

ing natural frontiers, strong and self-supporting industries, and keen national consciousness, become one of the greatest assets in the struggle against Pan-Germanism. (3) The small and land-locked Serbia of the past will be transformed into a strong and united Southern Slav State upon the eastern shore of the Adriatic, no longer seething with unrest as the result of Magyar misrule in Croatia and Austrian economic tariffs, but free at last to develop a national life which has resisted five centuries of Turkish oppression. As a second line behind these three Slavonic States we should aim at creating (4) independent Hungary, stripped of its oppressed nationalities and reduced to its true Magyar kernel, but for that very reason emancipated from the corrupt oligarchy which has hitherto controlled its destinies, and thus enabled

to develop as a prosperous and progressive peasant State; and (5) Greater Roumania, consisting of the present kingdom, augmented by the Roumanian districts of Hungary, Bukovina, and Bessarabia. Behind these, again, would stand Greece and Bulgaria as national States, the latter purged of her evil desire to exercise hegemony over the Peninsula. (6) Finally, Russia would control Constantinople and the Straits, thus restoring the Cross to its true place upon the Golden Horn, and at the same time satisfy that longing and need for an access to the open sea which has underlain Russian policy for at least two centuries. As a free port for all comers, Constantinople could only gain by a Russian protectorate, and the special rights of Roumania in the Black Sea and the Straits would receive the fullest recognition.'

## The Covenant-Conception in the First Epistle of John.

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It has long since been recognized that the thought of the Fourth Gospel is steeped in the religion of the Old Testament. I assume in the present paper that the same mind stands behind the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle of John, and I shall attempt to show that at a crucial point the influence of the Old Testament has a dominant place within the briefer compass of the Epistle.

The conception of the Covenant embodies one of the profoundest ideas of the Old Testament. It expresses the conviction, born of some far-reaching religious experience on the individual or the national scale, that God has been graciously pleased to enter into intimate relation with men in order to fit them for being His people. One has only to recall the mention, on the one hand, of a 'covenant' made with individuals like Abraham (Gn 15<sup>18</sup> 17<sup>1st</sup>.) and David (2 S 23<sup>5</sup>), on the other, of the national 'covenant' associated with the law-giving at Sinai (Ex 24<sup>8</sup>), to realize that the idea emerges from some spiritual crisis in which the Divine operation as a disclosure of mercy and condescension was overpoweringly felt. In the earlier period the impression of the initiative of a gracious God is primary. The 'arrangement' is altogether His doing. Men have no rights in the matter. But the approach of God to men

involves obligations on their part, pre-eminently the obligation of obedience to One who has made them sure of His loving interest in their history. From the nature of ancient society, the covenant with the community would be paramount in its influence. As soon as the idea arose, there must have gathered around it a ritual appropriate to preserve its validity. The existence of such ritual would tend to externalize the significance of the covenant. The performance of certain stated actions would be regarded by many at least as discharging *their* obligations. And when, at a later time, the Law was looked upon as a complete exhibition of the will of God for men, the notion of a *quid pro quo*, a definite contract with a Divine and human side, was inevitably formulated.

At the Last Supper, in the most solemn circumstances of His career, Jesus used the Covenant-conception to represent the new order established by His redeeming love. Here as elsewhere, He seems to have particularly in view the profoundly spiritual interpretation of Hebrew religion given by great prophets like Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah. Quite probably He may have emphasized Jeremiah's forecast of the 'new covenant' in the instruction of His disciples. In any case the use He made of it in His closing hours must have

stamped its significance upon the consciousness of the primitive Church. So that we are not surprised to find the Christian dispensation described both by Paul (2 Co 3<sup>6</sup>) and the writer to the Hebrews (9<sup>15</sup>) as the 'new covenant.'

But the fundamental ideas of the Covenant may be discerned even where there is no employment of the term. Indeed, a comparison with parallel phenomena in the New Testament suggests that more or less incidental allusions reveal a wider range of influence than explicit references. I venture to think that such hints present themselves in this Epistle, and illuminate important elements in its writer's thought.

In the Old Testament, the conception of the Covenant was bound up with that of the religious community. Hence it becomes inherently probable that when this conception is developed in early Christianity, the covenant-idea will also find expression, the new situation involving large modifications of the earlier representation. A prominent feature of the opening paragraphs of the First Epistle of John is the stress laid by the author on *κοινωνία*, 'fellowship.' I cannot attempt to discuss the various problems suggested by this rich and difficult term. But a consideration of 1<sup>3. 6. 7</sup> enables us without difficulty to determine its meaning for this writer. 'What we have seen and heard,' he declares, 'we announce also to you, that you on your part may have fellowship with us, and this fellowship of ours is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. . . . If we say that we have fellowship with him [God] and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practise the truth; but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.' These passages plainly presuppose the existence and value of the Christian community. The proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ creates a society, whose bond is communion with the Father and the Son. This society stands prominently before the writer's mind throughout the Epistle. In 2<sup>12-14</sup>, its constituent elements are directly addressed, first, in general, as 'children,' whom the author can appeal to as their spiritual guide, then, in two main groups, as 'fathers' and 'young men.' It is further (2<sup>18-20</sup>) set in sharp contrast with those whom the writer calls 'antichrists,' a term of stern condemnation applied to persons who had once associated themselves with it and afterwards withdrawn. They are regarded as 'antichrists' because they

