

The Covenant: God's Tabernacle with Men

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The covenant is not an agreement, but a relationship of friendship with God in Jesus Christ.

More so even than the doctrine of sovereign predestination, that concerning God's eternal covenant is a peculiarly Reformed heritage. The reason for this is, perhaps, that it is especially in Reformed theology that strong emphasis is laid on the self-revelation and the glory of God as the end and purpose of all the works of God, while it is in the covenant relation of God with man that He especially reveals Himself in all the beauty of His perfections, yea, in His very life as the Triune God. The truth of eternal election has often been called the *cor ecclesiae*, the heart of the church; the doctrine of the covenant may be said to deal with the very heart of religion. For in the covenant relation the Triune God receives us into His own family, takes us to His bosom, opens to us His heart, walks with us and talks with us, calls and treats us as His friends, so that we know Him, trust in Him, love Him with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and with all our strength, and serve Him as His friends. In the covenant relation God dwells with us, and we with Him: the tabernacle of God is with men!

However, that this living relation of friendship on the part of God with man is the real idea and essence of the covenant has not received proper recognition. Usually, the covenant was understood as a pact or agreement between God and men; or its essence was seen in the promise, 'I will be your God.' It was described as a way of salvation, as a means to an end, rather than as the very heart of all true religion, as the highest self-revelation of the triune God, as the ultimate realization of God's purpose of salvation. To demonstrate that the latter is nevertheless the true idea of God's covenant, as presented to us in Holy Scripture, is the chief purpose of this brief treatise.

Due to the rather late development of the truth concerning the covenant of God, the Reformed confessions have little to offer that can be of help to us in defining the idea of the covenant relation. Mention is made of the covenant in connection with the baptism and salvation of infants. The *Heidelberg Catechism* declares that infants 'as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God,' and, therefore, they must 'by baptism as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the Christian church; and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant' (Q. & A. 74). Likewise, the *Belgic Confession* expresses the belief that children of believers 'ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as the children in Israel formerly were circumcised, upon the same promises which are made unto our children' (Art. 34). The 'Form for the Administration of Baptism' speaks of an 'eternal covenant of grace,' the establishment of which God the Father 'witnesseth and sealetH unto us' by holy baptism; and it describes the covenant as consisting of two parts, our part consisting in this, that we are 'obliged unto new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust in him, and love him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life.' And it describes holy baptism as 'a seal and undoubted

testimony that we have an eternal covenant of grace with God.' Finally, children of believers are said to be baptized as 'heirs of the kingdom of God and his covenant.' All this is, indeed, significant; yet, it offers us no definition of the covenant.

A closer approximation to a definition of the covenant relation we find in the later *Westminster Confession*. Here we find mention of God's covenant with Adam, which it describes as something added to man's relation to God as creature, and as 'a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience!' It also speaks of the covenant of grace as a second covenant, 'wherein he freely offered unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they may be saved' (7:1-3).

Here, then, we meet with the notion that the covenant is something additional and secondary, a means to an end, a way of life, a device unto salvation. And since then this has become the prevailing conception of the covenant. To avoid giving to this essay the appearance of a theological treatise, I will refrain from offering the reader quotations from theologians to prove the truth of this statement. Fact is, that, generally speaking, the covenant of God is defined as a means to an end, not as the end itself. Occasionally, it is true, one finds the glimmer of a deeper and richer notion of the covenant: the idea is expressed that the relation between the three persons in the Holy Trinity is the ultimate basis of the covenant relation, and that, in the covenant, God speaks with man as a friend with his friend. However, this truth is never consistently worked out. The covenant of God with man is always a means to an end, a way of salvation, not the highest end in itself.

Definitions may differ in detail, but the prevailing notion remains the same. Some emphasize that the covenant is an agreement, a pact, an alliance; others find the main idea of the covenant in the promise; still others describe it as a way in which God saves His people. Some will speak only of 'parts,' others insist that there are definitely two 'parties' in the covenant. Accordingly, some look upon the covenant as strictly unilateral, one-sided: God alone realizes and maintains the covenant. Others insist that it is bilateral: it is an agreement that is realized by the consent of both parties, God and man. Still others would rather have it thus, that the covenant is unilateral, one-sided, in origin, but bilateral, two-sided, in operation: God alone establishes the covenant but, after it is established, man becomes a party in it. According to some, the covenant is established with Christ; others call it an agreement between God and the elect; still others prefer to describe the parties as the offended God and the offending sinner. The prevailing notion, however, in all these definitions is that the covenant is, essentially, a pact or agreement between God and men, and the chief elements are always the promise of eternal life and the condition of faith and obedience.

