

Eternal Suretyship of Christ

Anonymous Work by a Member of a Church of Christ, in the County of Essex; entitled: A Very Short and Brief Account of the Free Justification of God's Elect, London 1699.

I pray God Almighty confound what is not of Himself, let it lie on which side it is; and I hope I shall trample underfoot with abhorrence, whatever I could be convinced of to be contrary to the mind of Christ; and do sincerely desire to use all the means that I can to attain the clearest discoveries thereof; therefore I shall first explain my meaning concerning God's Eternal Justifying act in his own inexhaustible and unalterable mind, acting in a way of justice and grace, yet pure grace with respect to elect sinners; sheltering them in a way of grace from the dreadful effects, that otherwise must necessarily attend their fall in Adam; and that he might clear them from the curse of the Law in a way of strict justice, grace putting the Law into a hands of a Mediator; and though Grace intended not to prevent the elect from falling in Adam into sin equally with the rest of mankind; yet that grace might reign through righteousness, and super-abound where sin abounded, there was a Lamb provided, who by Divine Appointment should bear the whole curse due to their sin, with all the dreadful effects thereof.

There was from all eternity a fixed immutable will in God never to punish sin, nor to inflict the penalty of the Law upon his elect. This will was not to prosecute his right against them in a way of justice, {I Thes.5:9,} but to deal with them as righteous in a Mediator, {a pure act of grace,} by free imputation. {II Cor.5:21, Rom.5:21, Eph.1:4} God from all eternity did immutably will and bequeath eternal life to his chosen in Christ, through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. {Mt.26:28} "By

the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." {Heb.10:10} It plainly appears in this 10th chapter to the Hebrews, that it was the will of God, that Christ should be offered up a sacrifice to justice, by the which will of God, them that he died for were set apart to life; which I take to be meant by sanctified, because the Apostle is treating of justification and pardon of sin by the one offering of Christ as our High Priest. Besides it would seem strange to say that the will or decree of God, that Christ should die for sinners, would sanctify us inherently; but I think, sanctified by God's will or decree is set apart to life, and through Christ's own offering, as it respects the thing willed, the purging away of sin, with respect to its guilt and condemning power in the sight of Divine justice. Now God's will, as a Testament of Grace to elect sinners, was an eternal going forth by way of Covenant transaction between the Father and the Son as distinct parties {though absolutely one in Essence} and eternal grace, as it respected the fall and breach of the Law; so likewise it acted from eternity, {in fore view of Christ's Suretyship engagements on their behalf,} in a way of justice by a Mediator, to stand in our place, in order that justice, as well as grace was eternally pleased, that elect sinners should go unpunished, and hereby stand complete in the unchangeable favor of God; that when the Law was broken by Adam as a Covenant head, it should be completely answered by a second Man, or second Adam, as Mediator, as elect Head, and the Eternal Surety of an Everlasting Covenant by Grace. This Decree or Imminent Act of God's will made that Law exchange of persons, which set Christ as Mediator under the curse and condemning power of the Law, {which otherwise could not have touched him, but in a way of representation,} and turns the curse of the Law from the law-breaking sinner, {which otherwise would take hold on all sinners, as such,} and so sets him under the sentence of Life, in the court of grace, by absolute promise, {"in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began," Tit.1:2,} which free and absolute sentence of life takes hold on the persons of God's chosen as early as the Law sentence can take hold on the persons of those that have no Mediator. {Rom.9:11-13} This is the immediate effect of Christ's Mediatorship for the elect and

the pronounced or declared sentence of God's eternal will. Thus with respect to this eternal transaction in a Covenant way, we may understand these following Scriptures: "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." {PV.8:23} "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." {Mic.5:2} "Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." {Zech.6:13} "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." {Eph.3:11} "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." {II Tim.1:9} "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." {I Pet.1:20}

