

matically possible, but it seems hardly probable that so important a fact as that Araunah was the former king of Jebus should be only mentioned incidentally. Perhaps אֲרָאֻנָה should be omitted altogether, and the words taken as a remark of the historian, *all this did Araunah give (i.e. offer) unto the king.* So the LXX., and some MSS of the Vulg.

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"TESTAMENT" OR "COVENANT" ?

Οπου γὰρ διαθήκη, θάνατον ἀνάγκη φέρεσθαι τοῦ διαθεμένου· διαθήκη γὰρ ἐπὶ νεκροῖς βεβαία, ἐπεὶ μὴ ποτε ἰσχύει ὅτε ζῆ ὁ διαθέμενος."—HEB. ix. 16, 17.

It is generally admitted that *διαθήκη* has in ver. 15 its ordinary meaning of "covenant." But a large number of expositors, including several of the first rank, such as Chrysostom (who does not hint at any other interpretation), Calvin, De Wette, Bleek, Delitzsch, think that in vv. 16, 17 the word passes over into the meaning of "testament," or disposition of property by will. The awkwardness of the transition from the notion of covenant to that of testament is more or less fully acknowledged. But we are compelled to choose the view that offers fewest difficulties. Four proposed renderings of the passage assume that *διαθήκη* means covenant throughout, and all are certainly open to grave objection.

1. Some have translated *διαθέμενος* "the appointed victim." It is sufficient to say that in no other passage has *διαθέμενος* a passive meaning.

2. Some have proposed to render *διαθέμενος* "the mediating victim." But *διατίθημι* does not mean "to mediate."

3. The view of Ebrard is much more worthy of consideration: When a sinner enters into covenant with the

holy God, he must first atone for his guilt by death or offer a substitutionary burnt-offering. The notion of a substitutionary sacrifice is supposed to be introduced in the subsequent verses.

Some of the objections taken to this interpretation have not much force. For instance, it has often been objected that the writer's statement is axiomatic and the reference must be to all covenants. But, as he has been speaking throughout of the covenant between a sinner and God, he might very naturally ignore every other covenant in this passage. Again, it is alleged that, if the writer intended the reference to be to a propitiatory covenant, he would not have omitted to say which of the contracting parties must die. The sinner, it is evident, must die. For the necessity for death arises from the indissoluble connexion between guilt and punishment. The insuperable objection to Ebrard's interpretation of the passage is that Scripture nowhere represents the sinner as proposing to enter into covenant with God, but always represents God as offering pardon to the sinner. The sinner does not find the substitution, but God sends His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin. We may conjecture that the other interpretation, which assigns to *διαθήκη* the meaning of “testamentary disposition,” arose from the seeming incongruity of applying to God's free and merciful offer of pardon to sinful man the notion of an agreement entered into by two independent parties. It is not surprising that Hofmann should endeavour to fasten on *διαθήκη* the neutral meaning of “ordinance” or “arrangement.” The difficulty, however, meets us, that a mere ordinance does not necessarily involve the death of him who has made it.

4. A new interpretation has been recently suggested by Rendall in his excellent and too little known edition of the Epistle. His rendering is this: “Where a covenant is made, death of him that makes it must be the forfeit

offered. For a covenant is ratified upon dead victims: for is it strong at a time [reading *μὴ τότε*] when he that makes it lives *after breaking it?*" The objection is that the analogy fails. According to this interpretation the writer regards the death of him that makes the covenant as a penalty for breaking it. In order that the analogy between the death of him who has made a covenant and the death of Christ may be sustained and be of any value to the argument, it is necessary that the death of Christ should be a penalty which He has to pay for breaking the covenant. If it be replied to this, that Christ is a substitutionary sacrifice for the sinner, for whom He pays the penalty, the interpretation will not then be in harmony with the undeviating teaching of the New Testament, that the appointment of a substitutionary sacrifice is part of the covenant. It is offered, therefore, for the sinner's previous guilt, not for the guilt of breaking the covenant itself.

Such are the interpretations of the passage which assume that *διαθήκη* means "covenant," and such the objections which compel us to seek a view beset by fewer difficulties. Coming now to the more popular explanation, that *διαθήκη* is used in these verses in the sense of "a testamentary disposition," and *διαθέμενος* means "a testator," the arguments in its favour are mainly two.

1. The word *διαθήκη* has the two meanings elsewhere. In classical Greek it almost always signifies "a testamentary disposition of property"; in hellenistic Greek it means "a covenant." The notion of bequeathing an estate by will was scarcely known among the Jews. Some expositors render the word by "testament" in Gal. iii. 15. But this is, to say the least, too doubtful to permit our adducing the passage in proof. The context tells rather on the other side. However that may be, the argument from the two significations of *διαθήκη* is insufficient to justify an unnatural transition from the one meaning to the other.

