom, both before and after Christ, He had withheld all knowledge of the gospel; or those to whom, while He gives them the *outward* call of the Word, He refuses to give the *inward* call of His Spirit. Can such love as the death of Christ expresses, welling up and pouring forth from the heart of the omnipotent God, fail to secure the certain blessedness of its objects? Paul expresses his opinion upon this precise point: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom 8:32). Surely, it is a profane defamation² of this love to say that its effects may be measured in God's providing a salvation for all men to accrue to them upon conditions known and intended in the case of most to be impossible. It is surely an abuse of Scripture to say that the elect and the reprobate, those appointed to honor and those appointed to dishonor (Rom 9:21), those who "before were of old ordained to this condemnation" (Jud 1:4) and those who were "ordained to eternal life" (Act 13:48), those whom God "hardeneth" and those upon whom He "hath mercy" (Rom 9:18), the "world" and those "chosen out of the world" (Joh 15:19) are all indiscriminately the objects of this amazing, this heaven-moving, this soul-redeeming love.

The Scriptures habitually represent the definite design of the death of Christ to be the saving of *many*, the redemption of His *sheep*, His *Church*, His *people*, His *children*, the *elect*. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins" (Mat 1:21). "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep...I lay down my life for the sheep" (Joh 10:11, 15). "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it...That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:25-27). Christ is said to have died to "gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (Joh 11:51-52). "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom 8:32-35).

² **profane defamation** – grossly irreverent slander.

Now, many plausible reasons may be assigned why, on the supposition of a personal and definite atonement, general terms should be used on some occasions to illustrate the fact that the redemption is suited for all, sufficient for all, [preached] to all; that the elect are chosen out of every family, tribe, and nation under heaven (Rev 5:9), and from every successive generation; and that finally the whole earth shall be redeemed from the curse, the gospel [shall] triumph among all nations, and the saints [shall] inherit the regenerated world! But we affirm that, on the contrary hypothesis³ of a general and indefinite atonement, no plausible pretext can be given for the use of the definite language above quoted. If Christ loved the whole world so as to die for it, why say that the motive for His dying was that His *sheep* should be saved?

Christ's work as High Priest is one work, accomplished in all its parts with one design and with one effect, and having respect to the same persons. The work of the high priest...included sacrifice or oblation⁴ and intercession.⁵ I proved also (a) that the work of the ancient priest secured the actual and certain remission⁶ of the sins of all for whom he acted, and that it bore a definite reference to the persons of all those whom he represented and to none others; (b) that the ancient priest offered intercession for precisely the same persons—for all of them and for none others—for whom he had previously made expiation⁷...It will answer our purpose to notice,

(1) The Scriptures declare that the ancient priest was in all these respects a type of Christ. Our Lord, having made expiation in the outer court, went within the veil to make intercession. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us... For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us...seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb 9:12, 24; 7:25).

(2) But Christ interceded only for His *sheep*. This is certain, (a) because it is always effectual. He intercedes as "a priest upon his throne" (Zec 6:13). He says His Father "heareth him always" (Joh 11:42). His form of intercession is, "Father, I will that they also,

³ **hypothesis** – theory based on incomplete evidence.

⁴ **oblation** – anything offered as a sacrifice in worship.

⁵ **intercession** – pleading on behalf of another.

⁶ **remission** – forgiveness.

⁷ **expiation** – Expiation has reference to the *guilt* of sin. To expiate is to remove or cover the guilt of sin. (Morton H. Smith, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 382)

whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am” (Joh 17:24). (b) He expressly declares the fact that He intercedes only for the elect: “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me” (Joh 17:9). “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word” (Joh 17:20). “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (Joh 10:16).

(3) But if Christ makes intercession for the elect only, He can, of course, have died for them alone. As proved before, the ancient priest made intercession for all for whom he made expiation. The priestly work was one in design and effect in all its parts. It is simply absurd to suppose that the priest acted as a mediator for one party when He made the oblation and for another when he made the intercession. This is the view certainly that Paul took of the matter: “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?...Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Rom 8:35). Here it is plain that the argument establishes the security of the *elect*. The ground upon which that security rests is that Christ died for them and intercedes for them. Plainly the dying and the intercession have one and the same personal object.