In that Covenant transaction between the Father and the Son there was a grant unto our great Covenant Head, the Lord Jesus Christ; though he were purely God, and had not then assumed our nature, yet he did personally exist in his Divine Nature as distinct from, yet one with the Father from eternity, of the same Divine Nature and Essence, and by virtue of an Eternal Covenant Transaction he was under an obligation, from all eternity, to take our nature upon him, as Abraham's seed, with a special eye to the elect; and though it is true, that he took flesh, human nature upon himself, yet he passed by the non-elect, and on the seed of Abraham he took hold; that is, of all Abraham's spiritual seed; as he saith, "Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion." {Is.8:18, Heb.2:13} The Apostle in that second chapter to the Hebrews, quotes that out of Isaiah, and brings it to prove the Covenant Relation that was between Christ and the elect; and "forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself took part of the same," {Heb.2:14,} by this Covenant relation we become bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh,

{Gen.2:23,} as there is one body, as well as one Spirit, by virtue of this Covenant Relation the elect only receive life and quickening from Christ, as Head of the Covenant of Grace; as the Father gave him to be Head to the Church, the whole body of election, who "hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all," {Eph.1:22,23,} and then it immediately follows, "and you hath He quickened." {Eph.2:1} From this union flows life which doth not only precede faith in order of nature, but in order of time also; and by virtue of which, we have the Spirit given, working faith in our hearts, in God's time, from Christ as our Anointed Head.

By virtue of this Covenant Transaction Christ was likewise under an obligation to bear all the sins, by way of charge and imputation of all the elect in his own body on the tree as their Covenant Head and Mediator, so he stood engaged by Covenant Contract from eternity to answer for them to all the demands of Law and Justice. "This commandment have I received of my Father;" {Jn.10:18} and "I know that his commandment is life everlasting." {Jn.12:50} The same act of God's Grace that made our sins to meet on Christ, {to death as the wages of sin,} brought his Mediatorial Righteousness upon the elect to life everlasting. "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." {Rom.5:21} "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." {Rom.6:23} By virtue of this Covenant Transaction it is made over to God's chosen, by a free Testament of Grace, in the Blood of the New Testament, and comes upon them as a free gift of righteousness. "By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men {those embodied in Christ, and thus represented by Him} unto justification of life;" {Rom.5:18;} and we have right to that justifying righteousness {this righteousness is without us, and is not communicated, but imputed; and Christ as Mediator is the Subject of this righteousness} as held forth in the free and absolute promise, as elect persons, being chosen in Christ, as the elect Head of this his New Testament and the Testament itself gives right, and the elect are heirs of promise, as soon as they

have a being, {not natural heirs by descent, but spiritual heirs by grace in Christ.} God made his will in eternity and bequeathed eternal life to his adopted children that were predestinated to sonship, according to the good pleasure of his will. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." {Eph.1:5} Now this Testament of Grace in the Blood of Christ made known and revealed by an absolute promise of life; "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;" {Tit.1:2 taken from Gen.3:15;} this gives them right, and makes them heirs of the promise of life; and though the blessings given in this Testament be in the Surety's hand, until the time appointed of the Father, to be given out successively at the several times appointed; first spiritual life and light by the quickening power of the Holy Ghost, faith by the operation of the same Spirit, repentance...and at last salvation as consummated in eternal glory; therefore to make one blessing thereof to be either the cause or the condition of the rest would be most inappropriate, when all are but parts and effects of the same free gift; and that which gave them right to one, gave them right to all; for that which gave them a right to faith, before they did receive it, gave them a right to justifying righteousness before they were given faith; and that was before the Free Testament itself in the blood of Christ; then here lies the right of all God's elect, as such, to justifying righteousness in the will itself, as being absolutely settled upon for all the heirs of promise, by two immutable things, God's Faithful Promise and Immutable Oath; and add to this the Testator's blood which shows all is sure and certain and that the elect have an indisputable right, and are heirs by grace in Christ.

