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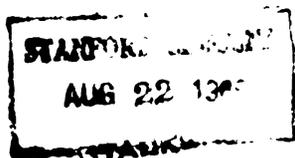
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INDEX OF ARTICLES

AUGUSTINI, SERMO DE DILECTIONE DEI ET PROXIMI. By E. S. Buchanan 92

BAYAN OF THE BAB. By Samuel G. Wilson..... 633

CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF THE CREATION. By Benjamin B. Warfield.. 190

CHURCH HISTORY AS A THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINE. By Frederick W. Loetscher I

CRITICAL NOTE (MATT. I. 16). By William P. Armstrong..... 461

DANIEL, THE BOOK OF, AND THE CANON. By Robert Dick Wilson.. 352

HEBREWS THE EPISTLE OF THE DIATHEKE. By Geerhardus Vos.... 587

HISTORY AND FAITH. By J. Gresham Machen..... 337

HUSS, JOHN, THE LIFE AND WORK OF. By Remsen Du Bois Bird.. 256

PHILOSOPHY AND THE PROBLEM OF REVELATION. By Henry William Rankin 409

SHIELDS, CHARLES WOODRUFF, AND THE UNITY OF SCIENCE. By Henry William Rankin..... 49

LIST OF BOOKS REVIEWED

AALDERS, <i>Sporen van Animisme in het Oude Testament?</i>	288
ADAM, <i>Plato: Moral and Political Ideals</i>	97
AINSLIE, <i>Christ or Napoleon—Which?</i>	497
AKED, <i>The Divine Drama of Job</i>	136
ALBERTSON, <i>The Distinctive Ideas of Jesus</i>	489
ANSTEY, <i>The Romance of Bible Chronology</i>	105
<i>Aristotelian Society, Proceedings of</i> , New Series, vol. xiv.....	275
ARPEE, <i>The Armenian Awakening</i>	494
BARCLAY, <i>The Golden Censer</i>	322
BAUDISSIN, <i>Zur Gesh. d. alttest. Religion</i>	681
BEGBIE, <i>The Proof of God</i>	101
BEGBIE, <i>Twice Born Men</i>	329
BISSELL, <i>Sermons of a New Englander</i>	149
BLACK, <i>The Open Door</i>	326
BLAKISTON, <i>John Baptist and His Relation to Jesus</i>	487
BOHRMANN, <i>Spinozas Stellung z. Religion</i>	669
BRYAN, <i>The People's Law</i>	155
BUCHANAN, <i>The Four Gospels from the Irish Codex Harleianus</i> 1023.....	119
BUFFET, <i>The Layman Revato</i>	472
BURRELL, <i>In the Upper Room</i>	136
CALVERT, <i>The Further Evolution of Man</i>	286
CAMPBELL, <i>Relations of the Christian Churches</i>	139
CANNON, <i>The Song of Songs</i>	107
CHARLES, <i>Religious Development, etc.</i>	476
CHIDLEY, <i>Fifty-Two Story Talks for Boys and Girls</i>	503
COBB, <i>Mysticism and the Creed</i>	308
CODDINGTON, <i>Plain Thoughts on Faith and Life</i>	149
COIT, <i>The Soul of America</i>	656
COLLINS, <i>The President and the "Pan-American" Thanksgiving</i> <i>Mass</i>	153
<i>Continuation Committee Conferences in Asia 1912-1913</i>	138
COOK, <i>The Inside of the Cup Examined</i>	153
CRAIG, <i>Jesus as He Was and Is</i>	498
CRAMER AND PYPER, <i>Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica</i> , vol. x.....	299
DAVIES, <i>The Miracles of Jesus</i>	285
DAVIS, <i>Mind and Spirit</i>	670
DEAN, <i>Evangelism and Social Service</i>	133
DEBRUNNER, <i>Blass' Grammatik d. NT. Griechisch</i>	483
DE JONG, <i>De Leer der Verzoening in de Amerikaanse Theologie</i>	120
DE JONG, <i>Enkele Beschouwingen over Christus in de Nieu. Amer.</i> <i>Theologie</i>	120
DENIO, <i>The Supreme Need</i>	145
DICKINSON, <i>The Christian Reconstruction of Modern Life</i>	151
<i>Domestic Needs of Farm Women</i>	505

DORCHESTER, <i>The Sovereign People</i>	131
DOUMERGUE, <i>Calomnies Anti-Protestantes</i>	122
DRIVER, <i>Ideals of the Prophets</i>	670
DUSSAUD, <i>Introduction à l'Histoire des Religions</i>	475
<i>Economic Needs of Farm Women</i>	505
<i>Educational Needs of Farm Women</i>	505
EPPENS, <i>The Dilemma of the Modern Christian</i>	102
EUCKEN, <i>Ethics and Modern Thought</i>	655
FABER, <i>Buddhistische und Neutestamentliche Erzählungen</i>	115
FAGUET, <i>Initiation into Literature</i>	154
FARIS, <i>The Book of God's Providence</i>	143
FARIS, <i>The Sunday School at Work</i>	141
FERGUSON, <i>The Westminster Superintendent's Service Book</i>	141
FLETCHER, <i>The Psychology of the New Testament</i>	114
FLEWELLING, <i>Christ and the Dramas of Doubt</i>	103
FLIPPIN, <i>The Financial Administration of the Colony of Virginia</i>	506
FOCKE, <i>Entstehung d. Weisheit Salomos</i>	677
FREEMAN, <i>Hour of Prayer</i>	699
GARDNER, <i>The Ethics of Jesus and Social Progress</i>	129
GIBBONS, <i>The New Map of Europe</i>	153
GILBERT, <i>The Bible and Universal Peace</i>	319
GILL, <i>The Psychological Aspects of Christian Experience</i>	469
GINDRAUX, <i>La Philosophie de la Croix</i>	317
GOODSPEED, <i>Die ältesten Apologeten</i>	491
GOULD, <i>Money and Transportation in Maryland 1720-1765</i>	504
HAMILTON, <i>The Almighty Magnet</i>	134
HASTINGS, <i>Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics</i> , vol. vii.....	275
HILL, <i>Shall We Do Without Jesus?</i>	133
HOLMES, <i>Is Death the End?</i>	469
HOLMES, <i>The Broader Vision</i>	132
HORNE, <i>The Romance of Preaching</i>	328
HOSKIER, <i>Codex B and its Allies</i>	289
HOYT, <i>Elements of Preaching</i>	328
<i>International Convention of Student Volunteer Movement</i>	323
JACKSON, <i>The Legend of the Christmas Rose</i>	322
JOHNS, <i>Laws of Babylonia and of the Hebrew Peoples</i>	676
JONES, <i>The Gospel of the Sovereignty</i>	503
JOWETT, <i>My Daily Meditation for the Circling Year</i>	325
KAUFFMANN, <i>Soziale Ethik im Judentum</i>	491
KELLEY, <i>A Pilgrim of the Infinite</i>	101
KELLEY, <i>Trees and Men</i>	331
KING, <i>Religion as Life</i>	140
KÖNIG, <i>Das antisemitische Hauptdogma</i>	683
KUHNS, <i>A Onesided Biography</i>	149
LAWTON, <i>The Greatest of These</i>	144
LOCKE, <i>A Man's Reach</i>	145
LOGAN, <i>Sabbath Theology</i>	694

LYTTLETON, <i>Character and Religion</i>	142
MACALESTER, <i>The Philistines</i>	675
MACNEILL, <i>The Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews</i>	489
MAINS, <i>Christianity and the New Age</i>	99
MARJORIBANKS, <i>The Sevenfold "I Am"</i>	133
MATHEWS, <i>The Individual and the Social Gospel</i>	320
MCGLOTHLIN, <i>A Guide to the Study of Church History</i>	307
MERRIAM, <i>History of American Baptist Missions</i>	692
MEYER-DAVID, <i>Histoire de l'Antiquité</i>	493
MILLER, G. A., <i>The Life Efficient</i>	149
MILLER, J. R., <i>Paul's Message for To-Day</i>	503
MILLER, L. H., <i>Our Knowledge of Christ</i>	477
MOFFATT, <i>The Theology of the Gospels</i>	111
MOORE, <i>History of Religions</i>	664
MORGAN, <i>Christian Principles</i>	698
MORGAN, <i>The Teaching of Christ</i>	147
MORGAN, <i>The Teaching of the Lesson</i>	144
MORRIS, <i>Colonial Trade in Maryland</i>	155
MURRAY, <i>Jesus and His Parables</i>	327
MURRAY, <i>The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians</i>	484
NELSON, <i>Silver Chimes in Syria</i>	142
NICHOLAS, <i>Seyyèd Ali Mohammed dit le Bab</i>	492
ORR, <i>The History and Literature of the Early Church</i>	299
PEAKE, <i>The Bible—Its Origin, Significance and Worth</i>	283
PHILLIPS, <i>Rediscovered Universe</i>	659
PLUMMER, <i>The Gospel according to St. Mark</i>	483
PORTER, <i>The Twelve Gemmed Crown</i>	135
<i>Public Recreation System for Newark</i>	505
RALL, <i>New Testament History</i>	684
RICHARD, <i>God's Paths of Peace</i>	320
ROBERTSON, <i>A Grammar of the Greek New Testament</i>	481
ROBINSON, <i>The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament</i>	109
ROSS, <i>The God We Trust</i>	142
RUTHERFORD, <i>The Seer's House</i>	326
SCHAFF, <i>De Ecclesia</i> (by Huss).....	687
SCHAFF, <i>John Huss</i>	687
SCHWARZE, <i>John Huss</i>	692
SCOTT AND GILMORE, <i>The Church, the People and the Age</i>	147
SELBIE, <i>Life of Fairbairn</i>	690
SHAW, <i>The Angel in the Sun</i>	325
SHELTON, <i>Christian Science So-Called</i>	105
SHEPHEARD, <i>Jesus and Politics</i>	497
SICKELS, <i>Seventh Day Adventism</i>	132
SIMMS, <i>What must the Church do to be Saved</i>	148
SIMPSON, <i>Facts of Life in Relation to Faith</i>	667
SMOOT, <i>The Standard of Pitch in Religion</i>	150
<i>Social and Labor Needs of Farm Women</i>	505

