

2 OF THE LAW OF FAITH, OR COVENANT OF GRACE

antinomista I beseech you, sir, proceed to help us to the true knowledge of the law of faith.

evangelista The law of faith is as much as to say the covenant of grace, or the gospel, which signifies good, merry, glad, and joyful tidings; that is to say, that God, to whose eternal knowledge all things are present, and nothing past or to come, foreseeing man's fall, before all time purposed,¹ and in time promised,² and in the fullness of time performed,³ the sending of his Son Jesus Christ into the world, to help and deliver fallen mankind.⁴

OF THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GRACE

antinomista I beseech you, sir, let us hear more of these things; and first of all, show how we are to conceive of God's eternal purpose in sending of Jesus Christ.

evangelista Why, here the learned frame a kind of conflict in God's holy attributes; and by a liberty, which the Holy Ghost, from the language of holy Scripture, alloweth them, they speak of God after the manner of men, as if he were reduced to some straits and difficulties, by the cross demands of his several attributes.⁵

For Truth and Justice stood up and said, that man had sinned, and therefore man must die; and so called for the condemnation of a sinful, and therefore worthily a cursed creature; or else they must be violated: for thou saidst (said they to God), 'In that day that thou eatest of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt die the death.'

Mercy, on the other side, pleaded for favour, and appeals to the great court in heaven: and there it pleads, saying, Wisdom, and power, and goodness, have been all manifest in the creation; and anger and justice have been magnified in man's misery that he is now plunged into by his fall: but I have not yet been manifested. [Mercy requires an object in misery.] O let favour and compassion be shown towards man, woefully seduced and overthrown by Satan!

¹ 'Who hath saved us according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began' (2 Tim. 1:9). 'According to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Eph 3:11).

² 'The gospel of God, which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy Scriptures' (Rom. 1:1-2).

³ 'But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law' (Gal. 4:4-5).

⁴ 'The Law of Faith' (66).

⁵ 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together' (Hos. 11:8).

Very short notes appear in square brackets.

Titles in the sidenotes refer to Boston's long notes and the page number on which they appear.

Brief notes appear as sidenotes.

Sidenotes highlight the page number to which Boston's note refers.

*Boston's
Notes*

THE LAW OF FAITH

These are the good tidings, this is the law of faith, that is the law to be believed for salvation, which the apostle plainly teacheth. 'The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth' (Rom. 1:16); and 'For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith' (v. 17). In this last text, clouded with a great variety of interpretations, I think there is a transposition of words to be admitted, and would read the whole verse thus: 'For therein is revealed the righteousness of God by faith unto faith; as it is written, But the just by faith shall live.' The key to this construction and reading of the words in the former part of the verse, is, the testimony adduced by the apostle in the latter part of it, from Habakkuk 2:4, where the original text appears to me to determine the version of that testimony as here offered. The sense is, the righteousness which is by faith, namely, the righteousness of Christ, the only righteousness in which a sinner can stand before God, is in the gospel revealed unto faith, that is to be believed. See a like phrase, 1 Timothy 4:3, translated after this manner.

PAYMENT OF A DOUBLE DEBT

As man lay in ruins, by the fall guilty and unclean, there stood in the way of his salvation, by mercy designed—

- 1 the justice of God, which could not admit the guilty creature; and,
- 2 the holiness of God, which could not admit the unclean and unholy creature to communion with him.

Therefore, in the contrivance of his salvation, it was necessary that provision should be made for the satisfaction of God's justice, by payment of the double debt mentioned

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above; namely, the debt of punishment and the debt of perfect obedience. It was also necessary that provision should be made for the sanctification of the sinner, the repairing of the lost image of God in him. And man being as unable to sanctify himself, as to satisfy justice, (a truth which proud nature cannot digest), the Saviour behoved, not only to obey and suffer in his stead, but also to have a fullness of the Spirit of holiness in him to communicate to the sinner, that his nature might be repaired through sanctification of the Spirit. Thus was the groundwork of man's salvation laid in the eternal counsel; the sanctification of the sinner, according to our author, being as necessary to his salvation as the satisfaction of justice; for indeed the necessity of the former, as well as of the latter, ariseth from the nature of God, and therefore is an absolute necessity.

CHRIST'S CONSENT

The Son of God consented to put himself in man's stead, in obeying his Father, and so to do all for man that his Father should require, that satisfaction should be made: farther, he consented, in man's nature, to satisfy and suffer the deserved punishment, that the same nature that sinned might satisfy; and yet farther, he undertook to bear the very same penalty that lay upon man, by virtue of the covenant of works, to have undergone; so making himself a proper surety for them, who, as the author observes, must pay the sum of money that the debtor oweth. This I take to be the author's meaning; but the expression of 'Christ's undertaking under the penalty,' &c., is harsh and unguarded.

CHRIST AND THE COVENANT OF WORKS

Our Lord Jesus Christ became surety for the elect in the second covenant (Heb. 8:22); and

'The Law of Faith' (63).

'Christ's Consent' (65).

'Payment of a Double Debt' (64).

'Christ and the Covenant of Works' (65).