2. Expositors, therefore, strive to show that the transition in the present case is not unnatural or, at least, not intolerable. The reference in ver. 15 to “the eternal inheritance” is thought to have suggested to the writer the classical meaning of *διαθήκη*, and to have led him to institute at once a comparison between the heirs of an estate willed by a testator and those whom God has called to receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. As the former cannot enter into possession till after the testator’s death, so likewise the latter receive not the inheritance before the death of Christ takes place. Here are two points of analogy, the inheritance promised and the necessity for the death of him who made the promise. The resemblance will appear still more natural if we bear in mind that one purpose of the verses, if not indeed their main object, is to account for the necessity of Christ’s death in reference to believers under the Old Dispensation. God had already brought many sons unto glory. But heaven was not secured or prepared for them till the death of Christ made them legal, as they were already actual, possessors of the inheritance.

This reasoning is plausible. But it cannot be considered satisfactory, unless we are prepared to admit that the sacred writer can condescend to use a sophistical argument. De Wette adopts the interpretation now stated, and considers it to be a piece of dialectic. Even Tholuck grants that it is, logically considered, inconsequential, and Lünemann admits it is logically inaccurate. But it is worse than inconclusive. It is an inconceivable confusion of thought. A testamentary disposition of property has no force until after the testator’s death. Why not? Evidently the only reason is that the testator may change his mind. During his lifetime, therefore, it is always possible that he may alter his will; but, when he has died, it is too late. Apply the analogy. Christ has made a testamentary dis-

position of certain blessings to men. But it has no validity while Christ lives. Why not? Is it because He may change His mind in His lifetime, but cannot when He has died? Not to speak of the irreverence and absurdity of such a notion, it must first be shown, to make the argument anything better than a childish equivocation, that God's promises are, in any real sense, a testamentary disposition. Christ's death is necessary, according to the unvarying representations of the New Testament, in consequence of man's guilt, and bears no resemblance of any kind to the act of a person who makes a bequest of his goods and chattels to his heirs.

The following considerations may have some force as subsidiary arguments against this view of the passage.

1. In ver. 15 the necessity of Christ's death is connected with the ratification of a covenant. It is natural to expect that in ver. 16 also the things connected should be the same. Add to this that in ver. 18 the necessity of the shedding of blood under the first covenant is inferred (*ὄθεν*) from what has been said in vv. 16, 17.

2. The strangeness of the meaning of "testament" in the hellenistic Greek has more weight on the one side than its familiarity in the classics has on the other. In Philo, *De Nom. Mutatione*, vol. i. p. 586 Mang., *κλήρον κατὰ διαθήκας ἀπολείψειν*, the mention of inheritance and the use of the word *ἀπολείψειν* have led Mangey and others to render the word by "testament." But all that can fairly be inferred is that Philo speaks of testamentary dispositions as being one kind of covenant. The subsequent words, *θήσω τὴν διαθήκην μου ἀνὰ μέσον ἐμοῦ καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον σου . . . ὥστε σύμβολον εἶναι διαθήκην χάριτος ἣν μέσσην ἔθηκεν ὁ Θεὸς ἑαυτοῦ τε ὀρέγοντος καὶ ἀνθρώπου λαμβάνοντος*, refer to mediation, a notion altogether foreign to the idea of a testament, but essential to his definition of a covenant. If so, the passage from Philo resembles the verses under

discussion, in connecting together the notion of an inheritance and that of a covenant, and may have suggested the thought to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

3. This interpretation does force, as Rendall observes, to the meaning of $\delta\tau\epsilon$, which can signify "in case," "supposing that," but cannot be synonymous with $\epsilon\omega\varsigma$, "as long as," "during."

Is no other interpretation possible? A covenant is an agreement on oath. Each of the parties to a covenant pledges himself to fulfil his part of the conditions at the cost, if necessary, of his life. Such were the covenants between Isaac and Abimelech (Gen. xxvi. 31), between Jacob and Laban (Gen. xxxi. 53), between David and Jonathan (1 Sam. xx. 17), and the writer of this Epistle represents God as making a covenant with Abraham by confirming his promise to him with an oath (vi. 13). Now in ver. 15 the writer has said that the redemptive death of Christ is necessary to the fulfilment of the promise of the eternal inheritance. The reason of this is given in ver. 16. God's promise is a covenant, and a covenant implies a pledge on the part of him who has made the promise that he will fulfil his promise at the cost, if necessary, of his life. This is the major premise of a syllogism. The minor premise is left to be supplied by the reader. It is that the new covenant, which God has made with man for the forgiveness of sin, is of such a nature that the condition of Christ's death is required for the fulfilment of the Divine promise. Christ now occupies the place of God, as the person who has made the covenant. No objection can justly be taken to this. God sends His Son. Christ dies as representative of God, who has promised and will not repent, though He must sacrifice His Son and, in His Son, face death, in order to fulfil His promise.