LIST OF BOOKS REVIEWED

vii

SPEER, <i>Studies of Missionary Leadership</i>	134
SPURGEON, <i>My Sermon Notes</i>	501
STANTON, <i>Telepathy of the Celestial World</i>	143
STEINLEITNER, <i>Die Beicht</i>	660
STODDART, <i>The New Testament in Life and Literature</i>	504
STÖCKHARDT, <i>Kommentar über den Ersten Brief Petri</i>	298
STRAYER, <i>Reconstruction of the Church</i>	695
STREETER, <i>Restatement and Reunion</i>	697
STUBBS, <i>How Europe was won for Christianity</i>	495
SULZER, <i>Planting the Outposts</i>	135
SUMMERBELL, <i>Religion in College Life</i>	132
TEN BROEKE, <i>A Constructive Basis for Theology</i>	312
THOMAS, <i>Bonheur et Mariage</i>	150
THOMAS, <i>La Souffrance</i>	150
TRWING, <i>The Working Church</i>	136
TOWNSEND, <i>The Stars Not Inhabited</i>	100
TUCKER, <i>Later Version of the Wycliffite Epistle to the Romans</i> ..	330
TURTON, <i>The Truth of Christianity</i>	287
TUTTLE, <i>Egypt to Canaan</i>	329
VAIL, <i>Stewardship Among Baptists</i>	146
VAUGHAN, <i>The Mirror of the Soul</i>	136
VON SODEN, <i>Griechisches Neues Testament</i>	461
WALKER, <i>Christ the Creative Ideal</i>	486
WARD, <i>Variety in Prayer Meeting</i>	698
WARFIELD, <i>The Plan of Salvation</i>	496
WEISS, <i>Fries' Lehre von der Ahndung</i>	96
WELCH, <i>The Story of Joseph</i>	136
WELLS, <i>Ten Don'ts for Sunday School Teachers</i>	141
WELLHAUSEN, <i>Kritische Analyse der Apostelgeschichte</i>	295
WENDT, <i>Die Apostelgeschichte</i>	292
WILLIAMS, <i>The Question of Alcohol</i>	155
WILSON, <i>Revival of Gift of Healing</i>	693
WINCKLER, <i>John Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity</i>	669
WINSTANLEY, <i>Jesus and the Future</i>	485
WOOD, <i>The Bible as Literature</i>	321
WRIGHT, <i>The Problem of the Atonement</i>	124
YOUNG, <i>The Illustrative Teachings of Jesus</i>	326
YOUTZ, <i>The Enlarging Conception of God</i>	127
ZORN, <i>Crumbs</i>	143

The Princeton Theological Review

CONTENTS

Jesus' Mission, According to His Own Testimony	513
BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD	
Hebrews, the Epistle of the Diatheke	587
GEERHARDUS VOS	
The Bayan of the Bab	633
SAMUEL G. WILSON	
Reviews of Recent Literature	655

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COIT, <i>The Soul of America</i>	656
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DRIVER, <i>Ideals of the Prophets</i>	670
EUCKEN, <i>Ethics and Modern Thought</i>	655
FOCKE, <i>Entstehung d. Weisheit Salomos</i>	677
FREEMAN, <i>Hour of Prayer</i>	699
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KÖNIG, <i>Das antisemitische Hauptdogma</i>	683
LOGAN, <i>Sabbath Theology</i>	694
MACALESTER, <i>The Philistines</i>	675
MERRIAM, <i>History of American Baptist Missions</i>	692
MOORE, <i>History of Religions</i>	664
MORGAN, <i>Christian Principles</i>	698
PHILLIPS, <i>Rediscovered Universe</i>	659
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SCHAFF, <i>John Huss</i>	687
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SCHWARZE, <i>Johh Huss</i>	692
SELBIE, <i>Life of Fairbairn</i>	690
SIMPSON, <i>Facts of Life in Relation to Faith</i>	667
STEINLEITNER, <i>Die Beicht</i>	660
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WINCKLER, <i>John Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity</i>	669

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OCTOBER, 1915

JESUS' MISSION, ACCORDING TO HIS OWN
TESTIMONY

(SYNOPTICS)

Under the title of "*'I came': the express self-testimony of Jesus to the purpose of His sending and His coming,*" Adolf Harnack has published a study of the sayings of Jesus reported in the Synoptic Gospels, which are introduced by the words "I came" or, exceptionally, "I was sent", or their equivalents.¹ These, says he, are "programmatic" sayings, and deserve as such a separate and comprehensive study, such as has not heretofore been given to them. In his examination of them, he pursues the method of, first, gathering the relevant sayings together and subjecting them severally to a critical and exegetical scrutiny; and, then, drawing out from the whole body of them in combination Jesus' own testimony to His mission.

It goes without saying that, in his critical scrutiny of the passages, Harnack proceeds on the same presuppositions which govern his dealing with the Synoptic tradition in general; that is to say, on the presuppositions of the "Liberal" criticism, which he applies, however, here as elsewhere, with a certain independence. It goes without saying also, therefore, that the passages emerge from his hands in a very mauled condition; brought as far as it is possible to bring them, even with violence, into line with the "Liberal" view of what the mission of Jesus ought to have been. It is reassuring, however, to observe that, even so, they cannot be despoiled of their central testimony. That Jesus proclaimed Himself to have come—to have been

¹ *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 1912, xxii, pp. 1-30.

HEBREWS, THE EPISTLE OF THE DIATHEKE

In the following article an attempt is made to trace the part which the Greek *διαθήκη* plays in the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

We leave the Greek word untranslated, because it is in part with the problem of its proper translation that we are concerned and it appears best not to prejudice the question. We notice first of all that Hebrews is the only New Testament document in which the concept and the term *diatheke* appear with any degree of prominence. In the teaching of our Lord we meet with the idea only once, in the institution of the Supper. More frequently it occurs with Paul, in Romans (ix. 4; xi. 27), 2 Corinthians (iii. 6, 14), Galatians (iii. 15, 17; iv. 24), Ephesians (ii. 12), altogether nine times in six contexts. In Luke's writings we find it, apart from the institution of the Supper, once in the Gospel (i. 72), and twice in the Acts (iii. 25; vii 8). Once also it is met with in the Revelation of St. John (xi. 19). This makes sixteen instances of its occurrence outside of Hebrews. Over against this stand seventeen occurrences in Hebrews alone. In other words in this single Epistle the conception is more frequent than in all the rest of the New Testament writings put together.

Both these facts require an explanation—the relative quiescence of the idea in the New Testament as a whole, no less than its sudden activity in Hebrews. It seems strange at first that a conception which plays so dominant a rôle in the Old Testament and so strongly colors the representation of religion there should have found so little employment in the later stage of revelation. The cause is usually sought in this, that other ideas like the Kingdom of God and the Church have forced it into the background and taken its place. But this is rather a fuller statement of the problem, and only in so far of help towards the solution, than the solution itself. For the question

persists: Why did other ideas, and precisely these ideas, become so dominant as to relegate the diatheke-idea to semi-oblivion? To this question the answer can only be found in the momentous change to which in the development of redemption and revelation the general character of religion became subject. Through the coming of the Messiah and the accomplishment of His work the people of God received a Messianic organization; their whole constitution and manner of life became determined by their relation to the Christ. Now the Old Testament idea of the berith, had in the long course of its history, scarcely come as yet into fructifying contact with the Messianic hope of Israel. Therefore at the dawn of the new dispensation it was not prepared to take the lead in the great rearrangement of doctrinal values characteristic of this epoch. While inherently not incapable of entering upon an organic union with the Messianic point of view, yet on the surface it did not suggest or invite such an interrelation. It will be remembered that the great prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the new berith which Jehovah will make with Israel in the future is not Messianically oriented. A definite, specific historical situation was required to draw this ancient idea into the service of the new Messianic outlook created by the appearance of Jesus and the accomplishment of His work.

In general we may say that such a situation was bound to arise as soon as the consciousness of the original and unique blessings conferred by Christianity led to a comparison between the present stage of redemptive attainment and the past. It is the retrospective, comparative mode of thinking applied from the exalted standpoint of Christian privilege and seeking to reach an adequate apprehension of the rich content of the latter by placing it over against the lower pre-Christian stage of redemption and revelation that has in most cases resurrected the diatheke-idea and brought it into new significance. This is entirely in accord with the first use made by Jeremiah of the idea in connection with the

future. The future order of things appears to the prophet as a berith because he pointedly compares it with and exalts it above the past and present order of things. Partly in dependence on this prophetic passage, but also with a broad historical comparison between the era introduced by the sacrifice at Sinai in the time of Moses and the era introduced by His own sacrifice, our Lord speaks of the latter in the institution of the Supper as a new diatheke. Again it is under the influence of the same comparative train of thought when Paul in 2 Corinthians iii. represents his apostolic ministry as a service connected with a diatheke, the new diatheke, not of the letter but of the Spirit, over against which he places the ministry of Moses as subservient to another diatheke, embodied in the Old Testament Scriptures. It may be observed in passing that the Apostle here by way of metonymy applies the term diatheke to the Scriptures themselves, since he alternates the phrase "the reading of Moses" with the other phrase "the reading of the old diatheke" (verses 14 and 15). This is the first instance of the literary usage of the term so familiar to us in the names Old Testament and New Testament as designations of the two canons of Scripture. The fact should not be overlooked, however, that even this literary usage has its roots in the Hebrew Scripture since berith there appears as a synonym of thora, law, and consequently like the latter comes to designate the written code as a rule of faith and practice. On the other hand there is no proof that the literary turn given by Paul to the phrase "old diatheke" had anything to do with the apocalyptic custom of representing the alleged oracular utterances of ancient Scriptural personages as their "testament" *e.g.* "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs." The other source is plainly indicated because Paul in the same sense speaks of the reading of Moses and the reading of the old diatheke.

