

I

The Parties Contracting in the Covenant of Grace

Seeing a covenant is a free compact upon certain terms expressed, or a contract in which a condition is prescribed, a promise is made, and both ratified by mutual agreement, there must, in the nature of the thing, be parties contracting. In all covenants, whether they are conditional or whether they are covenants merely of free and absolute promise, there must be at least two distinct parties. One may, indeed, purpose or decree with himself without another party; but he cannot stipulate or so much as promise anything without another. The covenant of redeeming grace, which is an eternal covenant, a covenant that never began to be made, could not be established but between parties; and those parties, before creation began, could exist nowhere but in the eternal, the ever-blessed Godhead. It therefore necessarily supposes a plurality of persons in the adorable Godhead.

As that glorious covenant took its rise from the everlasting and equal love of all the three divine Persons, so

they all had an equal part concerning the making of it, and each took His respective part in the economy of it. The ever-blessed Trinity, moved by infinitely free love and transcendent mercy, devised the amazing scheme of man's redemption; and each of the divine Persons was to get himself a glorious name by sustaining a distinct, a peculiar office in the accomplishment of the covenant. The eternal Father was to maintain the rights and to consult the glory of the holiness, justice and truth of the Godhead by demanding perfect obedience to His violated law, and full satisfaction for sin to His offended justice. The eternal Son covenanted to answer these demands, and so to glorify the wisdom, love, mercy, and other perfections of the divine essence. And the Holy Spirit agreed to glorify the grace and power of the Godhead by quickening the elect dead in sin, and by enabling them to walk in newness of life till they should attain the perfection of life eternal. But, though the eternal Spirit was deeply concerned in the making of that divine covenant, yet God the Father entered into it in a peculiar manner with His only begotten Son, the Head and Representative of His elect. Accordingly, in the covenant of grace, three parties present themselves to our consideration: first, the party contracting on the part of heaven; second, the party contracting on the part of man; and last the party contracted for.

SECTION I. The Party Contracting on the Part of Heaven