(4) This is rendered more certain by the very *nature* of that perpetual intercession that Christ offers in behalf of His elect. For us it is now perfected in heaven; it is not a humble dejection⁸ of Himself, with cries, tears, and supplications; nay, it cannot be considered as *vocal* by the way of entreaty, but merely *real* by the presentation of Himself, sprinkled with the blood of the covenant before the throne of grace in our behalf. “But by His own blood...now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb 9:12, 24)—so presenting Himself that His former oblation might have its perpetual efficacy until the many sons given Him are brought to glory. And herein His intercession consisteth, being nothing, as it were, but His oblation continued. He was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8). Now, His intercession before His actual oblation in the fullness of time being nothing but a presenting of the engagement that was upon Him for the work in due time to be accomplished, certainly that which follows it is nothing but a presenting of what, according to that engagement, is

⁸ **dejection** – casting down; humiliating.

fulfilled; so that it is nothing but a continuation of His oblation in postulating,⁹ by remembrance and declaration of it, those things that by it were procured.¹⁰ How, then, is it possible that the one of these should be of larger compass¹¹ and extent than the other? Can He be said to offer for them for whom He doth not intercede? His intercession is nothing but a presenting of His oblation in the behalf of them for whom He suffered and for the bestowing of those good things that were purchased by it.

The relation that this question sustains to the doctrine of election is self-evident. The...doctrine that God of His mere good pleasure has from eternity infallibly predestinated certain persons out of the mass of fallen humanity to salvation and to all the means thereof, and that in so doing He has sovereignly passed over the rest of mankind and left them to the natural consequences of their sin, necessarily settles the question as to the design of God in giving His Son to die. It is purely unthinkable that the same mind that sovereignly predestinated the elect to salvation and the rest of mankind to the punishment of their sins, should, at the same time, make a great sacrifice for the sake of removing legal obstacles out of the way of those from whose path it is decreed other obstacles shall *not* be removed.

Our view has the capital advantage of agreeing with and harmonizing all the facts of the case and of representing Christ as having designed to accomplish by His death precisely what in the event is accomplished and nothing else. We believe that He designed to accomplish by [the Son's] death the following ends: (1) Evidently as the end to which all other ends stand related as means, the only end that affords any adequate reason for what He did, He purposed to secure certainly the salvation of His own people, those whom the Father had given unto Him; (2) to secure that end, He designed to purchase for them, and then efficaciously to communicate to them, faith and repentance and all the fruits of the Spirit.

From *The Atonement*, in the public domain.

Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-1886): American Presbyterian theologian; son of Charles Hodge; born in Princeton, Mercer, New Jersey, USA.



⁹ **postulating** – claiming.

¹⁰ **procured** – obtained with special care or effort.

¹¹ **compass** – scope; boundary.

GOD'S PURPOSE CONSUMMATED

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.—Revelation 19:7-8

MY principal aim shall be to show you that the blessed and glorious union, which is to be celebrated between the Church and her Lord, will be “the marriage of the Lamb.” The ever blessed and eternal union of hearts with Christ will be in reference to His sacrifice, specially and emphatically. The perfected union of the entire Church of God with her divine Husband is here described by the beloved apostle, who laid his head upon his Master’s bosom and knew most about Him, and who was under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost in these words: “The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready”...

I will set forth this marriage as best I am able. It is divinely veiled as well as revealed in this Revelation. God forbid we should intrude where the Holy Spirit shuts us out! but still, what we do know of it, let us now think upon, and may the sacred Spirit make it profitable to us...

The marriage of the Lamb is the result of the eternal gift of the Father. Our Lord says, “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.” His prayer was, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (Joh 17:24). The Father made a choice, and the chosen He gave to His Son to be His portion. For them He entered into a covenant of redemption, whereby He was pledged in due time to take upon Himself their nature, pay the penalty of their offences, and set them free to be His own. Beloved, that which was arranged in the councils of eternity and settled there between the high contracting parties, is brought to its ultimate end in that day when the Lamb takes unto Himself in everlasting union the whole of those whom His Father gave Him from of old.

Next: this is *the completion of the betrothal*, which took place with each of them in time. I shall not attempt elaborate distinctions; but as far as you and I were concerned, the Lord Jesus betrothed each one of us unto Himself in righteousness, when first we believed on Him.

Then He took us to be His and gave Himself to be ours, so that we could sing, “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Song 2:16). This was the essence of the marriage. Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, represents our Lord as already married to the Church. This may be illustrated by the Oriental custom, by which, when the bride is betrothed, all the sanctities of marriage are involved in those espousals; but yet there may be a considerable interval before the bride is taken to her husband’s house...Well, then, you and I are betrothed to our Lord today, and He is joined to us by inseparable bonds. He does not wish to part with us, nor could we part from Him. He is the delight of our souls, and He rejoices over us with singing (Zep 3:17). Rejoice that He has chosen you and called you, and through the betrothal look forward to the marriage. Feel even now, that though in the world, you are not of it: your destiny does not lie here among these frivolous sons of men. Our home is henceforth on high...