With equal clearness the comparative view-point as inducing the emergence of the conception can be observed in Galatians iv. Here Paul speaks of two contrasting *διαθήκαι*,

i.e. two great religious systems operating by diverse methods and with opposite results, the one a Hagar-diatheke, geographically associated with Mount Sinai, the other a Sarah-diatheke having its local center in the heavenly Jerusalem. There is a difference between this and 2 Corinthians iii. insofar as there the old and the new were contrasted in their original God-willed and God-given character, whilst here in Galatians the Sinaitic-Hagar-diatheke is the old system as perverted by Judaism. But the comparative manner of handling the idea is the same in both passages and in both cases is alike responsible for its introduction.

These are the only instances in the New Testament, apart from Hebrews, where the term is applied to the Christian dispensation. In all other cases its use is purely retrospective, the reference being to the ancient theocratic order of affairs. Coming with the result obtained to Hebrews, it is not difficult to see that here likewise the motive of comparison between the old and the new religious systems very largely underlies the prominent use made of the diatheke-idea. In view of the specific purpose which the writer pursues it was inevitable that this idea should spring into prominence. We need not at this point discuss the problem why the author of Hebrews institutes such a careful and elaborate comparison between the old theocratic and the new fabric of religion. The old view, still widely taken of the matter, is that the readers of the Epistle, by reason of their Jewish descent and Old Testament associations, perhaps also their proximity to the still existing temple-service, were personally and practically interested in the comparative merits of the two systems contrasted and in need of fresh assurance in regard to the superiority of the Christian religion to that of Judaism. In recent times this older view has been steadily losing ground and it has been widely assumed that the interest of both author and readers in the Old Testament mode of religion was produced by theoretical rather than by practical considerations, the Mosaic institutions being used merely as a foil to set off

the excellence of Christianity as the supreme and final religion. As observed, it is immaterial for our present purpose to take sides in this debate for on either view of the question the comparative structure of the Epistle's argument stands out in bold relief. For whatever purpose he did it, the writer plainly wanted to contrast the old dispensation with the new. For doing this he needed a common denominator, and since the old order was to all intents a berith, a *διαθήκη*, the new order had, in order to be commensurable with the other, to be likewise represented under the same aspect. The only other form of which the writer might have availed himself to carry through the comparison was that of law and legal organization. The Epistle actually in a few passages approaches this point of view (vii. 12 "the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of law"; viii. 6 Christ is "Mediator of a better covenant which has been legally enacted upon better promises"). But it is easy to see that, however admirably this might suit the Mosaic order of things, the Christian order could not be adequately described as a new law, since in its fundamental aspects it transcends the category of law and since precisely in this supra-legal character consists a large part of that superiority of the Christian state which the author is intent upon bringing out. The exigency, therefore, of the comparative view-point, here no less than in the case of our Lord and of Paul, brought the diatheke-idea to the front and incorporated it in the new Christian thought-system.

While this explanation of the prominence of the idea in Hebrews is undoubtedly correct so far as it goes, it does not quite satisfy. One cannot help feeling that after all the writer's attitude of mind towards the conception is a somewhat different one from that of Jesus and Paul. With Jesus and Paul the term is taken up for the momentary purpose of comparison and, having served its purpose, allowed to drop out of sight. It exerts no further influence upon the structure of thought. Even what it expresses

might have been expressed in other terms without essentially altering the content of truth. It is not so in Hebrews. Here the diatheke-idea shapes and colours the doctrinal outlook to a considerable degree and in important respects. Though the writer may at first have called it into requisition for formal purposes merely, yet we can clearly perceive how in his hands it outgrows this subsidiary function and leaps to the rank of a valuable concept doctrinally suggestive and stimulating to the author's own mind, fruitful and pregnant with new potentialities of thought. Therefore to take this idea out of Hebrews would have quite different results than would follow its elimination from the teaching of our Lord and Paul. Through its removal the inner organism of the Epistle's teaching would be injured and significant lines and shades of its doctrinal complexion obliterated from our view. Its revelation-value would suffer a real impairment.

In order to show that this is so it will be necessary to face a problem which up to this point we have purposely refrained from injecting into the discussion. The problem concerns the meaning of the word diatheke in its religious usage. The two renderings "covenant" and "testament" have long contended for the supremacy. Of the thirty-three times in which the word occurs in the New Testament the Authorized Version renders it twenty-one times by "covenant" and twelve times by "testament." This already marks a considerable preponderance of "covenant" over "testament". In the Revised Version this preponderance becomes far greater, for here of the twelve instances of "testament" only two remain, so that the proportion according to the Revisers stands thirty-one to two. When the Revised Version was made, therefore, *i.e.* more than three decades ago, the meaning "covenant" seemed in a fair way of dislodging the other rendering from the English Bible. This preference for "covenant" was undoubtedly due in large measure to the presumption in its favor created by the Old Testament. In the Hebrew Scriptures the meaning "testament"

has no standing at all. Proceeding on the legitimate principle that in a matter of this kind harmony and continuity may be assumed to exist between the two canons of Scripture, the translators naturally felt bound to retain "covenant" so long as the import and context of a passage did not absolutely exclude it. At the same time there seems to have persisted in the mind of the Revisers a feeling that their verdict in favor of "covenant" was not absolutely final. They appear not to have been enough convinced to rule the rendering "testament" entirely out of court. In each of the cases where they substitute "covenant" for the "testament" of the Authorized Version they give in the margin "testament" as a possible alternative. And not only this, they offer of their own accord the same marginal alternative in nine additional cases, where the Authorized Version had already "covenant". That is to say, even where the Authorized Version and the Revised Version agreed in favoring "covenant", the Revisers deem it necessary to warn the reader that the possibility of the word meaning "testament" must be reckoned with. As a matter of fact, then, the Revision, so far from decisively settling the question, has by accentuating in so many instances the double possibility of rendering, placed the old problem more than ever in evidence.

That this was a wise suspension of judgment seems to be borne out by the recent course of investigation. If at the time of the Revision "covenant" was gaining on "testament," the rôles have now been reversed. The opinion of writers who of late years have occupied themselves with the subject has been steadily moving away from the rendering "covenant" to the other translation. Even where a stop is made at the half-way station of "disposition", "arrangement" and the specialized meaning of "testament" not insisted upon, the idea of "covenant" is none the less deliberately rejected as inapplicable. In this point Riggenbach and Deissmann and Behm and Lohmeyer all agree. This remarkable veering around of opinion is the result

of a new method of approach to the problem. The linguistic method of settling such a question is at present in the ascendant. The interest of scholars is no longer directed towards giving diatheke a meaning which shall keep it in touch or harmony with Old Testament precedent but exclusively towards explaining it from the common, secular Hellenistic *usus loquendi* at the time when the Septuagint and the New Testament were produced. The discovery and utilisation for New Testament science of the papyri and ostraka has made it possible to turn "the light from the Orient," as upon so many other things, also upon the diatheke-idea. The Septuagint has been studied with the distinct thought in mind that it should not be read in dependence upon the Hebrew original but treated as a linguistically self-explanatory document. Even the classical meaning of the word, in distinction from the later Hellenistic usage, has been exhaustively traced through its several stages and thus a complete history of the development of *διαθήκη* in the Greek language from its earliest emergence down to the eve of the New Testament period and to a much later point, has been laid before us.¹

As a result of all this investigation and discussion it is now claimed by prominent scholars that diatheke in Hellenistic Greek bore and could bear no other meaning than that of "testament" and consequently must have been meant in the same sense by the Septuagint translators and the New Testament writers, at least if we assume that these desired to be understood by their readers. Now, since nothing is more certain than that such a conception of berith as a "testament" is utterly foreign to the intent of the Hebrew Scriptures, the position taken implies that the Seventy by

¹*Cpr.* Riggenbach *Der Begriff Διαθήκη im Hebräerbrief* in the volume of Theological Studies dedicated to Theodor Zahn, 1908; Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten*, second and third ed., 1909; Norton, *A Lexicographical and Historical Study of Διαθήκη from the Earliest Times to the End of the Classical Period*, 1909; Franz Dibelius, *Das Abendmahl*, 1911; Behm, *Der Begriff Διαθήκη im Neuen Testament*, 1912; Lohmeyer, *Διαθήκη*, 1913.

translating as they did committed a stupendous blunder, and that in two directions; first by importing a false idea into the Old Testament, secondly by failing to reproduce the correct idea there found. So far as the Septuagint is concerned, this might not seem in itself such a very serious matter. We do not ascribe to the Greek Old Testament infallibility; its text is not to us a canonical text. None the less the matter is of considerable importance. The seriousness arises from the connection between the Septuagint and the New Testament. For the New Testament writers inherited this blunder from the Seventy. They also took diatheke as "testament" and labored under the same delusion that the berith of the Hebrew Scriptures was to be so understood. In other words there is involved in the case a huge misunderstanding of the Old Testament on the part of the writers of the New.