Grave objections may be raised against this presentation of the idea of God's covenant. The most serious and fundamental of these is that man cannot really be a party, a contracting party, in relation to the living God. For God is God. He is the infinite, the eternal, the self-existent, the perfectly self-sufficient One. He is the Lord, the sovereign Creator, of Whom, and through Whom, and unto Whom are all things. There is none beside Him. And man is a mere creature that owes his whole existence, all that he is and has, his entire being, with body and soul, with mind and will and strength, with all his powers and talents and possessions, in every relationship and every moment of his life, to his Lord and Creator. God is always the overflowing Fount of all good, and man is always the dependent and needy creature, who must drink from that Fountain. God is the self-sufficient I AM, man is constantly and completely dependent on Him. How, then, shall that creature assume the position of a party in relation to his God? What obligation could he possibly assume beside that which is already incumbent upon

him, without any special agreement: that he shall love the Lord his God with all his strength? Can the fulfilment of this solemn obligation ever become a condition for higher favours and richer blessings?

Man can bring nothing to God, for the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; His are all the gold and silver, and the cattle on a thousand hills. He can do nothing for God, Who is absolutely self-sufficient. All the good man has is a gift of grace, of free and sovereign favour from his God. Even the privilege that he may love and serve his Creator is a gift of divine goodness, for which he owes Him thanks. How then can the relation between this absolutely sovereign Lord and this wholly dependent creature ever be or become a pact or agreement with mutual conditions and stipulations? How could man ever merit eternal life, or, in fact, merit anything with God, by fulfilling certain conditions. Do I make a pact with the worm that crawls at my feet? Or can a man that owes me a thousand dollars make a claim to new favours by paying his debt? How, then, can the speck of dust that is man ever assume the position of a party in relation to God, and merit special favours and blessings by paying to God what he already owes Him? The relation between God and man can never really be that of an agreement between contracting parties, with mutual stipulations, conditions, and promises!

Reformed theologians have always felt this objection. They usually try to meet it by saying that this form of dealing on the part of God with man is due to His free and condescending favour and grace. By free and sovereign grace man is placed in the high position in virtue of which he becomes a party with God, can make an agreement with Him, or consent to an agreement, according to which he is able to attain to some higher good, even eternal life, by fulfilling certain conditions and obligations.

To this, however, we object that God cannot deny Himself, and that He would indeed do so were He to place the creature in the position of a party in relation to Himself. Reverently speaking, God cannot so condescend to man, that He bestows upon him the prerogative to make stipulations, or to merit anything with God by fulfilling certain stipulated conditions. It is true, the declaration of the law: 'do this and thou shalt live,' is unchangeable, because obedience is the sole way to obtain and experience God's favour, and in His favour is life; but this dare never be interpreted as if it implied that, by fulfilling his obligation of obedience in the love of God, man could ever make himself worthy of that higher state that is called eternal life in the Scriptures. Indeed, 'as in all covenants there are contained two parts,' so it is also in the covenant of grace; and it is our part in the covenant that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our soul, and with all our strength.

But mark you well, first of all, that 'parts' is not the same as 'parties'; and, secondly, that our 'part' is not a condition unto the fulfilment of God's 'part,' but rather the fruit of the latter, our reaction to God's covenant as rational, moral creatures: God sovereignly and unconditionally realizes His covenant with us, and in virtue of this we are empowered to do our 'part.' He gives us eternal life, and by the power of that eternal life we love Him.

Besides, we never read in the Scriptures of such an agreement or pact between God and man, in which God makes certain stipulations which man accepts, and by fulfilling which the latter makes himself worthy of 'eternal life.'

There is nothing in the scriptural revelation concerning man in the state of righteousness that suggests such a relation between God and Adam.

