



## The Covenant...A Cord of Many Strands Selected Texts

I have been arguing over the last few weeks that while there are a number of administrations or outworkings of the one covenant of grace, there is only one actual covenant of grace. Another way to say that is that while the various covenants mentioned in the Old and New Testaments often go by different names, they are, in fact, each and everyone so integrally woven together that they form an unbreakable cord...an unbreakable cord that constitutes the one covenant of grace.

Now that has been my main point...my big idea...my overarching controlling concept but, of course, it is never quite that easy. Along the way, I have had to put in here and there to set up my argument.

This is how I have proceeded so far.

I started off by defining the word "covenant".<sup>1</sup>

Now even that part is tricky. And the reason it is tricky is because it is possible to create an argument that will come to a predetermined conclusion simply by

setting it up at the very beginning with a definition that will buttress some points and ignore others in such a skillful way that no other outcome is possible.

Let me illustrate what I mean.

Let's say I am a congressman and I campaign on the promise that I am going to reduce your taxes. Let's say that I get very specific and say that I am going to reduce your taxes 10%. Now you, because you are an uninformed member of the proletariat, probably think that that means your tax rate is going to go down from \$100 to \$90. \$10 is 10% of \$100...a reduction of 10% means your new tax rate is reduced by \$10 so now all you have to pay is \$90. But that's not what I meant at all. What I meant is that instead of bumping up your taxes 20% to \$120 I am going to reduce the amount I am bumping them up 10%...which means that even though you are now going to have to pay \$108 in taxes...10% of \$120 is \$12... $\$120 - \$12 = \$108$ ...it is still a 10% tax decrease. I defined decrease in a certain way and because I did I was able to come out at the conclusion that I was aiming at and to use language that would make you happy.

Now I wanted to use that illustration because that is precisely what I have tried to avoid in defining the word covenant. I would like to define the word covenant as "an oath bound promise administered in blood with attendant signs and attached blessings and curses". I like that definition...I want that definition...yet, I can't honestly make that definition always work out the way I want it to. It usually does and I think it's a fairly honest and forthright expression of what usually happens in the making or cutting of a covenant. But it isn't always explicit. So I opted for something that will work all the way through and settled on "an oath bound promise".

After defining the word *covenant*, I went on to say there were three overarching covenants. Now I can see where that would make things confusing. I can see that especially in light of the fact that I started off this morning saying there is only one covenant of grace. I can see where that would be confusing so I want to take just a minute and clarify what I mean.

When I say there are three overarching covenants, I mean that there are two covenants that have occurred in the created world and order of things and one covenant that occurred in eternity past before anything was ever created or made. Let me deal with this last covenant...the one made in eternity past...first.

Many reformed theologians see a covenant occurring in the Bible between the members of the Trinity (the Father, Son, and Spirit) before the world was ever created. We haven't talked about that very much yet but we will in due course. That covenant is usually called the Covenant of Redemption.<sup>2</sup> It doesn't include any members of humankind directly. It was between the members of the godhead and concerned their eternal plan to bring about the redemption of mankind through the redemptive work of the Son after mankind fell. Now to be perfectly honest, there are a few reformed theologians, not very many, who have rejected this particular idea.<sup>3</sup> But overall it is an accepted truth...embraced with affection.

The phrase itself is not included in the Westminster Confession of Faith but it is implied by statements like this:

God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeable ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so, as thereby

neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.<sup>4</sup>

Now obviously that is not the covenant of grace I have been talking so far in our lessons. It clearly anticipates or looks forward to it...but it is a different covenant involving different participants. In terms of its participants, it is limited to the actual godhead.

Now there are two covenants that have occurred in the created order of things. By that, I mean that there are two covenants that have occurred in time and space and have involved the inhabitants of this world. Those two covenants are the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. Both of these two are mentioned in the Westminster Confession of Faith...which is a component of our church's constitution.

The covenant of works was the covenant that existed between God and Adam, who stood as our great representative head, in the Garden of Eden. The covenant works offered life to Adam and to us as his descendants on the basis of his perpetual, perfect obedience to God's command.