The advocates of the new view, however, are not much troubled by this. They care as little for the inspiration and infallibility of the New Testament, as we would be apt to care for the inerrancy of the Septuagint. But not only are they not seriously disturbed by the matter, they are enthusiastically elated over it. To their mind it is a most extraordinary case of religious good coming out of linguistic evil. To the cause of religion the Greek translators rendered by their mistake a signal service. The Old Testament idea of the berith, that is of the "covenant", was an idea of very inferior worth and questionable associations, belonging to a low plane of religious development. It is at bottom unworthy of the relation between God and man, ideally considered, to think of the two as contractually united. And, on the other hand, the idea of God issuing a testament, that is making sovereign disposal in matters of religion is an inherently noble conception. Although, therefore, the procedure of the Septuagint cannot be justified philologically, we are invited to hail its result as a great religious gain. Deissmann speaks about it in the following words: "The Bible which conceives of the relation

between God and man as a divine 'testament' moves, with Paul and Augustine, on a higher plane than the Bible (*i.e.* the Hebrew Scriptures) which represents God as making contracts."² And Behm delivers himself to the same effect: "The act of making a contract with its synergism gives way" (through the rendering of the Septuagint) "to the monergism of the sovereign pronouncement by which God prescribes His will to man, either commanding or promising gifts, by way of law or of grace."³

What shall we say to these things? In our humble opinion the conclusion which these scholars arrive at is a mixture of error and truth, both as regards its linguistic side and as regards the comparative estimate they put upon the religious value of the two ideas of "covenant" and "testament" as exponential of the spirit of the older and later Scriptures respectively. To begin with the linguistic aspect of the question, the whole antithesis between *berith* as meaning "covenant" and *diatheke* as meaning "testament" is, in the absoluteness with which it is here advocated, untenable and in the highest degree misleading. To charge the Old Testament, on account of its *berith*-conception, with the doctrine that God synergistically enters into contracts with man is a gross injustice. The fact is that, preoccupied with their own specialty of Hellenistic Greek, the scholars who make this charge have failed to keep up with the progress of Old Testament science. Even if *diatheke* meant "testament" pure and simple in Hellenistic Greek, even then a downright conflict of the Hebrew Bible with this could only be made out by giving *berith* the unqualified modern sense of "covenant" *i.e.* of "contract", "agreement". But the adequacy of such a rendering will no longer be upheld by any reputable Old Testament scholar. The sense of "contract", "agreement" does not belong to the essence of the *berith*-conception at all. This does not mean that sometimes in the

² *Die Hellenisierung des Semitischen Monotheismus*, p. 175, quoted by Lohmeyer, p. 96.

³ *Der Begriff Διαθήκη im Neuen Testament*, p. 31.

Old Testament the berith does not appear in the form of an "agreement" between parties and that this may not be an important feature theologically considered. It only means that even in such cases what constitutes the agreement a berith is not the two-sidedness but something else which equally well can appear where there is no compact at all. This essential element is the absolute confirmation of the arrangement by means of a religious sanction or ceremony; in other words it is the introduction of the divine factor securing stability that gives to the berith its specific character. This is so in the secular berith between man and man; but it is from the nature of the case more emphatically so when God is one of the parties entering into an arrangement with man. The circumstance that in virtue of its berith-character the arrangements must derive its security not from man but from God has for its necessary result that God where He Himself enters as a party acquires in the transaction a monergistic preponderance which from the outset excludes any idea that He parleyed and contractually negotiated with man in a manner derogatory to His divine position. It thus appears that even where there is a reciprocal relationship the berith-aspect of it is the very aspect that keeps it within the bounds of religious dignity and decorum. However bilateral the arrangement may be in its outcome, to God alone belongs the prerogative of initiating it and with Him alone lies the right of determining its content. God never deliberates or bargains with man as to the terms of the berith He condescends to enter into. Man may accept voluntarily but can in no wise modify what the sovereign divine will arranges for him. Thus even in the case of an avowed bilateral berith there already is seen to exist a balance of monergism on the divine side sufficiently strong to exclude every thought of a contractual procedure unworthy of God. But the berith by no means involves such a two-sided arrangement everywhere in the Old Testament. There are numerous instances where the berith is wholly one-sided in its import, where man as-

sumes no obligations but is purely receptive in regard to it, in other words, where it amounts to a solemnly sanctioned promise or disposition on the part of God. Such are the berith made with Noah and that made with Abraham. Further the frequent equivalence of berith and "law" can only be explained on this same principle. The conclusion of the matter, therefore, is that the element of two-sidedness plays a very subordinate rôle in the Old Testament usage of the term berith, and where it does enter, it is very much restricted in scope. The characterization of the Old Testament God as a God making contracts quoted above from Deissmann derives its main support from the rendering "covenant", which, as we have seen, is a very inadequate rendering. If regard is had not to the modern associations of the word "covenant" but to the actual nature of the Biblical berith as ascertained by induction, no ground for criticism on that score exists.

But, although the charge of religious inferiority can not justly be brought against the Old Testament berith-conception, it may still be asked, whether the charge of linguistic conflict between it and the Greek diatheke-idea does not remain? The diatheke may not be something higher or more God-worthy than the berith, but is it not something specifically different, so that after all the Greek Bible places the idea in a false light and deflects it in a wrong direction? For the answer to this question all depends on what the Greek diatheke did actually mean or can have meant to those who equated it to berith. If it could mean and did mean nothing else but "a last will," then the conflict with the sense of berith lies on the surface and there is no use in trying to argue it away. Nor will it do to say that revelation in its progressive development has the right to modify a conception or even to empty it of its old and fill it with a totally new content. For the later Scriptures in this case are not conscious of such a modification or refilling of the form; on the contrary they profess to employ diatheke in such a way as to make it retain its full identity with be-

rith. If the identity does not exist, then it is a case of self-delusion such as can hardly be reconciled with the dignity of revelation. The only recourse, therefore, lies in maintaining that the understanding of diatheke in Hellenistic Greek was not so absolutely tied down to the sense of "testament" as we are asked to believe. This, we believe, can be maintained, without any stretch of the linguistic conscience. The facts appear to be as follows. *Διαθήκη* is a derivative of the verb *διατίθεσθαι* (in the middle voice). The verb means "to order for one's self", "to dispose for one's self". To this general meaning of the verb, the noun must at one time have corresponded in the sense of "arrangement for one's self", "disposition for one's self". But, as is frequently the case with general terms, the noun acquired in course of time a specialized, technical meaning which became so prevalent as to force the original unspecialized signification into the background and practically put it out of use. Diatheke became a term of jurisprudence. In this capacity it had two meanings, the one very common, the other, it seems, more rarely employed. The common meaning was that of "testament", "last will", the rarer one that of "treaty", or "mutually obligating law". This specializing development had already run its course before the close of the classical era, so that in Hellenistic Greek diatheke had become monopolized by jurisprudence as a technical term. Now the question in hand reduces itself to this, whether in the face of a fixed specialized usage the Septuagint, and in its wake the New Testament writers, could attribute to diatheke any other meaning than that of "testament" and still have reasonable ground to believe that in doing this they would be understood by their readers. This question may confidently be answered in the affirmative. It is true that, so far as our knowledge goes, "testament" was the sense commonly connected with the word. But, as already stated, it was not absolutely the only sense; side by side with it, there existed the sense of "treaty" or "mutually obligating law". Even strict adherence to actual usage,

therefore, did not compel the translators or the readers to identify a *diatheke* in every case with a "last will". But, what is of more importance, it should further be remembered that the technical meaning acquired by a word may or may not kill the potentialities inherent in the word for reasserting its old use or making new growth in some other direction. A term can become so technical as to lose all adaptability for wider and freer usage. The Latin words "testamentum" and "sacramentum", and the corresponding English words "testament", "sacrament" are examples of this. In their case the memory of the native sense, which in virtue of their etymology they possessed, has been lost beyond all possibility of resurrection; if any new development occurs it will have to take its point of departure in the technical usage. But it is not necessarily so in every case. A word can become technical and yet a more or less clear consciousness of its original, plastic force and etymological sense may survive enabling the latter to spring into living use whenever the emergencies of expression require it. Now the word *diatheke*, it seems to me, belongs distinctly to this second class. While it had come to mean almost exclusively "testament", the older meaning of "disposition for one's self" "arrangement for one's self", which was the parent of the technical use, had only become momentarily non-active, but could by no means be counted dead and buried. The stock remained alive and capable of sending forth a fresh shoot. We must not overlook the important fact, that, while the noun *διαθήκη* became specialized, the corresponding verb *διατίθεσθαι* did not share to the same extent in this specializing development. Of course, it had to follow the noun into the field of jurisprudence; when *διαθήκη* meant "testament", *διατίθεσθαι* could not help acquiring the sense of "to make a testament". But there was this difference, that the noun practically dropped its other meanings whereas the verb had only gained a new technical adaptation without detriment to its other usage which remained precisely what it was before. To the Greek

mind *διατίθεσθαι* did not necessarily call up the idea of a testamentary transaction; it could express a disposition or arrangement for one's self in any other sphere uncolored by the associations of the law-court or the last will. This, however, could not be without retroactive influence upon the destinies of the noun. The etymology of the noun *διαθήκη* is so perspicuous that it could never be entirely detached from its parent-stock still living with unimpaired vigor in the verb. A *διαθήκη* is so clearly the result of *διατίθεσθαι* that whatever the latter signified, the former also must have remained capable of signifying anew when occasion called for it. If then the Septuagint translators for good reason thought it desirable to detach the term diatheke from the restricted contemporary meaning and revert to its original freer force, the technical usage can have presented no insurmountable obstacle.