That there nevertheless was such a relation between God and man before the fall has become a very current notion in Reformed teaching. The relation is known as the 'covenant of works.' This covenant, according to the traditional view, consisted of a promise, a condition, and a penalty. The promise was

eternal life for Adam and his posterity. The condition was perfect obedience, put to the test by the probationary command not to eat of the tree of knowledge. The penalty was death. These were the elements of the agreement into which God is supposed to have entered with Adam.

Numerous are the objections that may be raised against this view. First of all, let it be noted that nowhere in the first three chapters of Genesis do the Scriptures speak of a mutual agreement between God and Adam. On the contrary, it is God that acts throughout, and He alone. He creates man. He places him in the garden of Eden. He plants the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He gives the probationary command: 'thou shalt not eat of it.' The command is in no wise contingent upon Adam's consent. He is simply under the law. Secondly, the notion that God promised Adam 'eternal life' is a pure invention, a figment of the imagination. The Scriptures do not even suggest it. The notion is deduced from the penalty of death that was threatened in case of disobedience. It is argued that, since death was the penalty upon disobedience, it follows that 'eternal life' was the implied promise upon obedience.

But this deduction is false. It may be granted that Adam would not have suffered death, had he remained faithful. But this is wholly different from saying that he would have reached the higher state of heavenly glory that is called eternal life in the Bible. He would simply be confirmed in his earthly state. Moreover, we may safely state that what the Bible calls 'eternal life' is a state of glory and bliss, a form of fellowship with the living God, which Adam could never attain. It requires for its basis the incarnation of the Son of God, and has its central realization in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Moreover, when would Adam be caught up into that heavenly glory? After the whole human race had been brought forth? And would the earthly creation have been glorified with him? Let it suffice, however, that no promise of 'eternal life' was given, nor could have been given, to our first father in paradise.

Nor is that other form of the covenant of God that is commonly known as the 'covenant of grace' ever presented in the Scriptures as a pact or agreement. Uniformly, the Bible emphasizes that God establishes His covenant. Immediately after the fall, God reveals His purpose to maintain His covenant in the well-known sovereign declaration: 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel' ([Gen. 3:15](#)). On man's consent this establishment of the covenant depends not at all.

To Noah, both before and immediately after the flood, God declares that He will establish His covenant with him and with his seed ([Gen. 6:18](#); [9:11](#)). The covenant is God's, and He alone establishes it. The same expression is employed to denote the establishment of God's covenant with Abraham: 'I will establish my covenant' ([Gen. 17:7](#)). And thus it is presented throughout the Scriptures. Through Isaiah God declares to His people: 'I will make an everlasting covenant of peace with you' ([Isa. 55:3](#)). Through Jeremiah He says: 'I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel' ([Jer. 31:31](#)); and this passage is applied to the covenant of the new dispensation in [Hebrews 8:8-10](#).

That the covenant is not a mutual agreement, but established by Jehovah alone, is also clearly revealed in the vision recorded in [Genesis 15:9ff](#). Abraham is commanded to take several sacrificial animals, divide them into halves, and lay the pieces in two rows over against each other. Jehovah then, under the symbols of a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, passes through the midst of the pieces. The significance of the ritual of passing between the halves of the sacrificial animals must have been well known to Abraham. It was a symbolic act expressing the inviolable ratification of a covenant. The party passing through the midst of the divided animals thereby expressed that he would rather go through

death than violate the covenant. Only, while in the case of a covenant between men both parties would pass through the midst of the halves of the sacrificial animals, thus expressing that the inviolability of the covenant depended upon the faithfulness of both, in the vision of [Genesis 15](#) the Lord alone passed through them, indicating that He is His own party, and that He alone establishes and maintains His covenant.

To this we may add that the covenant could never be established with believers and their children, in their generations, if it were an agreement the ratification of which depends on the consent of man, or upon any condition man must fulfil. Infants can fulfil no conditions. They cannot act as party in a pact. If, therefore, the covenant is established with them, not as they grow up, but from infancy, it cannot be conditional, it is not an agreement or pact. The covenant is God's. He sovereignly performs all that belongs to the establishment of the covenant. He alone determines who shall be received in it. On His faithfulness alone it is based. God is faithful! That is the sole reason why the covenant is inviolable. It cannot be broken. It is an eternal covenant.