Therefore, we believe that there was a grant to Christ in the Eternal Compact, he performing all Covenant conditions as Head and Mediator; which when he had performed in time, he entered into heaven by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption, {Heb.9:12,} and what he obtained as our great Executor and Surety of the Covenant was before granted; and he obtained it on the behalf of them for whom it was granted. It pleased the Father to entrust him with all fullness of grace for the

elect as their Covenant Head, that so it might be sure to all the heirs of promise. {The acceptance of their persons in the Beloved, "wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved," Eph.1:6, is a pure act of God's sovereign will that wills because he will, and will on whom he will. Thus it appears, that the elect are heirs by grace alone; and the Covenant itself gives them right to eternal life as the free gift of God by absolute promise, and to have right to eternal life, and all the blessings of the Testament of Grace by blood.} The Father hath made it as sure in Christ, the Surety of this Testament, as the Eternal God could make it, to speak with reverence.

Thus I have been showing which way sinners are made righteous in a Mediator, and though the Decree produced no immediate effect, yet it produced its timely effects at that moment of time that the Law was broken, for then a Mediator stood ready as foreordained to step in and stand in the breach to keep off the flood of wrath from breaking out upon the elect. Always remember, that the Law was put in the Mediator's hand, or else we make strange work, and set the Law and Promise together by the ears; for when the Law could not give life it must march off as a Covenant of life or death to God's chosen; Christ takes it in his own hand, and makes it give way to the promise of Life in Himself.

Now I shall come to speak something of the justifying sentence which pronounces the elect righteous in their Covenant Head and Mediator as proceeding from and grounded upon this preceding act of grace, by way of Covenant transaction between the Father and the Son, which brought our sins upon Christ, and his Mediatorial Righteousness upon us; {to deliver His people out of a state of sin into a state of justification,} and that we are wholly passive, both in our being made righteous by Imputation, {which is an act of pure Grace in God to sinners,} and likewise in our being pronounced justified in that imputed righteousness, which is a sentence of grace, and passed in the Court of Grace, life by the free promise of salvation in Christ. Now in pronouncing the sentence of life upon ungodly law breaking sinners God sits judge of his own Law, as well as the elect sinners cause; and instead of pronouncing the sentence of the Law upon the sinner

to condemnation, God sits enthroned upon a Mercy Seat in the Court of Grace as reconciled in a Mediator; in whom grace and justice most sweetly agree to pass the sentence of eternal life upon the elect by absolute promise, based upon the substitutionary death of Christ on their behalf in time. This sentence declares God's eternal will, that Christ as Mediator was to die in their place; and they live by virtue of righteousness imputed. {Doth God pronounce any just, but such as are so in his sight by Imputation? If not, then making over a righteousness to elect sinners in a Mediator must be taken into God's justifying act, as well as the pronounced sentence, which is grounded upon this Act of Grace in a way of complete justice, because God, as Righteous Judge, justifies ungodly law-breaking sinners and clears them from the voice of the Law, as to the condemning power thereof, by a righteousness without us by Imputation. Then that act of God's grace that turns the sentence of the Law upon Christ, the spotless Lamb, by imputing our sins to him, and turns the sentence of Law, as to its condemning power, from guilty law-breaking sinners, by imputing his Mediatorial obedience unto them comes into justification, as well as the pronounced sentence that declares this act of grace, by which the sinner stands clear in a way of Justice. For all sentences of court, according to Justice, are grounded upon some preceding act, according to which act the sentence is just, and the sentence justifies, as it declares the act by which they stand clear.} Thus God, as a Righteous Judge, justifies the righteous only; that is, pronounces none but such just as truly are so in their Surety; and yet he justifies the ungodly, not by dispensing with his Holy Law, or making that void; but in a way of Justice, magnifying and honoring his Law, declaring an act of eternal grace, by virtue of which act his elect did stand righteous in his sight, {again, in fore-view of Christ's Suretyship engagements on their behalf,} by imputation of one Man's obedience to answer the Law in their place, as a Covenant Head, opposed to Adam's one disobedience, who was a figure of this second Adam, which was immediately to take the first Adam's place, {with respect to God's chosen in him,} upon his failure. {In this way of justifying the believing sinner, all the Divine perfections are perfectly glorified. Justice is