The next question is, whether the Septuagint, self-interpreted, suggests anywhere that it wants diatheke to be understood as "testament." It is à priori extremely improbable that this should be the case. A "testament" always carries the implication of the prospective death of the person who makes it. How could such a thought have been applied to God who is throughout the maker of the religious diatheke? In the New Testament the diatheke as a "last will" is once brought into connection with the sacrifice of Christ, once with the promise of God to Abraham. The former case cannot be put on a line with what the translators of the Septuagint are charged with having perpetrated, because Christ, unlike God, is in His human nature subject to death and can appear in the rôle of testator. The other instance (that in Gal. iii.), which actually makes God the testator of the inheritance bequeathed to Abraham, is occasioned by Paul's desire to emphasize the subsequent unchangeableness of the promise. That Paul in an exceptional case and for a concrete reason gives this specific turn to the idea and discounts the element of a contemplated death cannot, of course, give plausibility to the

assumption that the Septuagint associated God with the idea of a "last will" on the broadest scale. It ought also to be noticed how in both these New Testament instances the writers do not content themselves with implying the testamental character of the diatheke, but take particular pains to call our attention to it so that the import of the word in the context cannot possibly be misunderstood. By accentuating this and using the technical terms of jurisprudence the writers reveal that they are conscious of using the religious diatheke in a meaning not normally associated with it. In the Greek Old Testament it is totally different. The translators here give no indication anywhere by their manner of rendering of their desire to have diatheke understood as "testament". It may be said that as translators they were precluded from doing this by their dependence on the original from which every allusion to a "last will" in connection with berith was absent. Still in other cases the translators of the Septuagint have not been restrained by strict adherence to the Hebrew text from injecting or suggesting their own theological ideas and it is certainly strange that in the numerous cases of their employment of diatheke they should have entirely failed to do so. All the more is this to be wondered at, since a direct temptation to underscore the meaning "testament" offered itself in the fact that the Hebrew Scriptures had already associated the two ideas of berith and inheritance. Jehovah in virtue of the berith gives the inheritance of Canaan to Israel. Of course in the original this combination has nothing whatever to do with the idea of the berith as a "last will". But it offered a splendid opportunity for a translator who understood diatheke as "testament" to make his understanding of the matter unmistakable. When nowhere a hint to this effect is given, we may safely conclude that the Septuagint had no special proclivity towards identifying the religious diatheke with a testament.

If not specifically "testament" what then did the diatheke of the Greek translators mean? Would we come nearer

to their intent by saying they meant it in the sense of "covenant"? In our opinion an affirmative answer may be given to this in so far as that which we understand by a "covenant" must have entered in a number of cases as a constituent element into their conception of the berith and of the diatheke, while it is entirely incapable of proof that the idea of a technical testament associated itself for them with these words. They speak sometimes of the diatheke in the same way that the Hebrew Bible speaks of the berith, as a *διαθήκη* *with* and *between* persons, and this certainly suggests that it appeared to them as a mutual agreement. There is reason therefore to believe that their idea of the diatheke was sufficiently wide and elastic to include the covenantal element. And yet the simple equation of diatheke and "covenant" might easily become misleading. The two above-named constructions are not the favorite constructions of the Septuagint. They prefer to speak of a diatheke which God makes *towards* men, and this already suggests that the covenantal idea, while not excluded, is in their mind subordinated to and delimited by another idea. This other idea is that of the sovereign prerogative of God to regulate without human interference the redemptive relation that shall exist between Himself and His people, even though this relation may in the outcome partake of the nature of a mutual fellowship and agreement. That the preference given to diatheke as a rendering for berith actually arises out of consideration for God as the principal factor in the transaction appears from the following: where the berith is made between man and man and consists in a mutual agreement, the translators do not employ *διαθήκη* but *συνθήκη*, a word exactly corresponding to the word covenant; on the other hand, where the berith lies between God and man, even though it possesses equally the character of a mutual agreement, they never employ *συνθήκη* but always *διαθήκη*. Plainly then their avoidance of the former is due to the thought that it connotes something that cannot be properly predicated of

God. The preposition *συν* in *συνθήκη* expresses the co-equality and coëfficiency of the persons concerned in the berith. Such a coëquality and coëfficiency cannot exist between God and man; even where God most condescendingly enters upon a relation of true friendship with man, it is still out of place to conceive of this as a treaty in the ordinary sense. God cannot forego the right of sovereignly framing and imposing the arrangement that shall control the religious intercourse between Himself and man, and that He exercises this right is admirably expressed by the preposition *διὰ* in *διαθήκη*. To this extent and to this extent only we are warranted in saying that the Septuagint shrinks from conceiving of the Old Testament religion as a "covenant." What it wants to avoid is the contractual character of the religious relation in its origin, not its reciprocal character in the outcome. The translators had no interest and could have no interest in representing God as the framer of a "last will" and the conveyor of property. All that they wanted out of *diatheke* was the emphasis which the word enabled them to throw upon the one-sided initiative and the unimpaired sovereignty of God in originating the order of redemption. And fortunately the linguistic usage did allow them to utilize the word for this purpose. Since the original etymological meaning of "a person's free disposition in his own interest" still clearly shows through the specialized sense of "testament", they could fall back upon it and were not compelled to take the technical associations of *diatheke* into the bargain. Had this been otherwise, had the word become so absolutely and irretrievably identified with the conception of a "last will", then the substitution of *διαθήκη* for *συνθήκη* in the sole interest of escaping from the synergistic, contractual implications of *σύν* would have been a desperate remedy. It would have meant for fear of misrepresenting the form to sacrifice the substance of the idea. Surely the Septuagint translators were not foolish enough to affirm, irrespective of all inevitable incongruities, that the berith was a "testament"

simply because in one important respect they could not properly call it a "covenant". Their procedure appears intelligent only on the supposition that they believed diatheke capable of retaining or reacquiring the sense of "disposition". And it should be emphasized that in making diatheke, so understood, the vehicle for conveying the content of the Old Testament berith the Greek translators evince the most exquisite tact. The rendering represents not one of their blunders but one of their most felicitous strokes. The supreme interest they attach to safeguarding the divine dignity and prerogative is not something of later origin and imported by them ab extra into the Old Testament world of thought. On the contrary it constitutes one of the ideas indigenous to the Old Testament revelation itself. Thence and from no other source the Septuagint derived it. They prove themselves in this case excellent craftsmen by reason of their faculty of sympathetic apprehension no less than by reason of their skill in faithful reproduction. In one respect they even improved upon the Hebrew original: for, while in the Hebrew Scriptures the divine sovereignty in regulating the religious life of Israel is uniformly recognized and prevailing colors the representation, it does not find direct expression in the word berith itself. Such expression the makers of the Greek Bible first gave it. They for the first time made the word and the conception cover each other with approximate perfection. And by thus enshrining the concept in the word, they created the means for the conservation and faithful transmission of a great religious treasure to the later Church.

We now approach the question, what data the New Testament passages offer for determining the sense of diatheke. Of course, the answers cannot help being strongly influenced by the conclusion reached regarding the Septuagint usage. Still we must not forget that the New Testament writers lived in a new-created world of redemptive realities and apprehended this world with new-born forms of thought. The possibility should be reckoned with that

the ancient conception of the *διαθήκη* felt the effect of the powerful forces set free in the spheres of redemption and revelation. To what extent, we ask, do the facts show that such was actually the case? At the outset it may be well to moderate our expectation of fresh insight into the content of the idea to be afforded by the manner of its occurrence in the New Testament writings. As already stated, where it is not introduced in a purely retrospective sense but reinstated as a conception remaining permanently applicable to the new order of things ushered in by Christ, this is done largely in a comparative manner, that is to say, without much reflection upon the inherent character of the idea. The new order is a diatheke because the old order was. This is taken for granted rather than consciously realized through apprehension of the continuity of organic structure in both cases. Hence the difficulty of telling in many passages what conception the diatheke in such comparative statements actually called up to the writer's mind. It would be exegetically wrong to seek to elicit answers from such contexts on a question which probably was not present to the consciousness of the author at all. Still even so there are sufficient indications to enable us to affirm that the three senses, "covenant", "authoritative disposition", "testament", are all represented in the New Testament vocabulary. The idea of "covenant" in the specific sense, that is with positive reflection upon the community of interests, the intercourse and fellowship between God and man, is perhaps least in evidence. This does not necessarily mean that it was least familiar to the writers, only it so happens that it obtrudes itself less and its currency is therefore less easily verified. Outside of Hebrews the passages recording the institution of the Supper most clearly attest its presence. To be sure these are the very passages in which a number of modern expositors, Zahn, Deissmann, Dibelius, confidently claim that the meaning "testament" can be established with a strong degree of plausibility. Our Lord here brings the new diatheke into connection with the cup containing His blood,

that is with His death. This invites the interpretation that through His death the new religious basis on which it puts His followers is as a legacy bequeathed to them. In favor of this view a further argument is drawn from Lk. xxii. 29, where, immediately after the institution of the Supper, our Lord speaks of the provision He makes for His followers in the future kingdom and uses to describe this act the word *διατίθεσθαι*, the rendering proposed being: "I bequeath unto you, as my Father bequeathed unto me etc." If the technical use of the verb could here be substantiated it would create a presumption in favor of the technical sense of the noun *διαθήκη* in the immediately preceding institution of the Supper, the more so since the imagery of joint-eating and -drinking with Jesus at His table on the one hand and the eschatological outlook of the Supper, in which Jesus also speaks of the drinking of new wine in the kingdom of God, on the other hand, appear to draw the two statements very closely together. These two arguments, weighty as they may seem at first sight, on closer inspection lose much of their force. It is true our Lord establishes a connection between His death and the new diatheke inaugurated. But this by no means shuts us up to viewing the diatheke as a testament put into effect through the death. The true interpretation of the Lord's Supper is that it appears as a sacrificial meal, to which His death forms the sacrifice. If, therefore, the new diatheke is connected with the death of Jesus, the connection will have to be sought along the line of sacrifice, that is to say, the death must be assumed to give birth to the diatheke in the same capacity and for the same reason which make it the central feature of the sacrament. It is, therefore, à priori probable that the diatheke appears as something inaugurated by a sacrifice, and that is not a "testament" but either a "religious disposition" or a "covenant". The obvious parallel in which Jesus places the blood of the new *διαθήκη* with that of Ex. xxiv., where the blood is none other than the blood of sacrifice inaugurating the Sinaitic berith, also re-