Then, too, the very fact that the Scriptures present the covenant of God as eternal militates against the notion that it is a means to an end, a way of salvation. 'I will make an everlasting covenant with you' ([Isa. 55:3](#)). 'I will make an everlasting covenant with them' ([Isa. 61:8](#)). 'And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me' ([Jer. 32:40](#)). 'Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them' ([Ezek. 37:26](#)). Thus the Lord had spoken to Abraham: 'I will establish my covenant ... for an everlasting covenant' ([Gen. 17:7](#)). Now a way is not everlasting. It comes to an end when the destination is reached. A means is not eternal. When that which is caused or effected by it is realized it has served its purpose. An eternal covenant is abiding. It is not a way, but rather the destination. It is the end itself.

That ever abiding covenant is God's tabernacle with men. It may be defined as that living and most intimate bond of fellowship between God and His people in Christ that assumes the form of friendship. By friendship we mean a relation of fellowship and intimate communion of love that exists between persons on the basis of the highest possible equality by personal distinction. Friends have no secrets. They know each other. They enter into each other's life. This is possible only on the basis of equality. On the other hand, true friendship is mutual fellowship. Friends supplement each other. They form a unity, a whole. Hence, the parties between whom a bond of friendship exists must be personally distinct. Were they identical, each would be self-sufficient. Hence, for the establishment of a bond of friendship there must be personal distinction, on the basis of the highest possible affinity and equality.

The idea of the covenant of God is briefly expressed in the term 'friendship.' In His covenant, God is the Friend-sovereign of man, man is His friend-servant. In His covenant, God reveals Himself to man, and man knows Him; God opens His heart to him, and he tastes that the Lord is good; God takes man into His house, and he dwells with Him, consecrates himself to Him, serves and glorifies Him, and has his delight in the keeping of His precepts. The covenant of God is the very essence of religion!

That this idea of the covenant is based on Holy Writ is not difficult to demonstrate. In paradise God reveals Himself to Adam and speaks to him as a friend with his friend, and Adam knew God in the cool of the day. The first creation is concentrated in paradise, the house of God; paradise has its centre in the tree of life, that sacrament of God's covenant of friendship; and the whole is concentrated in man, the house-servant of God. The whole earthly creation has its ethical centre in the heart of man, and through that heart all creation lies at the heart of God! Adam was the friend of God.

Of the early saints we read that they walked with God, a term denoting intimate fellowship and friendship (**Gen. 5:22**; 6:8). We read of them that they talk with God, and that God reveals His counsel to them, hiding nothing from them (**Gen. 6:13**; 9:9; 18:17ff.). Abraham is called the friend of God (**Isa. 41:8**; **James 2:23**). To Moses the Lord spoke as a friend with his friend (**Ex. 33:11**); and the Lord knew him face to face.

Moreover, it is this idea of the covenant that is symbolized in the tabernacle and the temple, expressing the truth that God will dwell with His people under one roof. And it is well known that the covenant relation between God and Israel is presented as a marriage relation, that most intimate of all human relationships; and that transgression of the covenant is called adultery.

The same truth is found in the New Testament. To know God is eternal life (**John 17:3**). The highest realization of God's people to Him in Christ is expressed in the words of Christ's sacerdotal prayer: 'I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfect in one' (**John 17:23**). The church is the temple of the living God and has the glorious promise, 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people' (**II Cor. 6:16**). At the table of communion believers are the guests of God, and it is in His house that they eat and drink.

And the culmination, the highest and final realization of God's purpose of salvation is expressed in the words, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God' (**Rev. 21:3**). In the new Jerusalem, God's people shall walk in the light of the glory of God, and they shall see his face (**Rev. 22:4**). God's eternal covenant of friendship shall have been realized in its highest, heavenly perfection of beauty!

The deepest ground of this covenant relationship is God Himself. For God is a covenant God, apart from any relation to the creature. He is the Triune. He is one in Being, yet three in Persons. In the one divine essence, the three Persons are absolutely equal. They are one in nature, one in mind and will, one in all the essential and ethical perfections of the Godhead, in eternity and immensity, in independence and immutability, in knowledge and wisdom and power, in holiness and righteousness and justice, in love and grace and beauty. In infinite perfection the three Persons of the Trinity enter into one another's life. Yet, they are personally distinct, and each of the three Persons possesses His own personal names: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And again, in their threeness they constitute a unity, an exclusive union. No fourth person could possibly have a place in that adorable fellowship.