Ver. 17 will then be a proof of the major premise; first, from actual fact; second, from the notion of a covenant.

First, as matter of fact, a covenant based on dead men, that is, on the condition that the contracting parties will not shrink from facing death in order to fulfil their engagement, is, for that very reason, well established, and calculated to inspire men with confidence. The emphasis in this clause is on *βεβαια*, and the word refers, not to legal validity, but to the certitude which such an agreement imparts to the interested persons. Cf. vi. 16, *εις βεβαίωσιν*, "unto certitude." The words *ἐπὶ νεκροῖς* should be closely connected with *διαθήκη*, and *ἐπὶ* understood in its usual meaning of "upon." The plur. (*νεκροῖς*) is used, because a covenant is a sworn agreement between two or more persons. But in reference to the new covenant (ver. 16), the sing. is preferred, because it is not a contract into which two independent and equal parties enter with one another, but a gracious dispensation of God on behalf of men.

Second, the notion of a covenant implies that its power with men rests on the solemn pledge of the contracting parties to fulfil their engagement or die in the attempt; inasmuch as it has no influence in case he who has made it lives, and shuns to expose himself to danger of death in fulfilling its conditions. *Μήποτε* (if we adopt this reading in preference to *μὴ τότε*) refers to the notion of covenant. If the reference were to the fact of a covenant, *οὐποτε* would have been used.

At first sight the word *ἰσχυει* appears to be an objection to this interpretation of the verses. But there is no need to suppose the word means legal validity. Indeed, this is not the precise signification that ought to be attached to the word, even if we adopted the other interpretation, that the writer is speaking of a testamentary disposition. For it is not the testator's death, but his signature or some other sufficient proof that the document expresses his intention, that constitutes the validity of the will. His death is only the necessary condition of the transfer of the estate.

But *ἰσχυεῖ* cannot fairly express this notion. On the other hand, if the reference is to a covenant, *ἰσχυεῖ* will bear its natural meaning of moral influence. Cf. Acts xix. 20; Rev. xii. 8. This interpretation assigns to *ὅτε* also its correct meaning.

A difficult word is *φέρεσθαι*. It cannot well be synonymous with *γίνεσθαι*. The meaning "to prove legally" is not found in any of the passages adduced as examples by expositors; *μάρτυρα φέρειν* is quite different. Again, it is scarcely safe to consider *φέρεσθαι* synonymous with *ἐμφέρεσθαι*, "to introduce." But the word bears a meaning sometimes that fits in well with the interpretation suggested in this paper. Cf. Thuc. iii. 53, *ἠγούμενοι τὸ ἴσον μάλιστ' ἂν φέρεσθαι*, "thinking we should have justice *dealt out* to us." Any man that makes a covenant has death dealt out to him as the ultimate condition which he must be prepared to fulfil, if he will discharge his duty in accordance with his engagement. The tense is to be noted. Death is always held before him in prospect.

This view receives some confirmation from the similarity of the argument here and in Gal. iii. 10-15. In that passage the necessity of Christ's death is inferred from the curse under which men lay. But Christ was made a curse for us. This is compared to the confirmation of a covenant. Even in the case of a man's covenant, if it be once confirmed, no one can take from or add a whit to its force. Here the confirmation of the covenant must mean the oath by which the contracting parties pledge themselves to die rather than fall short of the fulfilment of their promise. Similarly the death of Christ is the confirmation to all believers of God's promises. *Κυρῶ* is used in 2 Cor. ii. 8 in the sense of convincing a person of another's love; and in Gal. iii. 15, the only other passage in the New Test. in which the word occurs, it may be understood to mean that the pledge of death begets confidence in the trust-

worthiness of the covenant. Christ did not shrink from such a pledge, and His death is like a Divine oath, the end of all unbelief, even unto certitude.

The interpretation now suggested is not free from difficulties. One is that ἐπὶ νεκρῶς does not naturally yield the meaning of "based upon the death of the contracting parties." The meaning assigned to ἐπὶ is, of course, frequent with the dat.; and the use of the plur. adj. in the sense of θάνατος seems to be parallel to the use of ἐκ νεκρῶν, in Rom. vi. 12, to signify "from a state of death." Nothing more is claimed for the view proposed than that it appears to be surrounded with fewer difficulties than other interpretations of the passage.

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THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

XVI.

TWO FINAL TESTS OF THE FALSE TEACHING.

"If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances, Handle not, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; *but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.*"—COL. ii. 20-3 (Rev. Ver.).

THE polemical part of the Epistle is now coming to an end. We pass in the next chapter, after a transitional paragraph, to simple moral precepts which, with personal details, fill up the remainder of the letter. The antagonist errors appear for the last time in the words which we have now to consider. In these the Apostle seems to gather up all his strength to strike two straight, crashing, final blows, which pulverize and annihilate the theoretical positions and practical precepts of the heretical teachers. First, he puts in the form of an unanswerable demand for the reason