The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.<sup>5</sup>

Now obviously, Adam broke the covenant with God...disobeying Him and in the process reaping sin and destruction upon himself and upon his seed until God determined to respond in kindness in a second covenant of grace. I particularly like the way John Milton describes it in *Paradise Lost*.

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the World, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,  
Sing, Heavenly Muse,<sup>6</sup>

The Westminster Confession is less poetic but perhaps clearer. It puts it like this:

Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.

Now you may be thinking, "Well Tom, you haven't really talked much about the covenant of works yet either. Just what is it you have been talking about?" If you are thinking that or wondering that...you are absolutely right to do so. When we started our study, I put in at the middle...starting not with the covenant of redemption or even the covenant of works but rather with the covenant of grace. Now I did that for a reason. I did that because of the three of these covenants...the covenant of redemption...the covenant of works...and the covenant of grace...the one that has the clearest face for us to see is the covenant of grace. It is the one shows us the salvation we have in Jesus. It is the one that takes the place of prominence in Holy Scripture.

That doesn't mean that these other two covenants don't peek through...they do. Clearly, the covenant of redemption peeks through in God's elective and sovereign purpose and design. Clearly, the consequence of the covenant of works peeks through every time we see sin and death and misery rear its ugly

head. But the covenant that shines through the clearest in God's redemptive history is this matchless, incomparable, beautiful covenant of grace.

The Westminster Larger Catechism says this:

God does not leave all men to perish in the estate of sin and misery, into which they fell by the breach of the first covenant, commonly called the covenant of works; but of his mere love and mercy delivers his elect out of it, and brings them into an estate of salvation by the second covenant, commonly called the covenant of grace.<sup>7</sup>

So I started there...right dead square in the middle, where the beauty of Jesus shines brightest.

Now in doing that I risked being unclear and I don't like being unclear. I think it is a teacher's responsibility to sacrifice everything but the truth for the sake of clarity. So I wanted to take a bit of time and try to clear things up.

What I have been arguing is that the one true covenant of grace is made up of several administrations or outworkings. I have purposely avoided saying that it is made up of a number of different covenants or sub-covenants because saying that implies that they are distinct and altogether different in kind and I do not think they are. Saying it that way, would seem to me, to make matters even more confusing. The various covenants that together make up the one covenant of grace may differ in degree but not in kind. They are each one linked at the hip. They are not like a long line of distinct dominos that knock down the next domino in the row when the first one is pushed over. They are more like steps on a pathway inextricably connected together leading to God's redemption of the

elect in Christ. The confession says it in Elizabethan English. Still it's pretty clear. It says it like this:

This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the Gospel: under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come; which were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the Old Testament.<sup>8</sup>

The Larger Catechism says it like this:

The covenant of grace was not always administered after the same manner, but the administrations of it under the Old Testament were different from those under the New.<sup>9</sup>

Calvin says it like this:

The covenant made with all the patriarchs is so much like ours in substance and reality that the two are actually one and the same. Yet they differ in the mode of dispensation. But because no one can gain a clear understanding from such a short statement, a fuller explanation is required if we wish to make any progress.<sup>10</sup>

So that is what I have been trying to do...to make a little progress and to do that I had to start somewhere. I did that by starting with the covenant of grace instead of the other two overarching covenants and the funneling down to one particular administration or outworking of the covenant of grace known as the Abrahamic Covenant and then just diving in. I started with the Abrahamic Covenant because it is the clearest and easiest to follow of all of the administration or outworkings of the covenant of grace.

What I mean by that is that its oath bound promise is very clear.

Its basis is very clear.

Its attendant sign is very clear.

It is confirmed not once, not twice but three times.

There is a sense in which it forms the basic building block for the one covenant of grace. Now I understand that the Genesis 3:15 proposes the covenant of grace in type and shadow. I understand that the covenant with Noah builds on that and is, in fact, the first place in the Bible that the word “covenant” is actually used. My point in starting with the Abrahamic Covenant is that it leaps forward in degree in terms of clarity.