And on the basis of that absolute essential equality by personal distinction, the three Persons of the Godhead live an eternally perfect life of friendship. The Father knows and loves the Son, of Himself, in the Spirit; the Son knows and loves the Father, through Himself, in the Spirit; the Holy Ghost knows and loves the Father, through the Son, in Himself.

The covenant life of God Himself is the ultimate ground of all covenant relationship between God and the creature. For God will reveal and glorify Himself. This is the divine motive for all His works outside of Himself. He purposed to reveal Himself in His adorable covenant life of friendship, and that, too, in the highest possible degree, and on the highest possible plane, by establishing His covenant of friendship with His people.

Hence, He predestinated a people, and ordained them to be made like unto the image of His Son. For, as we said, the relation of covenant friendship presupposes a basis of likeness and of the highest possible equality. To form such a people, that shall be perfectly and in the highest possible creaturely measure conformed to the image of His Son, He determined in His eternal counsel. Eternally He

conceives and beholds them, and He loves them with an everlasting love. At the head of that people, as they are conceived in God's eternal good pleasure, stands Christ, the Son of God in the flesh, and that, too, as the glorified, resurrected Lord. He is the covenant Friend-servant of God *par excellence*. In Him the likeness of God is realized in the highest possible degree.

For Christ is not an afterthought of God, so to speak, but in the counsel of God He is the Firstborn. Salvation is no repair work, but the realization of God's eternal covenant, even through the deep way of sin and grace. Not the first world, but the new creation, of which the risen Lord is the Head, and in which the tabernacle of God shall be with men, is the goal, the purpose of God from eternity. All the rest is means, belongs to the way to that goal. And since all things in the new and heavenly world that is to come are concentrated in the glorified Son of God in the flesh, and all things are created unto Him and for Him, we repeat that, in the eternal good pleasure, the glorified, risen Christ is the firstborn of every creature. In Him God wants to reveal and realize the glory of His everlasting covenant.

This is the meaning of that marvellous passage in **Colossians 1:15ff.**: 'Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things exist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all the fullness dwell.' Christ, the firstborn of the dead, the risen Lord, is the beginning, the goal, the Firstborn of every creature!

Centrally, therefore, it is with Him that God establishes His everlasting covenant. That this is true is plain from all the Scriptures. Just read such passages as **II Samuel 7**; **Psalm 2**; 34; 89; 110, and several passages in the prophets, and you will be convinced how biblical is this conception. But the glory of God's covenant of friendship, centred in the risen Lord, must shine forth in a multitude of people, the glorified church. He must be the firstborn among many brethren. Hence, God ordains all the elect, and gives them to Christ. In Him they are chosen. According to His image they must be conformed, in order that the blessed covenant of friendship might be reflected in and established with millions upon millions of sons of God, and thus all might redound to the abundant praise of God.

And what is more, to this glorified Christ and His church all things are given in heaven and on earth. For Christ is the head of heaven and earth. In Him as the head, all things must be gathered together, that the whole creation may be one glorious house of God, embracing every creature, and all things may serve the new man in Christ, that he may serve his God. And unto that glorious end, that final, heavenly realization of God's all embracing covenant, all things in time are strictly subordinated and made subservient, creation and the fall, sin and death, the powers of darkness and the revelation of God's grace in Jesus Christ our Lord. All things must serve the highest realization of God's eternal covenant of friendship.

Thus all things are conceived in God's eternal counsel.

In the realization of this counsel of God, however, in history, we have the inverted order. Not Christ appears first on the scene, but the first Adam. We see the order of creation, the fall, sin, death, the curse—and thereupon the revelation of Christ, the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and glorification of the Son of God, redemption and final perfection in heavenly glory.