quires this interpretation. And when it is said of the blood as exponential of the death that it is *ὑπὲρ πολλῶν*, "on behalf of many", this yields a thought utterly incongruous to the concept of testament, for a testator does not die in behalf of or with the intent of benefiting his heirs, whereas the benevolent intent of the death of a person fits admirably into the circle of sacrificial ideas. As to the passage from Luke, it is exceedingly doubtful whether the verb *διατίθεσθαι* can there have the technical meaning of "to bequeath" on which the force of the argument depends. Jesus, it will be observed, puts His own *διατίθεσθαι* for the disciples on a line with the Father's *διατίθεσθαι* for Himself. Now the Father's provision of the kingdom for Jesus, from the nature of the case, cannot be considered a testamentary act, since God does not die. This already compels the rendering: "I appoint unto you as my Father appointed unto me", with which we are familiar from our English Bible. To this must be added that the more plausible construction of the sentence makes the object of the *διατίθεσθαι* of Jesus for the disciples something that could hardly be the object of a testamentary disposition. The English versions construe: "I appoint unto you *a kingdom*, even as my Father appointed unto me a kingdom". But for reasons, which it is not necessary here to detail, the construction given by the Revised Version in the margin decidedly deserves the preference. It reads: "I appoint unto you that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, even as my Father *appointed* unto me a kingdom." If the object of Jesus' *διατίθεσθαι* for the disciples were a kingdom, as it is on the ordinary construction, this might properly fall under the rubric of a legacy, but the eating and drinking with a person in his kingdom do not naturally fall within the terms of a bequest. For these reasons we believe that the testamentary idea may safely be eliminated from the institution of the Lord's Supper. As to the choice between the two other meanings "disposition" and "covenant" the latter decidedly deserves the preference. The new diatheke appears from the

point of view of its valuableness to the disciples. This already points to the covenant-idea. More specifically, the benefit conveyed by it consists in the approach to God mediated by the forgiveness of sins. It is equivalent to a new basis of intercourse between God and the disciples. Finally the pointed reference to the berith at Sinai, which was to all intents a two-sided agreement, and to the prophecy of Jeremiah, which speaks of the future new berith as a supreme favor to be bestowed upon Israel shows that the emphasis rests upon the resulting covenantal fellowship rather than upon the divine sovereign initiative that lies back of the new order of things.

A careful study of the Pauline passages yields a somewhat different result. It is true where Paul speaks retrospectively of the *διαθήκαι* as forming part of the distinctions and prerogatives of Israel, as in Rom. ix. 4 and Eph. ii. 12, this might seem to favor the notion of "covenant" as involving a privileged relation to God. But in the passage of Romans the coördination of *διαθήκαι* with such terms as "the promises" and "the law" proves that a one-sided disposition of God could easily be viewed as a favor and distinction conferred upon Israel. In Eph. ii. 12 the phrase "covenants of the promise", in which the genitive is expegetical, yields positive proof that Paul regards the *διαθήκαι* as so many successive promissory dispositions of God, not as a series of mutual agreements between God and the people. Far more energetically however does the Pauline principle of the sole activity of God in the work of salvation draw the diatheke-idea into its service where the latter is considered not by manner of retrospect merely, but is applied on the comparative principle to the Christian system itself. Here every reflection on the covenantal aspect of the new religious relation is absent and the diatheke-idea is pointedly used to bring out how God sovereignly sets in motion and effectually organizes and carries through all that is necessary to securing the religious end contemplated in His purpose. Thus in 2 Corinthians iii. the two

διαθήκαι compared, that of the letter and that of the Spirit, represent two great systems and methods of religious procedure, working themselves out through two corresponding ministries, that of Moses and that of Paul, and thus inevitably shaping the result of human destiny and experience according to their intrinsic law of operation. The old *diatheke* is the system of legal administration: it issues into bondage, condemnation and death. The new *diatheke* is the system of spiritual procreation and endowment prevailing through Christ: it produces liberty, righteousness and life. The sense of contract is not only absent here: one may perhaps go so far as to say that the introduction of it would have jarred upon the singlemindedness wherewith the Apostle pursues the opposite element in the conception, that of the divine sovereignty and monergism of procedure. Only, over against Deissmann it should be observed that Paul pursues this principle in a thoroughly impartial way, with reference equally to the Old Dispensation, and to the New. In speaking of the order of grace as a *diatheke* in this one-sided divinely-monopolized sense, Paul is not conscious of imparting to the *diatheke* a different character from that which it bore previously. The legal order of things is as little a contract here as that which took its place: it was according to Paul a *diatheke* in the same absolute, sovereign way as the Gospel-order of things. The form is the same, the content poured into it differs; and the form as such is indifferent to the distinction between grace and works. Although there was an agreement at Sinai, in Paul's view it was evidently of such an origin and nature that it could be equally well represented as the result of a divine disposition and the name *diatheke* employed with exclusive reference to this its source in the activity of God.

The contrast between the Hagar-*diatheke* and the Sarah-*diatheke* in Galatians iv. 24 proceeds along similar lines. That the Hagar-*diatheke* here stands for the old Sinaitic system, not in its original divine intent but in its Judaistic perversion, creates no formal difference; the *diatheke* is

viewed here as in 2 Corinthians iii. as a project and organism determining religious status, bearing, propagating itself, as the figure strikingly expresses it, unto liberty as unto bondage.

The term is placed at the farthest remove from every association with "covenant" by Paul's way of handling it in Galatians iii. There can be little doubt that here the desire to throw the strongest possible emphasis on the supremacy of the principle of promise and grace in Old Testament history has induced the Apostle to compare the Abrahamic diatheke to a "testament". That Paul here has in mind a "testament" follows from two considerations: first, the legal terminology employed is derived from testamentary law and is such as was not used in connection with covenants or legal dispositions generally; second, in the context the idea of the *inheritance* is pointedly associated with the diatheke. The Apostle means to say, the gracious principle on which God pledged to Abraham and in him to all believers the inheritance of salvation was as absolutely immutable, as absolutely incapable of being modified or replaced by the subsequent law-giving, as if it had been a testamentary disposition: "A testament, though it be but a man's testament . . . no man makes void or adds thereto" . . . even so "a testament confirmed by God beforehand, the law which came four hundred and thirty years after doth not disannul so as to make the promise of none effect." To our minds it might easily seem as if the idea of a "testament" were poorly adapted to bring out the character of immutability which Paul wishes to emphasize. A "testament" as we know it might more easily be a figure for changeableness than the opposite, for until the testator dies it is subject to repeated modification or absolute recall. How then can Paul say: "*no one* maketh it void or addeth thereto." It has been proposed to take "no one" in the sense of "no one except the testator". But Paul evidently means "no one, not even the testator", and the purpose for which he employs the representation requires him to mean

it so, for the point is precisely this, that not even the testator, God, could subsequently through the giving of the law have modified the arrangement made with Abraham. It is plain, therefore, that here is a "testament" which, once made, cannot be changed. Professor Ramsay, I believe, has furnished the solution to this difficulty by calling attention to the difference between the testament of Roman law and a kind of testament possible under Syro-Grecian law.⁴ The Roman testament, as we know it, is changeable till the testator dies, but under the Syro-Grecian law a prospective disposition of property could be made during the lifetime of the possessor, frequently carrying with it adoption, which after having been once sanctioned in public immediately carried with it certain effects and was not after that subject to modification. Comparing the berith God made with Abraham to such a diatheke Paul could within the terms of the representation properly say that God could not have meant to change its fundamental character as a dispensation of grace and promise through the later giving of the law at Sinai, and that therefore the law may not be interpreted on a legalistic principle but must be subsumed under the Abrahamic arrangement as a means to an end. Perhaps it will be said that Paul by giving this turn to the diatheke has imported into it what the berith-idea of Gen. xv. did not contain, in other words, that in saying God meant it so when making the promise to Abraham, the Apostle is historically at fault. The charge would be warranted, of course, if Paul had used this peculiar testamentary conception for a different purpose than that for which in Genesis the berith-idea is introduced. But this is by no means the case. The purpose for which in the one case the form of the berith, in the other case that of the "testament" comes in, is absolutely identical. The berith with Abraham was not a covenantal berith at all. It was a disposition-berith in the strictest sense, intended exclusively by God for the purpose of binding Himself in the strongest

⁴ *Expositor*, 1899, pp. 57 ff.

possible way by His own promise, and so rendering the promise unalterably sure. It is for nothing else than for faithfully translating this import of the berith into the thought-form of his readers and so bringing it home to their understanding that Paul says God made with Abraham a testamental diatheke. Under the circumstances this amounted to saying: the berith God made with Abraham was as unchangeable as a diatheke is among you. It simply accentuates, in the most emphatic way, what to the narrator of Genesis himself is the salient point of the transaction.

Before returning to Hebrews, we must cast a glance at the use of the conception in the two cases where Luke records it. In the Gospel i. 72 the diatheke is equivalent to the promise given to the fathers; the parallelism in which it stands with the "oath" of God proves this: "to remember his holy diatheke, the oath which He swore unto Abraham, our father." In the other passage, Acts iii. 25, Peter addresses the Jews as "sons of the prophets" and "sons of the diatheke which God made with the fathers". "Sons of the prophets" of course does not mean "descendants of the prophets" but "heirs of what the prophets have predicted". Similarly "sons of the diatheke does not mean "begotten by the diatheke", but "heirs of what the diatheke conveys in the way of blessing". This, of course, admits, though it by no means positively requires the construction of the diatheke as a "testament". "Heirs of a testament-diatheke" is a more suggestive, and more directly self-explanatory form of statement than "heirs of a disposition-diatheke". But it can not be said that the latter interpretation is in itself unnatural. "Sons of the berith" for "heirs of the promise of the berith" is as allowable a figure, as good Semitic idiom, as "sons of the prophets" for "heirs of the predictions of the prophets". But, whether the notion of "testament" be found here or not, it is at any rate clear that the Lucan and Petrine usage in these two passages agrees with the prevailing Pauline mode of representation. Peter, like

Paul, emphasizes the sovereign promissory source of God's dealings with His people and does not reflect in the present connection upon the reciprocal relation resulting from it. In passing it may be remarked that in Stephen's speech, Acts vii. 8, "the diatheke of circumcision" means nothing else but "the law, ordinance of circumcision". The reference is to Gen. xvii., where the word berith has the same sense. The author of Genesis, who in chapter xv used the term berith in the sense of a promise, here takes it as "law", "appointment". He did not mean that God in the same sense twice made a berith with the patriarch. First God gave a promise-berith, then He imposed a law-berith. So Genesis intends it and so Stephen quotes it.