The marriage day indicates the perfecting of the body of the Church. I have already told you that the Church will then be completed, and it is not so now. Adam lay asleep, and the Lord took out of his side a rib and fashioned thereof a help meet for him: Adam saw her not when she was in the forming, but he opened his eyes, and before him was the perfect form of his help meet (Gen 2:18). Beloved, the true Church is now in the forming and is therefore not visible. There are many churches; but as to the one Church of Christ, we see it neither here nor there...But the day will come when He shall have completed His new creation, and then will He bring her forth whom He has made for the second Adam, to be His delight to all eternity. The Church is not perfected as yet. We read of that part of it which is in heaven, that “They without us should not be made perfect” (Heb 11:40). Unless you and I get there, if we are true believers, there cannot be a perfect Church in glory. The music of the heavenly harmonies as yet lacks certain voices. Some of its needful notes are too bass for those already, and others are too high for them, until the singers come who are ordained to give the choir its fullest range...There is demand for other voices to complete the heavenly harmony! Beloved, in the day of the marriage of the Lamb, the chosen shall all be there—the great and the small—even all the believers who are wrestling hard this day with sins and doubts and fears. Every living member of the living Church shall be there to be married to the Lamb.

By this marriage is meant more than I have told you. There is *the home-bringing*...All the faithful shall soon be away to thy land, O Emmanuel! We shall dwell in the land that floweth with milk and

honey, the land of the unclouded and unsetting sun, the home of the blessed of the Lord. Happy indeed will be the home-bringing of the perfect Church!

The marriage is the *coronal-avowal*. The Church is the bride of the great King: He will set the crown upon her head and make her to be known as His true spouse forever. Oh, what a day that will be when every member of Christ shall be crowned in Him, and with Him, and every member of the mystical body shall be glorified in the glory of the Bridegroom! Oh, may I be there in that day! Brethren, we must be with our Lord in the fight if we would be with Him in the victory. We must be with Him in wearing the crown of thorns, if we are to be with Him in wearing the crown of glory. We must be faithful by His grace, even unto death, if we are to share the glory of His endless life.

I cannot tell you all it means, but certainly this marriage signifies that all who have believed in Him shall then *enter into a bliss that shall never end*; a bliss that no fear approacheth or doubt becloudeth. They shall be forever with the Lord, for ever glorified with Him. Expect not lips of clay fitly to speak on such a theme. Tongues of fire are needed, and words that fall like fire-flakes on the soul.

A day will come—the day of days—time's crown and glory, when, all conflict, risk, and judgment ended forever, the saints, arrayed in the righteousness of Christ, shall be eternally one with Him in living, loving, lasting union, partaking together of the same glory—the glory of the Most High. What must it be to be there! My dear hearers, will you be there? Make your calling and election sure. If you are not trusting in the Lamb on earth, you will not reign with the Lamb in His glory. He that doth not love the Lamb, as the atoning sacrifice, shall never be the bride of the Lamb. How can you hope to be glorified with Him if you neglect Him in the day of His scorning? O Lamb of God, my sacrifice, I must be one with Thee, for this is my very life! I could not live apart from Thee. If, my hearer, thou canst thus speak, there is good hope that thou shalt be a participator in the marriage of the Lamb...

It was next as the Lamb that He loved us and proved His love. Beloved, He did not give us words of love merely when He came from heaven to earth and dwelt among us “a lowly man before his foes”; but He proceeded to deeds of truest affection. The supreme proof of His love was that He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. When He poured out His blood as a sacrifice, it might have been said, “Behold, how he loved them!” If you would prove the love of Jesus, you would not mention the transfiguration, but the crucifixion. Gethsemane and Golgotha would rise to your lips. Here to demonstration, beyond all

possibility of doubt by any true heart, the Well-beloved proved His love to us. See how it runs: “Who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20), as if that giving of Himself for me was the clear proof that He loved me. Read again: “Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph 5:25). The proof of His love to the Church was the giving up of Himself for it. “Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi 2:8). “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us” (1Jo 4:10). So, you see, as a Lamb, He proved His love; and as a Lamb, He celebrated His marriage with us.

Go a step further. Love in marriage must be on both sides, and it is as the Lamb that we first came to love Him. I had no love to Christ. How could I have, until I saw His wounds and blood? “We love him, because he first loved us.” His perfect life was a condemnation to me, much as I was compelled to admire it; but the love that drew me to Him was shown in His substitutionary character, when He bore my sins in His own body on the tree. Is it not so with you, beloved? I have heard a great deal about conversions through admiration of the character of Christ, but I have never met with one: all I have ever met with have been conversions through a sense of need of salvation, and a consciousness of guilt, which could never be satisfied save by His agony and death, through which sin is justly pardoned and evil is subdued. This is the great heart-winning doctrine. Christ loves us as the Lamb, and we love Him as the Lamb.