Hence, in the first paradise we behold the first, the earthly realization of God's covenant of friendship. And this covenant was not an agreement or pact established with Adam sometime after his creation; nor was it a way for him to work himself up into the higher glory of eternal life; but it was the living relation of fellowship and friendship in which Adam stood to God, from the moment of his creation, and in virtue of his being endowed with the image of God. For also for this first covenant relationship there was the basis of equality in man, established by the fact that man was made after the similitude of God. There was a creaturely likeness of God in Adam. He was endowed with true knowledge of God, so that he knew Him in love, with perfect righteousness, so that he knew and loved to do the will of God, and with full holiness of his entire nature, so that he consecrated himself with all his power and with the whole creation to the living God. On the level of his earthly life he enjoyed God's blessed fellowship, the friendship of His covenant.

However, man 'being in honour, understood it not, neither knew his excellency, but wilfully subjected himself to sin, and consequently to death, and the curse, giving ear to the words of the devil' (*Belgic Confession*, Art. 14). He violated God's covenant of friendship, and allied himself with the prince of darkness, the enemy of God. Thus he became the object of God's fierce wrath. He became subject to death and corruption, perverse in all his ways, an exile from the house of God. The image of God with which he was endowed changed into its very opposite: his light became darkness, his righteousness turned into perversion and rebellion against the living God. Adam, the friend of God, became God's enemy, and in him the entire human race, whose head and father and root he was, fell away from the Fount of good, and became a race of covenant violators. And there was no way out as far as man was concerned. Return into God's fellowship of friendship has become humanly impossible. The door was closed.

But what is impossible with man is possible with God. He had provided some better thing for us: the everlasting perfection of His covenant of friendship in Christ. Adam violated the covenant of God, but God maintains it. And He immediately revealed His covenant as it is eternally established in the Son of God become flesh, crucified and raised, the glorious Lord. For He announced there and then that He will put enmity between the devil and the woman, and between their respective seeds, and that the cause of the woman's Seed, the cause of His everlasting covenant, shall have the victory.

The realization of this covenant shall follow the line of election. And for the revelation of this covenant the stage is set in all creation. Man is subjected to temporal death, separated from the tree of life. The conception as well as the sorrow of the woman is made great, that Christ may come quickly. The ground is cursed, and the earth will bring forth thorns and thistles. Not only will man eat his bread in the sweat of his face, but he will also eat and drink his own death. And the creature is subjected to vanity, so that all real culture by the fallen lord of creation is become impossible. But upon that stage God reveals His blessed covenant, and in that darkness He causes the light of His promise, the light that shines from the face of the risen Lord, to penetrate, and to fill the heirs of the promise with hope.

That covenant is revealed to Noah and his seed, as a covenant that embraces the whole creation in its scope. And the bow in the clouds is the sign of final deliverance for the entire groaning creation. That same covenant is revealed to Abraham, the friend of God, and father of believers, as running in the line of his generations, but as embracing, nevertheless, all the nations of the earth. That covenant is revealed at Sinai, placing it, however, under the law, that sin might abound, and that the children of the promise, under the taskmaster, might earnestly look for the end of the law in the Christ that was to come.

And although, all through the old dispensation, all the powers of darkness unite against God's holy covenant and attempt to destroy the holy seed before the Christ of God can come into the world, in the fullness of time God realizes His covenant, centrally, in the incarnation of the Son of God. The basis of that covenant is established in righteousness, by the perfect obedience of the Friend-servant of Jehovah, through the blood of the New Testament. The glory of that covenant is centrally realized in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and in the exaltation of the Firstborn of every creature at the right hand of God.

And through the Spirit of the risen Lord indwelling in the church, that covenant of friendship is realized spiritually in the hearts of all the elect, as they are reborn unto a new life, and called by the gospel out of darkness into God's marvelous light. Now they all know Him, from the smallest to the greatest, for His law is written in their hearts. And their calling it is to live from the principle of the new life, and to represent the cause of the Son of God in the midst of a world that lieth in darkness.

Still all things are not accomplished. One more revelation of the wonder of God's grace we expect in the light of the promise. For the Son of God must be revealed from heaven. Once again God will bring His Firstborn into the world. Then God's covenant shall be perfected. Old things shall pass away, and He will make all things new. Our mortal bodies shall be made like unto the most glorious body of the Son of God, creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption to participate in the glorious liberty of the children of God, and all things shall be made conformable to the glory of the risen Lord. The new Jerusalem shall come down from God out of heaven, and the tabernacle of God shall be with men. And He shall walk with them, and they shall see His face, knowing even as they are known, and taste and declare that the Lord is good!