Now I do intend to go back, Lord willing, and connect the dots with the previous administrations of the covenant of grace I mentioned but what I did last week was to press forward...to try to show how that Abrahamic Covenant is connected to the Mosaic Covenant. What I tried to show is that they are two administrations of the same covenant.

I think I did that and if you missed the lesson it is on the webpage in both print and audio and I would ask you to go review that simply so I don't have to keep going over the same material time and again. What I showed was that God explained to Moses that His delivery of the children of Israel out of the house of bondage in Egypt was inextricably tied to His covenantal promise to Abraham.<sup>11</sup> The text lays that connection out in Exodus 6:5.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 6:5**...Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant.

Now the covenant that God remembered was His covenant with Abraham.

Now in case there is any doubt that that is true, it comes up twice more. It comes up once in Exodus 32 when God says he is going to destroy the Israelites because they have abandoned His worship and worshipped the golden calf. You'll remember the scene where Moses cries out to God to...

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 32:13**...Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.'"

And you will remember what happened. The text says...

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 32:14**...And the LORD relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.

The same sort of thing occurs later on in Deuteronomy when the Israelites were about to enter the land. God speaks to them and flatly tells them that He is not giving them the land because of anything in them but rather because of His promise to Abraham. He says it like this:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Deuteronomy 9:4**..."Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,'...<sup>5</sup> the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. <sup>6</sup> "Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people.

Now my point was that the two covenants...the one with Abraham and the one with Moses...are tied together in such a way that the only proper way to think of them is pretty much as different administrations of the one true covenant of grace.

Now you can do that here because the text says, "This is that." And it does that rather plainly. It does that other places as well and I will show you a few of those in a moment. But it also does that in other places where the imagery of one administration of the covenant are purposely linked to another.

Let's say that I wanted to put a picture in your mind involving certain physical elements...that is, I wanted to mention some words to you and have you be reminded of something you already knew about. Let's say for argument sake that I mentioned three ideas: something called an ark, that was covered on the inside and out with pitch...something like tar...and then floated on the water bringing deliverance to whoever was inside. What image do you think would come to mind?

Probably it would be this image from Genesis 6:14.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 6:14...** Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. <sup>15</sup> This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. <sup>16</sup> Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks. <sup>17</sup> For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. <sup>18</sup> But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

But you would also be right if you mentioned Exodus 2, where it says...<sup>12</sup>

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 2:3**...When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket (the exact same Hebrew word for ark) made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank. <sup>4</sup> And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him. <sup>5</sup> Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it. <sup>6</sup> When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." <sup>7</sup> Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" <sup>8</sup> And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the girl went and called the child's mother. <sup>9</sup> And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. <sup>10</sup> When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, "Because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

Now I am making the point because sometimes the Scripture will be explicitly clear and will say, "This is that." And sometimes it will allude to something and leave it to the reader to make the implicit connection. That was true last week in that scene with Moses, Gershom and Zipporah where God was trying to kill Moses because the boy wasn't circumcised. A careful reader, would think, "Oh, I see that is connected back to the command of God to Abraham to make sure that all of his descendants were circumcised...or else they risked the danger of being cut off from the covenant. God is reminding Moses that the covenant sign attached to the oath made to Abraham is still required."

Now you can see my point, I hope. Sometimes the connection to the various administrations of the covenant will be quite clear. Sometimes they will be implicit but less clear.

Let me give you one more example and I will move on. Genesis 3:15 reads like this:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 3:15**...I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

Now this particular verse occurs in the Garden of Eden after the fall of man and is often called the *protoevangelium*. We'll look at it in a lot more detail when we finally get around to the covenant of works. It is called that because it seems to be referring to a day when a seed of the woman...the Messiah...will crush the head of the serpent though it will inflict a wound upon his heel.<sup>13</sup>

When I was in seminary, I had an Old Testament professor there that rejected the idea that this passage was about the Messiah. He said he thought it was there to explain mankind's inordinate fear of snakes...I have to tell you, that wasn't the dumbest thing I ever heard said but it certainly was in the top two or three.