deny that Jesus is the Messiah (2<sup>22</sup>): the loyal members of the Christian community have been anointed by the Holy One, and possess the true knowledge (2<sup>20</sup>). The supreme criterion of the Christianity of the individual is his attitude towards the community: 'We know that we have crossed from death to life because we love the brotherhood' (3<sup>14</sup>, Moffatt). An uncompromising distinction is drawn between those within and those without the society: 'They belong to the world, therefore they speak as inspired by the world, and the world listens to them: we belong to God—he who knows God listens to us, he who does not belong to God does not listen to us' (4<sup>5</sup>, Moffatt; cf. 5<sup>19</sup>).

This dominant idea of a society constituted by fellowship with God in Christ at once calls up the Covenant-conception of the Old Testament. Here is the realization of the ideal of the Hebrew community. Yet, in view of these data alone, we might hesitate to say that the Covenant-conception was influential for the mind of the writer. But the evidence bears on the point more directly. Let us complete a passage which has been partially quoted: 'If we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship with one another, *and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin*' (1<sup>7</sup>). Unquestionably the clause italicized comes in as a surprise. And it is not convincing, as an explanation of the connexion, to be told as, e.g., Haupt tells us, that 'the light is the sphere in which Divine life rules, i.e., on earth the kingdom of God, the community of which Christ is the Head. But if this community is founded only through the death of Christ, if its life, that is to say, has its existence and basis in the blood of Christ, then the man who *ἐν φωτὶ περιπατεῖ* comes thereby into direct contact with this blood, and when the light influences him, that means that the blood of Christ exercises its activity, i.e., cleanses him from sin' (*Der erste Brief d. Johannes*, p. 38). It may be possible to arrive at such a concatenation of thought on the ground of the author's general standpoint, but it certainly involves the supplying of a number of connecting links of which the passage itself does not afford a hint. But it is far simpler to explain the connexion by means of the covenant-idea. The cleansing of which he speaks is carried on within the Christian society. It is a cleansing not 'from all sin,' as our version translates it, but 'from every sin,' from individual

transgressions which stain the soul and interrupt its fellowship with God: which thus weaken the spiritual life of the community, but do not necessarily break it up, because they may be repented of. Surely we are at once reminded of the situation depicted and provided for in the Pentateuch. The Covenant was reduced to a dead letter if the people proved disloyal to God through their disobedience. To meet the case, the sin-offering of the Day of Atonement was prescribed. This offering atoned for the guilt of members of the sacred community, cleansed them from that impurity which would make it sacrilege to approach the Holy One. It is noteworthy that the term *καθαρίζεν*, used here and repeatedly in Hebrews to denote this purifying of the consecrated community, is regularly employed in the LXX to translate *טָהַר*, the technical ritual term for cleansing the Old Testament congregation by the sin-offering of the Day of Atonement (*e.g.*, Lv 16<sup>30</sup>). Here is the clue to the writer's grouping of ideas. The New Covenant has a sacrifice which continually avails for the sins of those who are under it, that corresponds to the atoning sacrifice of Old Testament ritual. This offering the writer designates 'the blood of Jesus his Son.' The description of Jesus as 'his Son' suggests the infinite value of the sacrifice.

But if we should hesitate to adopt this interpretation, all doubt is removed by 2<sup>1-2</sup>: 'If any one sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; he is himself the propitiation for our sins, though not for ours alone but also for the whole world' (partly Moff.). Here again we are moving among the terms of the ritual for the Day of Atonement. Jesus is represented as the *ἱλασμός*, a word used more than once in the LXX (*e.g.*, Lv 25<sup>9</sup>, Nu 5<sup>8</sup>) to translate *כַּפָּרִים*, which belongs to the very heart of the covenant-ceremonial. Only, the writer rises to the larger Christian vision of an atonement 'for the whole world,' thereby reminding his readers of the limitations of the earlier order. The covenant-reference is confirmed by the statement which follows: 'This is how we may be sure that we know him, by obeying his commands' (2<sup>3</sup>, Moffatt). In Ex 24<sup>7</sup>, which describes the inauguration of the old covenant, the people pledge themselves to it in the words, 'All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.' Our

author seeks to impress upon his readers that under the new covenant also obedience is indispensable for its maintenance.

In this connexion, however, it ought to be observed that Old Testament thought concerning the covenant always presupposes the fidelity of God. Indeed that constitutes the basis of all that is meant by this relationship. And even after their disloyalty has robbed the covenant of its real significance, the members of the community are still ready to confide in the Divine faithfulness. It is this confidence which lies behind the inspiring vista of the Messianic Hope. Hence, in a context pervaded by the covenant-conception, the author emphasizes this aspect of the attitude of God. 'If we confess our sins,' he writes, 'he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from every form of unrighteousness' (1<sup>9</sup>). Under the new covenant as under the old, the fidelity of God is the impregnable rock on which the penitent can take his stand.