magnified by the infinite satisfaction of Christ; Mercy is likewise magnified in the salvation of the sinner on account of that satisfaction which Christ made to the justice of God; and the wisdom of God shines forth in contriving such a wonderful method of salvation, so that all the Divine attributes perfectly harmonize in the justification of the sinner by Christ; agreeable to Psalm 85:10, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."} And it is remarkable, that with respect to Christ Mediatorship, God comes in the cool of the day, reconciled in Him, and sounds the Jubilee trumpet from heaven, and pronounces the sentence of life in the Free Promise conditioned solely upon Christ. For until the sentence was passed, there was no grace, no Christ, no promise revealed for fallen man to lay hold upon, and the case must be the same still, for the object must precede the act, that is conversant about that object; and if life were not revealed in an absolute promise, there would have been no footing for faith to stand upon, for a conditional promise is most properly a law, only he that does that which is required shall live; and thus faith is made void, and the free promise of none effect; for the first thing looked to must be the condition annexed to the promise, and the promise claimed upon that condition. Now suppose faith to be annexed to the justifying sentence of life, then justifying righteousness and eternal life in the free promise is not the object of faith, but faith itself must be looked to, and then the promise pleaded upon faith as the condition of life; but this is not the nature of Abraham's faith, that took God upon his Word, and staggered not at the Promise, {of Christ,} nor considered the unlikeliness, or seeming impossibilities, but believed God upon his Word, {believing as an evidential seal of our justification in Christ,} and the Object of his faith was counted to him for righteousness. Thus it is by faith, as an empty hand, or passive instrument, that receives all in the free promise, as pure grace, and in no sense upon faith as a condition annexed to the sentence of life.

The Scriptures do plainly declare that some are elected and these only are redeemed. Justice doth not charge these redeemed ones, for God is completely reconciled to them by the death of his Son. Now will it not amount to the same to say that

some are ordained to eternal life, and redeemed with the blood of Christ; as to say, that God doth not charge these redeemed ones; seeing that we likewise affirm, that none can know that they are not under condemnation before believing, and that whoever dies an unbeliever shall be damned; except any suppose, that terrifying souls with Law Curses and Condemnation be the most effectual way to bring them to faith in Christ; and if so, I am not of their mind; though I am sure the Gospel ought to be preached and Free Grace proclaimed; and I think it is the most effectual to propose the Truth concerning Christ as the Object of faith, which the Gospel doth reveal for salvation; that is, God's pardoning grace in the blood of Christ, and thus to call upon sinners to look to the Lord, and that if mercy is to be found it is to be found alone through the Sacrificial Death of Christ. This is that which offends some that have made the greatest noise; and because they cannot directly strike at this Gospel summons to sinners to come directly to Christ, without any previous qualifications; which strikes so directly at their idol of self-righteousness; therefore they are pleased to brand the doctrine of God's Free Justifying Grace in Christ with all manner of absurdities; and I wish that some, which see otherwise, be not frightened from owning the truths they believe and have received in the light of God's Holy Spirit for fear of being laden with calamities and reproaches; for it is indeed a trying time, and I do believe, that those that are kept close to Christ and his doctrine, in owning and confessing the simplicity of the Gospel, shall meet with as great trials as those that have gone before us; for Christ will shake the earth and the heavens, and remove those things that are made, and burn up the hay, wood and stubble. Therefore let every man take heed what he builds, though upon the foundation of Christ. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." {I Cor.3:11} But to return to the point in hand, and that is to conclude with some, that affirm that they were not justified until faith acted upon Christ, would be great darkness; for though God in his Word doth pronounce only believers justified, yet it will no more follow, that they were not justified before, if things be rightly weighed; for this makes faith a moral condition of justification, as hath been shown already, and also denies

Justification to be by the Imputed Righteousness of Christ alone, and makes the Eternal Covenant of Grace conditional. Few do directly deny, and I am as certain, as I am certain that the Scriptures are true, that the first pronounced sentence of life to sinners is by that Covenant promise in Christ; {Gen.3:15;} and it is according to the tenor of that Covenant of Grace as an absolute Promise of life in Christ that the promise takes an effectual hold of the elect as soon as they are brought into the world. {Rom.9:9-13}