We are now ready to return to Hebrews and bring to bear upon it the light we have obtained from the remainder of the New Testament. In view of what has been found, it is not likely that diatheke bears in the Epistle the uniform meaning of "testament". Riggenbach's assertion to this effect is staked on the fact that in ix. 16, 17 the necessity of rendering "testament" is self-evident, and that this one passage must be considered regulative for the author's understanding of the term throughout. The major premise of this argument is unassailable. The wording of the statement in the passage named compels us to think of a testament: "where a diatheke is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it, for a diatheke is of force where there has occurred death: for does it ever avail while he that made it liveth?" Besides this, the purposeful introduction of technical law-terms is just as noticeable here as in Galatians iii. Of course there have been exegetes who thought they could even here adhere to the meaning "covenant". Westcott is one of these.⁵ He thinks that the necessity of death dwelt upon in the passage has nothing to do with the legal decease of a testator, but relates to sacrificial death. According to him the thought is: a covenant cannot go into effect except a sacrificial victim have died. It does not, of

⁵ *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 265.

course, escape Westcott that the author, instead of saying this, makes the quite different assertion, a covenant cannot go into effect except the *covenant-maker* have died. How can that possibly be explained on the principle of sacrifice? Westcott appeals for explaining it to the idea of identification between the offerer and his sacrifice, so that when the animal dies the offerer, in this case the covenant-maker, dies with it. "He who makes a covenant is, for the purposes of the covenant, identified with the sacrificial victim, by whose representative death the covenant is ordinarily ratified. In the death of the victim his death is presented symbolically." In other words the author of Hebrews meant really to say: "A covenant cannot go into effect except in his sacrificial substitute the covenant-maker has first died." There can be no objection to the symbolical-vicarious interpretation of sacrifice in general or of covenant-sacrifice in particular. We believe most thoroughly in its soundness. But that does not answer the question why the author of Hebrews should in this passage have found it necessary to call attention to the fact that not merely the sacrifice but in the sacrifice the covenant-maker dies, and that only so the covenant can go into effect. Westcott himself feels the necessity of accounting for this peculiar form of statement, and therefore offers the additional explanation that the death of the covenant-maker in the sacrifice serves to express the idea of the subsequent unchangeableness of the covenant: "the unchangeableness of the covenant is seen in the fact that he who has made it has deprived himself of all further power of movement in this respect." The man is dead and can no longer act. On the impossibility of this explanation the whole exegesis breaks down. The idea of unchangeableness, irrevocableness of the covenant, on which Westcott would suspend it, is foreign to the context. What the writer wants to prove by the death of Christ is not the subsequent unchangeableness or irrevocableness of the diatheke but its sure effectuation. Herein lies precisely the difference between Gal. iii. and this ix. chapter of Hebrews. Paul says

no one *annuls* or *adds* thereunto; our author says: a diatheke *avails, is of force, goes into effect* when a person dies. Besides this, if the writer had actually wanted to express the thought of irrevocableness and unchangeableness, the representation of the diatheke as a testament in the Roman-law-sense would have lain far nearer to his hand and be far more suited to his purpose, than this tortuous, artificial appeal to symbolic suicide of the covenant-maker in his sacrifice. Still further, the full absurdity of the exegesis is felt only when the attempt is made to apply the principle in question to the death of Jesus. Can we say that the covenant inaugurated by Jesus through the sacrifice of Himself is now irrevocable and unchangeable because, the covenant-maker now being dead, the covenant is ipso facto exempted from all danger of change or annulment? The case of Jesus is precisely peculiar in this, that He does not remain dead; the whole ingenious device of proving the unchangeableness from the death would be a mere pretense at argument, lacking all cogency for the case in hand. We may, therefore, confidently dismiss this exegesis as impossible. The diatheke in Heb. ix. 16, 17 is nothing else but a "testament", and its testamentary aspect serves the single purpose of bringing out the certainty of its effectuation. Just as the death of a testator under the Roman law automatically puts into effect his last will, even so the death of Christ with absolute inevitability secures all the effects for which it was intended.

Now, Riggenbach's major premise being thus granted, are we bound to accept his conclusion, that diatheke must uniformly throughout the Epistle mean the same thing that it means here? We think not. There are several considerations that lead us to believe that the treatment of the diatheke as a "testament" is a peculiarity of this one passage and not representative of the author's ordinary view. The very fact that the author takes great pains by the use of legal terminology to call the reader's attention to the possibility of construing the diatheke as a "testament" operates

against the view that it should ordinarily have been so understood either by him or by the readers. Then there is the important phenomenon that the author immediately before and after the passage under discussion predicates things of the diatheke which do not properly belong to a "testament". In verse 15 the death of Christ is said to have taken place for the redemption from transgressions committed under a former diatheke. "Transgressions" do not naturally invalidate a "testament", but do have a disannulling effect upon a "covenant" or a "disposition." And in verse 18 the writer says: "Wherefore even the first diatheke has not been *dedicated* without blood". It is plain that here already the idea of "testament" has been again dismissed as suddenly as it had been introduced; the author has shifted back to his ordinary conception of the diatheke as a "covenant" or a "disposition", for to a "testament" the idea of "dedication" does not apply. Evidently the writer finds it difficult to keep himself well within the terms of the figurative, accommodating use to which for the moment he is led to put the conception. Finally it is still possible to point out what it was that first suggested to the author the rendering "testament" as a means of which he might avail himself to set forth impressively the effectiveness of the death of Christ. This was nothing else than the mention of "the inheritance" at the close of verse 15: "For this cause is He the mediator of a new diatheke that a death having taken place for the redemption from the transgressions that were under the first diatheke, they who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." The author in speaking of the inheritance is at first still unconscious of the train of thought which it may open up. But no sooner has he written down the word than all at once the possibility of attaching the inheritance to the diatheke in the sense of "testament" suggests itself to him and he is quick to see the striking use that may be made of it in furtherance of his argument. But the novel turn given to the word under such circumstances offers no indication of the meaning con-

nected with it elsewhere in the Epistle. To assume that it signifies "testament" elsewhere we need other evidence than this single passage. And such evidence does not exist. In none of the other contexts where *diatheke* occurs is there anything that even remotely suggests the idea of a last will. And against it speaks decisively the representation of Jesus as the sponsor and mediator of the new *diatheke*. Neither of these two functions that of a sponsor or that of a mediator appear among the legal accompaniments of a testament.

But if not the idea of a testament, what then is the idea which our Epistle ordinarily connects with the word *diatheke*? The answer is that both the other aspects of the conception so far found in the earlier documents are here represented with a fair degree of equilibrium. The usage of our Lord, who spoke of a "new covenant", and that of Paul, who practically everywhere views the *diatheke* as a divine disposition, both reappear in Hebrews, and they are not merely mechanically held together but organically and harmoniously united. The Epistle speaks the last word in the Biblical development of the *berith-diatheke* idea and that not only in point of chronology but likewise as giving the idea its full-orbed, consummate expression. And this is due to the fact previously alluded to, that the writer of Hebrews is positively interested in the conception, loves it for its own inherent character, finds it congenial to his own religious idiosyncrasy, and so is able to penetrate it with his thought and raise it to the highest state of doctrinal fruitfulness. The two aspects distinguishable in the *diatheke* correspond closely to the two poles between which the religious thinking of the author moves. His thinking would have partaken of this twofold character even if the *diatheke*-idea had remained unknown to him; the latter is by no means the source of his doctrine but, as a reagent, it has materially contributed to the strengthening and clarifying of the two great thoughts that existed and worked in the writer's mind apart from it. Let us look at each of these

two thoughts separately and at the corresponding elements in the diatheke with which they are found interacting.

In studying the Epistle it soon becomes clear that it deals with the diatheke from two different points of view. In a number of passages it appears as an institution established and set in operation for an ulterior end. This is in line with the understanding of the diatheke as a divine disposition, and leaves out of regard its character as a state of fellowship with God, in which latter respect it is not, of course, a means to an end, but an absolute end in itself. It is true the direction to an ulterior purpose admits of being combined with the idea of a covenant: a covenant between two parties can serve to realize some extrinsic end. As a matter of fact, however, while this may be so in the abstract, the concrete statements of the Epistle in regard to the ends which the diatheke subserves are such as to exclude the idea of their being reached by a "covenant" and fit in only with the idea of a system or disposition. The instrumental diatheke appears in the following ways. Back of the diatheke stand the promises, and it is for the fulfillment of the promises that the diatheke has been instituted. Hence it is said to have been enacted upon the basis of promises, inferior promises in the case of the first diatheke, better ones in the case of the second. The diatheke further appears as a means to the end of the *τελειωσις*, i.e. the attainment of the religious goal of approach to and communion with and service of God. Here, it will be seen, the fellowship with God, which we ordinarily associate with the covenant-idea appears as lying above and beyond the diatheke, as the end lies above and beyond the means.

Over against this we may place other passages in the Epistle which represent the diatheke as the realisation of the religious ideal and therefore as an end in itself. In viii. 10, in the passage quoted from Jeremiah, the diatheke is held to consist in this, that Jehovah is the God of Israel, and Israel to Jehovah a people. The life of the people of God is essentially an intercourse with God and this inter-

course appears in ix. 14, 15 as the very essence of the diatheke. The diatheke is also called a *διαθήκη αἰώνιος*, "an everlasting covenant", chap. xiii. 20, and this implies that in it the whole religious process comes to rest: for the predicate *αἰώνιος* in Hebrews expresses not only endless duration but inclusion among the eternal realities which have absolute value and significance in themselves. Now it is plain that in this second absolute aspect the character of the diatheke can only be expressed by the rendering "covenant". It is only as a "covenant" and not as a disposition that it lends itself to being eternalized after this fashion.