Further, marriage is the most perfect union. Surely, it is as the Lamb that Jesus is most closely joined to His people. Our Lord came very close to us when He took our nature, for thus He became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He came very near to us when, for this cause, He left His Father and became one flesh with His Church. He could not be sinful as she was; but He did take her sins upon Himself and bear them all away, as it is written, “the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6). When “he was numbered with the transgressors” (Isa 53:12) and when the sword of vengeance smote Him in our stead, then He came nearer to us than ever He could do in the perfection of His Incarnation. I cannot conceive of closer union than that of Christ and souls redeemed by blood. As I look at Him in death, I feel forced to cry, “Surely a husband by blood art thou to me, O Jesus! Thou art joined to me by something closer than the one fact that Thou art of my nature; for that nature of Thine has borne my sin and suffered the penalty of wrath on my behalf. Now art Thou one with me in all things by a union like to that which links Thee with

the Father.” A wonderful union is thus effected by our Lord’s wearing the character of the Lamb.

Once more, *we never feel so one with Jesus as when we see Him as the Lamb...* I never feel so close to my Lord as when I survey His wondrous cross and see Him pouring out His blood for me...I have almost felt myself in His arms, and like John, I have leaned on His bosom when I have beheld His passion. I do not wonder, therefore, that since He comes closest to us as the Lamb, and since we come closest to Him when we behold Him in that character, He is pleased to call His highest eternal union with His Church, “the marriage of the Lamb.”

And O beloved, when you come to think of it, to be married to Him, to be one with Him, to have no thought, no object, no desire, no glory but that which dwells in Him that liveth and was dead—will not this be heaven indeed, where the Lamb is the light thereof? For ever to contemplate and adore Him Who offered up Himself without spot unto God, as our sacrifice and propitiation;¹ this shall be an endless feast of grateful love. We shall never weary of this subject...

I have done when I have again put this question: Do you trust the Lamb? I warn you, if you have a religion that has no blood of Christ in it, it is not worth a thought: you had better be rid of it. It will be of no use to you. I warn you, also, that unless you love the Lamb, you cannot be married to the Lamb; for He will never be married to those who have no love to Him. You must take Jesus as a sacrifice or not at all. It is useless to say, “I will follow Christ’s example.” You will not do anything of the sort. It is idle to say, “He shall be my teacher.” He will not own you for a disciple unless you will own Him as a sacrifice. You must take Him as the Lamb or have done with Him. If you do despite² to the blood of Christ, you do despite to the whole person of Christ. Christ is nothing to you if He is not your atonement. As many of you as hope to be saved by the works of the Law or by *anything* else apart from His blood and righteousness, you have un-Christianized yourselves; you have no part in Jesus here, and you shall have no part in Him hereafter, when He shall take to Himself His own redeemed Church to be His spouse forever and ever. God bless you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

From a sermon delivered on Lord’s Day morning, July 21, 1889,
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.



¹ **propitiation** – appeasement; sacrifice that turns away wrath.

² **despite** – mental attitude of despising something.

LOVING JESUS IN HIS ETERNAL WORK

Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664)

WE must love Jesus as carrying on that great work of our salvation in eternity. And this is the fruit or effect of faith, if once we believe, that all those designs and transactions were for us—even for us! O then how should we but love that God and love that Christ, Who thus first and freely loved us? God loved us before we loved Him, for He loved us in that eternity before all worlds. Surely, then, we are bound to love Him first and above all things. As the diamond formeth and fashioneth the diamond, so love formeth and fashioneth love. Or as fire converteth fuel into fire, so this ancient love of God and Christ may well cause our love again.

O Christ! Didst Thou not love us?...Who doubts it, that but reads the eternal design of God that Christ should go out of Himself and suffer an ecstasy¹ through the [intensity] of His love? That Christ should so far debase² His majesty as to die for us that we might not die, but live with Him? O then, how should this but kindle in our hearts a most ardent love towards God and Christ? What more effectual motive [works] man's love than...the love and bounty of another? That this fruit doth spring from the sense of our election, Bernard³ observes in *Epistle 107*, "Who, then, is righteous, except he who returns to God, Who loves him, His meed⁴ of love? And this never happens unless the Spirit by faith reveals to the man the eternal purpose of God concerning his future salvation." And hence it is that the heart is most in frame,⁵ when it is considering the eternal love of God in Christ...O my soul! That thou couldst so live by faith on these eternal passages as that thou mightest attain to the highest fruits of faith, not only to love God and Christ, but to love them with a burning love, with a mighty love—such a love as lies in the most vigorous prosecution after Jesus Christ and in the most faithful resignation of thyself to God; such a love as works the most delightful aspect of God and Christ, as makes a man to behold

¹ **ecstasy** – state of feeling that engrosses or bewilders the mind with astonishment.