Towards the close of the Epistle, the idea of the Covenant asserts itself once more. The writer has been urging upon his readers the efficacy of submissive prayer (5<sup>14-15</sup>), and then he proceeds: 'If a man see his brother committing a sin which does not lead to death, he shall ask, and he will give him life, that is, in the case of those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin which leads to death. Not regarding that do I mean him to pray' (5<sup>16</sup>). Westcott justly interprets 'death' in this passage as 'final exclusion from the Divine society' (*ad loc.*). That is the opposite of 'life,' the Johannine term which sums up all the blessings of salvation. By far the most illuminating New Testament parallel is He 10<sup>26-29</sup>: 'For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin left, nothing but an awful outlook of doom, of that burning wrath which will consume the foes of God. Any one who has rejected the law of Moses dies without mercy, on the evidence of two or of three witnesses. How much heavier, do you suppose, will be the punishment assigned to him who has spurned the Son of God, who has profaned the covenant-blood with which he was sanctified, who has insulted the Spirit of grace?' (Moffatt). In this passage spurning the Son of God is identified with profaning the blood of the covenant, and the sin is plainly that of apostasy. There can be little doubt that the same sin is hinted at in the enig-

matic words of our Epistle. The solemn warning of Hebrews and the verse before us recall Jesus' description of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit as a sin which shall not be forgiven (Mk 3<sup>28, 29</sup>). But the ultimate background of both statements is to be found in the Old Testament, within the sphere of covenant-ideas. In Nu 15<sup>22-29</sup> provision is made for an atonement in the case of those who have sinned 'in error.' Such sins necessarily interrupt the covenant-relationship, but the atoning sacrifice procures the Divine forgiveness, and thus

the maintenance of the relationship. 'But the soul that doeth aught with an high hand . . . the same blasphemeth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people' (Nu 15<sup>30</sup>). Here we have the Johannine application of this Old Testament idea. The presumptuous sin *par excellence* within the Christian community is denial of the Son of God. Under the new covenant also the penalty is 'exclusion from the Divine society.' That exclusion is final, and is therefore equivalent to death in its largest significance.

## In the Study.

### † Seven Words.

#### I.

##### CHRIST THE INTERCESSOR.

'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'  
—Lk 23<sup>34</sup>.

BEHOLD the scene! The Cross is laid on the ground. Our Blessed Lord is stretched upon it, His arms are extended, and the cruel nails are driven first through His hands and then through His feet. It was probably whilst this torture was being inflicted that the first word was spoken, and unlike the other words it was repeated again and again, for the Greek word (ἔλεγε) which is translated 'said' is in the imperfect tense, and signifies 'He kept on saying.' As the cruel blows of the hammer drove the nails through the tender flesh and muscles, He kept on saying, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'

The Cross was lifted up from the ground and dropped into the hole prepared to receive it, terribly increasing our Lord's suffering; but He went on with His prayer, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'

All sin was gathered round Him there: the envy and jealousy of the priests, the moral cowardice of Pilate, the callous cruelty of the executioners, the brutal and heartless curiosity of the mob. Our Lord, as He looked down upon the upturned faces, read in them as in hideous characters every sort of sin.

What could He do? For three years He had gone from one end of the land to the other on

missions of love, preaching to sinners; but He could do that no longer, for His feet were nailed to the Cross. For three years He had done works of love, laying His hands in healing and blessing on their sick; but His hands were nailed to the Cross, so that now He could do that no longer.

There is one thing left; His tongue is still free, He can pray for them.

¶ Jean Paul Richter says this mode of death includes all that death can have that is horrible and ghastly; dizziness, cramp, thirst, tetanus, starvation, sleeplessness, fever, publicity of shame, mortification of untended wounds, all intensified just up to that point at which they can be endured, but stopping short for long weary hours of the point which gives to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness. Now, mark the first evidence of 'the mind of Christ.' The cruel custom of binding up the mouth of malefactors, that they should not inflame the populace with declamations from the cross, was omitted in His case. He will speak. What will He say? He has been hanging there three hours crucified by those He made (Jn 1<sup>8</sup>). Surely there will come now some word of tremendous malediction. Listen! Turning His weary eyes up to Heaven, He says, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'<sup>1</sup>

¶ We see Him, our High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, taken from among men. As in the old sacrifice no angel went into the Holy Place, no angel put on the long white garment, no angel wore the breastplate, but a man taken from among men, so too our High Priest is One that is taken from among men, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, who is in all points tempted like as we are. He is lifted up, the Priest and the Sacrifice and the Offering, and He makes intercession for the transgressors. 'Father, forgive them.' He asks for forgiveness for the transgressors—that is what the transgressors want. He makes intercession for the transgressors. What the high priest did of old

<sup>1</sup> B. Wilberforce, *The Power that Worketh in Us*, 130.