Anyway most scholars connect it with the redemptive work of the Messiah and when you come to a New Testament passage like Romans 16:20 you can see how Paul is making the connection and simply alluding that the new covenant in Jesus is the very fulfillment of the initial promise of the one covenant of grace given in the Garden of Eden.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 16:20**...The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Now the point I am making is that sometimes the text will be crystal clear in connecting one covenantal administration to another...like it did in connecting the Mosaic administration to the Abrahamic administration. Sometimes it will imply that two different administrations are connected and it will do so through allusion or implication and that when it is does it is just as valid to say that it is connecting the two things or even arguing that the two things are the same thing though I freely admit a measure of care or caution needs to be taken.

I am making the point because I think it is an important tissue in trying to argue for the unity of the one covenant of grace.

Now let me show two additional places where the text seems to be saying this is that.

In Luke's gospel there is a wonderful narrative scene, where Mary pregnant with the baby Jesus, hurried off to the hill country of Judea to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who was herself pregnant with the unborn John the Baptist. Now Mary may have undertaken the trip to avoid the scandal of an unmarried pregnancy or she may have made the trip because of some unrevealed command given to her by the angel Gabriel.

Whatever Mary's reason, we can rejoice that the Holy Spirit has seen fit to relate this wonderful scene filled with the hope and expectation of these two godly women. Now I want us to put in Luke 1:41 where Luke relates Elizabeth's reaction to first hearing Mary's greeting. Look at how Luke describes the scene in Luke 1:41.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 1:41**...And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, <sup>42</sup> and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! <sup>43</sup> And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup> And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." <sup>46</sup> And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, <sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, <sup>48</sup> for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; <sup>49</sup> for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. <sup>50</sup> And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. <sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; <sup>52</sup> he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; <sup>53</sup> he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. <sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, <sup>55</sup> as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."

Now the strange thing about Mary's wonderful prayer of praise, which has been called for centuries the Magnificat, is not so much her recognition that the Lord favored her in her lowliness and meekness, for the Lord has always been gracious and gentle with the meek and lowly, but rather that she perceived this event, this wonderful miraculous birth of the Lord Jesus, to be somehow an expression of God's faithfulness from generation to generation and more importantly to be a fulfillment of the promise God He made to Abraham.<sup>15</sup>

Now I bring that up because there are those that admit that God made many wonderful promises to Abraham and that perhaps some of those promises even had Messianic implications but they balk or become a lot more skeptical whenever they hear someone say straight out, "You know the promise to Abraham was fulfilled in Jesus."

I bring that up because it seems to me that that is exactly what Mary is saying. It seems to me that what she says is, "You know this is that. This wonderful action by God is what God meant in His promise to Abraham." Now, I can see, of course, where a person might say, "Well Mary's response to Elizabeth ought not to be taken so literally." After all, she was a product of her culture and in that day the Jews, both men and women, were constantly seeking to understand the events around them in terms of biblical prophecy, something like the dispensationalists do today. And you know when I hear that I am almost swayed by that argument because there are times when biblical characters sometimes say things that reflect what they were thinking and not necessarily what the Lord was saying.

I mean take for example, this passage from Luke 23 where the disciples say to Pilate.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 23:2**...And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king."

Now that is certainly what they said and it may even be what they actually thought but it is most assuredly wrong. The Lord Jesus never subverted anything. Still, the fact that someone thought He was subversive or said He was subversive is recorded in Scripture and it is part of the infallible record and I can understand, though I completely disagree, that some people might think that Mary was speaking in the same way and was just wrong. That is, I can understand when someone says that Mary may have thought that Jesus' birth was going to lead to the fulfillment of the promise of Abraham but that she misspoke or misunderstood the connection between the two things.

That is why I am so grateful that you only have to skip down eleven verses to find out that Mary was exactly right, that she did not misunderstand anything. Now let me take a minute and explain how I know that. In fact, let give you some context. The verses I want to look at concern Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. The angel Gabriel, you will remember, approached Zechariah, while he was fulfilling his ministerial obligation in the temple. You will also remember that Gabriel struck Zechariah speechless when he doubted the word of the Lord regarding the birth of John the Baptist.