² **debase** – lower in dignity.

³ **Bernard of Clairvaux** (1090-1153) – French monastic reformer known for his devotion.

⁴ **meed** – deserved share.

⁵ **in frame** – in the best mental or emotional state.

God and Christ with all cheerfulness; such a love as works a man to extol the praises of God. O, in these hinges lies the strength of love ...Indeed the best affections have their fits of swooning; it may be for the present thy love is cold. O but come up to *this* fire! Consider how God and Christ loved thee in every one of these:

His project to save thy soul sprang out of His love. Love was the first wheel that set all the eternal works of God going. What was that great design of God, but only an expression of His love? It was His pleasure to communicate Himself, and the rise of that communication was His love.

The counsels of God were all in love. Had not love been as president of the council, where hadst thou been? When all the attributes of God were at a stand, it was the love of God in Christ that resolved the question for thy salvation.

The foreknowledge of God was a foreknowledge of love and [approval]. In His eternal love, He embraced thee as His own. He foreknew thee, i.e., of His free love He set thee apart to life and salvation: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4). He chose us *in* Christ...Nothing at all moved Him to elect thee but His own good pleasure and free love.

The purpose of God was a resolution of love. It speaks of His love to be a constant, settled, abiding love: no unkindness shall alter it. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (Joh 13:1). Nay, He loves them without end, from everlasting to everlasting.

The decree of God was...an act of love to give in that grace unto His elect. Before all time He decreed [that this love] should be an effectual means to bring them unto glory.

The covenant between God and Christ was an agreement of love. God and Christ struck hands⁶ to save our souls. Grace was given in Christ Jesus before the world began (2Ti 1:9). Grace was given us, that is, the gracious love and favor of God in Christ was given us before all secular times.⁷ This was God's meaning from everlasting, this was the design, yea, the greatest design that ever God had—to set out the infi-

⁶ **struck hands** – figure of speech = shook hands after reaching an agreement; "Thus Christ assented, and from everlasting struck hands with God, to put upon Him man's person...and to enter in his stead in obeying His Father, and to do all for man that He should require." (Edward Fisher, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 23)

⁷ **secular times** – times after Adam's fall, when sinful human beings became unconcerned about the worship of or obedience to God; profane ages of human history.

nite glory and the riches of His love in Jesus Christ! No question but He had other great designs in doing such great things as He hath done. But above all the designs that ever God had in all His works, this is the chief: to honor His mercy, to glorify the riches of His love and grace. Had it not been for this, He would never have made the world. And therefore in that world to come, it will be the delight of God to show His saints and angels what He is able to do for a creature. Yea, He will to all eternity declare to them—to what a height of excellence and glory—His love and mercy...so that the very saints and angels shall admire, adore, and magnify the name of God everlastingly for it.

O my soul! Canst thou ponder on this and not love Him dearly, who hath thus loved thee? Come...if thou art a Christian, thou hast some sparks, though now it may be under the ashes. Come rub, [inflammé,] and warm thy affections at this fire!...Christ hath fire in His hand: look up and reach out thy hand to take it from Him. O take it with both thy hands and be thankful for it! Prayer...contemplation, judicious observation of the Spirit's season are the best instruments to kindle this fire of love in thee.

And I think thy heart should begin now to melt! I think it should receive more easy impressions from the object before it; I think these eternal works and acts of God and Christ towards thy poor soul should begin to overcome thee...“Why, Lord, is it thus? Was I elected from all eternity in Christ? Was I ordained to a glorious inheritance before there was a world? Was this business to make me happy one of the chief deep councils of God? Was this one of the works of His wisdom that He was exercised about before the world began? Was this the great design of God in making the world and in making heaven—that place of glory—to glorify Himself and to glorify such a poor wretch as I am? O then how should this but mightily inflame my heart with the love of God and love of Christ?...Ah! what flames of divine affection, what raptures of zeal, what ravishments of delight, what ecstasies of obedience can be enough for my blessed God and dearest Redeemer?”

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Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664): Anglican, then Presbyterian minister; born in Ormskirk, Lancashire, England, UK.