Anyway, after Elizabeth had delivered her baby there was some controversy in their family about what he was to be named. Zechariah called for a tablet, probably a slate, and wrote, **"His name is John"** and when he did the Lord unloosed his speech. Now with that in mind, look at verse Luke 1:66.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 1:66**...and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him. <sup>67</sup> And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, <sup>68</sup> "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people <sup>69</sup> and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, <sup>70</sup> as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, <sup>71</sup> that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; <sup>72</sup> to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, <sup>73</sup> the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us <sup>74</sup> that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, <sup>75</sup> in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

Now the reason that I think this verse is so important is because of verse 67. You see verse 67 removes any doubt about what John says here simply being his opinion or his impression. Look at what it says...

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 1:66**...And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied,

You see whatever follows verse 67 is prophetically inspired by the Holy Spirit and to be given special weight. Now what was the content of Zechariah's prophecy contained in verses 68-79? You know, of course, that I am particularly interested in verse 72-73. But what was the content of the whole section? Well it seems to me that the Holy Spirit is making a point that John the Baptist's birth and role in relationship to the ministry of Jesus means that certain things are coming to fruition. It seems to me that salvation is about to come upon God's people and that that salvation will be a fulfillment of promises made to David (vs. 69) through the prophet and a fulfillment of the covenantal promises made to Abraham.<sup>16</sup>

Now what is it that the Holy Spirit is saying through Zechariah? I think it is transparently clear that the Holy Spirit is saying is that the covenant to Abraham is going to be fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus. And since that is true, and since the New Covenant is the covenant, which Jesus says He is bringing about, it seems fairly clear to me that the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant are two ways of speaking about the very same thing. Now, I admit that there are different aspects between the two covenants but those differences are explained by the New Covenant fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant and not replacing it. It is a difference in maturity and completion and not in nature...a difference in degree and not kind.

This is one of those places where the text itself says this is that...and it seems to me we ought to pay close attention.

Let's pray.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Horton, *God of Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Herman Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man* Volume 1 (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1990), 165. Even better see Dr. C. Matthew McMahon's synopsis.

<http://www.apuritansmind.com/Baptism/McMahonSummaryWitsiusEconomy.htm#2:2>

<sup>3</sup> Dr. C. Matthew McMahon explains that Frances Turretin divided the one Covenant of Grace into two overarching administrations: the one involving only the members of the godhead and the other involving God and the elect. Still, it constitutes pretty much the same idea approaching the traditional view. See Turretin in his *Institutes*, 2:177 or read Mahon's view at *Francis Turretin's View Of The Covenant Of Grace And Its Distinctions, With Critical Notes Following* [http://www.apuritansmind.com/Baptism/McMahonCovenantConceptsTurretin.htm#\\_ftnref13](http://www.apuritansmind.com/Baptism/McMahonCovenantConceptsTurretin.htm#_ftnref13)

<sup>4</sup> WCF, III.1

<sup>5</sup> WCF, VII.2.

<sup>6</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 1, Lines 1-6.

<sup>7</sup> WLC, Question 30.

<sup>8</sup> WCF, VII.5.

<sup>9</sup> WLC, Question 33.

<sup>10</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Volume 2, 10.2. This is from the Battles translation.

<sup>11</sup> Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983), 79. Cassuto confirms the fact that the text is referring to a covenant that already existed and not to the making of a new covenant. He writes: "Verses 4 and 5, both of which begin with the word וְאִתִּי ['and also', 'moreover'], point to two parallel statements: on the one hand, I have established, etc., and on the other, I have heard, etc. I discussed the signification of the idiom 'to establish a covenant' in my commentary on Gen. vi 18, where I showed that it was not identical with that of the expression 'make [literally, 'cut'] a covenant', as most commentators are accustomed to suppose, particularly modern exegetes, who regard the use of the two different terms as a sure indication of divergent sources. The expression 'to establish a covenant' connotes the fulfillment of a covenant that has already been made. The Lord says: Let it be known to you, Moses, that I have established My covenant, which I made with them. The words 'with them' belong not to the verb 'established' but to the substantive 'covenant', as is shown by ii 24: 'And God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' The covenant was a promise (on the use of the word covenant in the sense of a unilateral promise, see my note on Gen. vi 18) to give them — that is, the Patriarchs and their descendants — the land of Canaan, the land of their sojournings, wherein they sojourned. This assurance I have established, I have given it permanent validity, it exists before Me constantly."

<sup>12</sup> Cassuto, 19. “The word *ark* [תֵּבָא, *tēbat*] occurs in only two sections of the Bible: here and in the section of the Flood. This is certainly not a mere coincidence. By this verbal parallelism Scripture apparently intends to draw attention to the thematic analogy. In both instances one worthy of being saved and destined to bring salvation to others is to be rescued from death by drowning. In the earlier section the salvation of humanity is involved, here it is the salvation of the chosen people; in the former passage, Scripture tells of the deliverance of the macrocosm, in the latter it speaks of the deliverance of the microcosm.”

<sup>13</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2001), 93. Waltke writes: “The immediate seed is Abel, then Seth. The collective seed is the holy offspring of the patriarchs (Gen. 15:5; 22:17). After Genesis we do not hear again of the promised seed until God promises David a seed (2 Sam. 7:12), which should also be understood in all three ways. The unique fulfillment of this seed promise, Jesus Christ, comes into the world through the seed of the woman: the patriarchs and David. Paul refers to the seed of Abraham as the individual Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16) but then also includes the church in Christ as Abraham’s seed (Rom. 16:20; Gal. 3:29).”

Also, Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1988). The Christian expositor thinks of Jesus Christ, the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), the Seed of the woman (Gal. 3: 16–19; 4:4), in relation to this narrative. With the revelation of the New Testament we are able to see how the human race would ultimately gain victory—it would come through one who took upon himself the curse of the whole world. The motifs in this chapter—toil, sweat, thorns, the conflict, the tree, death, dust, and the seed—all will be reflected in the experience of the Christ, who became the curse, sweat great drops of blood in bitter agony, wore a crown of thorns, hung on a tree until he was dead, and was placed in the dust of death (cf. Ps. 22:15). This culmination of God’s provision for the sinful race, however, does not come into focus in Genesis 3:8–24.”

<sup>14</sup> Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 133-4. Kline writes: “He will bruise your head and you will bruise his heel” (Gen 3:15c). A climactic battle in the holy war is here envisaged, and the war’s final outcome. On the eschatological horizon of the judgment-prophecy of the divine Prophet appeared the hope of a victory that belonged by God’s decree to the army of the woman. God would crush Satan under their feet (cf. Rom 16:20). This victory prophetically announced in the curse on the serpent would be in the first instance, however, a victory not of the collective seed of the woman but of an individual. “He” is thus to be understood, as an individual counterpart to the individual “you.” The latter points to the figure of Satan behind the creature of the field through whom he spoke, one who, unlike that particular serpent, would still be on the world scene at the distant historical time referred to. What is in view in the all-decisive battle is a judgment ordeal by individual combat, fought by a champion from each of the opposing armies. Mention of a wound to be suffered by the champion of the woman’s army does not throw in doubt the decisive victory he was to gain for them. As an historical exposition of the absolute defeat of the devil affirmed in the curse of verse 14, verse 15 must reinforce that idea and such is certainly the intention of the contrast drawn between the blow inflicted on the heel of the woman’s seed and the blow delivered to the head of the serpent. And just as all the seed of the woman participate in the victory of their champion, so the seed of

the serpent, who share in the cause and nature of the devil, must share also in his destiny of defeat and doom.”

<sup>15</sup> Leon Morris, *Luke in the TNTC* (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 85. “Mary is saying that God’s action in the Messiah is not so much completely new as a continuation of his mercy to Abraham. It is also accordance with his promises to the fathers of old time.”

<sup>16</sup> Leon Morris, 88. “The salvation the Messiah will bring is spoken of first as deliverance, then as mercy to the fathers (not only to the living), and then in terms of the covenant. There are several covenants in the Old Testament, but that with Abraham stands out. The *oath* was a significant part of any covenant, and here it is emphasized. God will not go back on what he has sworn. The covenant with Abraham will be brought to its consummation.”