These two principal aspects of the diatheke answer perfectly to the two outstanding features of the Epistle's teaching. The first of these consists in the emphasis placed upon the absoluteness, sovereignty and majesty of God and the monergistic divine initiative and prosecution of the work of salvation. In various ways, altogether apart from the diatheke-conception, this finds expression. God is the Majesty on high (i. 3), the one for whom are all things and through whom are all things, whom it therefore behooves, even through great suffering with sovereign hand to carry through His saving purpose (ii. 10), the living God (ix. 15, xi. 31), a consuming fire (xii. 29). But in keeping with this the writer vindicates for God not merely the original planning and inception but also the further effectual carrying out of the work of redemption. There are various servants in the house of God, and Christ is even a son over the house, but the principle remains in force: "He that built all things is God" (iii. 5). And how this thought of the underlying divine initiative and energizing flows together with the diatheke-idea may be seen from the doxology in xiii. 20, 21: it is the God who omnipotently brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, with the blood of the eternal diatheke, who also makes the believers perfect in every good thing to do His will, working in them that which is well-pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ. On this principle it is further to be explained that

the new diatheke can be represented as a new species of legislation. God has enacted it. The reason is not that it is legalistic in content or import, but simply that God has instituted it with the same supreme authority with which He promulgates His law. How much weight the author attaches to this point may be seen from the change introduced in ix. 20 into the quotation from Ex. xxiv. 8. Here the Septuagint reads: "this is the blood of the diatheke which God *disposed* (*διέθετο*) towards you". The writer substitutes for this: "the blood of the diatheke which God *commanded* towards you." In line with this conception of the diatheke as a divine arrangement carrying the pledge of its unfailing effectuation in itself is also the function of *λεμότης* and *ἔγγυος* performed by Christ in connection with it. Of the latter term *ἔγγυος*, to be rendered as "sponsor", this is plain on the surface. Christ is the "sponsor" of the diatheke insofar as He guarantees the fulfilment of the promises to which the diatheke has reference. The term is not a technical term either in connection with a "testament" or a "covenant" and it most naturally attaches itself to the understanding of diatheke as a divine promissory dispensation. It forms the connecting link between the diatheke and the important rôle which the word "promise", "promises", plays in the Epistle. As for *μεσίτης*, the English literal rendering of the word by "mediator" is apt to lead to the premature conclusion that it goes with the diatheke as a two-sided covenantal agreement and marks Jesus as the one who brings the two parties together by mediating between them. While *μεσίτης* has this meaning in the Greek language of law, its legal use is by no means restricted to it and at least three other meanings have been fully established as equally current.⁶ We shall not weary

⁶ The other three meanings are: 1) the person with whom parties at law deposit the object in litigation until the suit has been decided; 2) the witness who vouches for the veracity of a statement; in this sense the verb *μεσιτεύειν* is used in chap. vi 17 God pledged Himself with an oath for the truthfulness of His promise; 3) the person who vouches for the execution of engagements made; in this sense *μεσίτης* becomes synonymous with *ἔγγυος*.

the reader with an account of the recent discussions on this point: suffice it to say that the trend of present scholarship is towards considering *μεσίτης* and *ἔγγυος* as entirely synonymous in the vocabulary of the writer of Hebrews. The *μεσίτης* is he who guarantees for God the sure accomplishment of what has been stated or promised in the *διαθήκη*. So taken the word, no less than *ἔγγυος*, becomes a witness to the prominence in the writer's mind of the sovereign, promissory aspect of the diatheke.

The other aspect of the diatheke, that of covenantal fellowship and intercourse with God appealed equally much, if not more, to the religious temperament of the writer. It has long been observed that the type of Christianity represented by the Epistle is peculiar in the almost exclusive emphasis it places upon the exercise of religion in the conscious sphere. The important subconscious processes, sometimes designated as mystical, which play so large a rôle in the Pauline teaching, are very little in evidence in Hebrews. Hence also the Spirit as the author and bearer of this hidden subconscious union with God and Christ is seldom referred to. Where the Holy Spirit is mentioned in Hebrews it is as the source of the extraordinary charismata, and even here His operation is highly personal, for He is said to distribute these gifts according to His own will (ii. 4). It would be foolish, of course, to attribute the absence of this specifically Pauline strand of teaching to the author's ignorance or denial of it. The many and intimate relations with Paul's type of doctrine in other respects forbid us to assume any conscious departure or opposition here. But without ignoring or denying the deeper and more mysterious underground of the religious process, the author could feel himself more strongly drawn towards exploring and cultivating the more advanced stage of the process, for whose sake all previous operations exist, its blossoming out into conscious Christian experience. The author of Hebrews is a great spiritualizer. The efflorescence of religion in the clear luminous regions of the believer's noëtic life evokes

his supreme interest. In several important connections we can trace the influence of this spiritualizing factor in the shaping of his thought. These will afterwards receive separate attention. For the present it suffices to observe that to a mind thus spiritually oriented the interpretation of religion in terms of the covenant was bound to offer a special attraction. For it is precisely in religion as a covenant-religion that everything is reduced to ultimate, spiritual, conscious values. The new covenant is the ideal covenant because in it the will and law of God are internalized, put on the heart and written upon the mind. Here its nature as a covenant can first freely and perfectly unfold itself.

The full significance, however, of this interlocking of the principle of spirituality in religion and the covenant-idea will not be perceived until we remember in the next place that the spiritualizing tendency of the Epistle is of a peculiar, God-centered kind, and that only in this specific form it perfectly fits into the covenant-type of religion. We do not hesitate to say that in hardly any New Testament writing is the essential character of the Christian religion as consisting in face to face intercourse with God, mediated by Jesus Christ, so clearly realized and so pointedly brought out as in our Epistle. The supremacy of the spiritual, when closely looked at, is only a result of drawing every religious state and act into the immediate presence of God, where nothing but the spiritual can abide. To be a Christian is to live one's life not merely in obedience to God, nor merely in dependence on God, nor even merely for the sake of God; it is to stand in conscious, reciprocal fellowship with God, to be identified with Him in thought and purpose and work, to receive from Him and give back to Him in the ceaseless interplay of spiritual forces. It is this direct confrontation of the religious mind with God which finds in the covenant-idea its perfect expression. To be in covenant with God,—what finer and what more adequate definition of the perfect religious life could be conceived than this? The classical formula in which already under the Old Testament

God Himself expresses His conception of the covenant and which through Jeremiah has descended to our author reads: "I shall be to them a God and they shall be to me a people", and "All shall know me from the least to the greatest." According to this the covenant means that God gives Himself to man and man gives Himself to God for that full measure of mutual acquaintance and enjoyment of which each side to the relation is capable. The highest concrete analogy for this is that offered by the prophet Hosea when he compares the berith between Jehovah and the people to the marriage-bond between husband and wife, which when perfect leaves no room for divided interests or possessions. Some of the Psalms also reach the same high altitude where the soul rises above every thought of self, even above the consciousness of its own need of salvation, and desires and receives God for His own sake.

Let us now endeavor to trace the influence which this covenantal understanding of the relation between God and man has exerted upon the theology of the Epistle. And first of all its doctrine of revelation must be considered here. The Epistle makes much of the fact that God has revealed Himself to His people. In part, of course, this is accounted for by the supernaturalism which the writer has in common with all the Biblical writers. No redemptive religion, however conceived, covenantal or otherwise, can dispense with the basis of divine, supernatural self-disclosure. But there are perceptible differences in the way in which the several types of Biblical teaching account for this necessity and in the statement of the supreme end which they make it subserve. Special, supernatural revelation is necessary for a soteriological reason, because man in his sinful, lost, helpless condition is dependent on the sovereign, gracious approach of God in word and act to recover his normal religious state. As such, revelation bears an instrumental saving character. This view of it also Hebrews shares with the other New Testament writings. Revelation, however, alongside of this, and even

through all its saving activity also serves the purpose of establishing as from God to man that train of personal communication in which the end of religion consists. In this aspect one might define it as divine speech for the sake of divine speech; God reveals Himself, because in His love for His own and interest in them it is natural for Him to open up and communicate Himself. Revelation in a sense is the highest that God has to give because in it He gives Himself. And while in the ordinary understanding of it revelation is in order to salvation, the reversed sequence also can lay claim to recognition: salvation is in order to prepare man for further, perpetual revelation carrying its right of existence in itself. Such speech of God existed in the state of rectitude; such will continue to exist in the eschatological state of the world to come, when all abnormality of sin and every need of salvation shall have been forever surmounted. And, as already intimated, even in the soteric process of revelation this higher and ultimate function of it finds simultaneous employment. All saving transactions are so many approaches, so many occasions of meeting between God and man in which the forces of help become fountains of love, God the great physician of souls making friends of all His patients. Now it is in the emphasis placed upon this specifically religious aspect of revelation that the influence of the covenant-idea can be clearly traced in our Epistle. It is not accidental, that the first sentence with which the writer opens his discourse reads: "God having spoken . . . spake." It is as a speaking God that he grasps Him and desires to bring Him in touch with the readers. And the word also that is employed in this first sentence and prevailingly afterwards to describe the revelation-speech of God deserves notice in this connection. It is the verb *λαλεῖν*, a verb used in the New Testament with reference to the speech of God outside of Hebrews only in John and Acts and which brings out most strikingly the idea of familiar intercourse, denoting speech not primarily for the purpose of conveying information but for

the purpose of maintaining fellowship. Further the verb *διαλέγεσθαι*, expressive of the two-sided mutually responsive speech that takes place between God and man may here be mentioned as entering into the author's vocabulary. Because the divine word is not merely for instruction or salvation but brings God personally near to the believer, it becomes in itself an object of enjoyment, hence the Epistle speaks of tasting the good word of God (vi. 5). And it is further in agreement with this personal, practical view taken of revelation when, throughout, the direct provenience of the word from God is emphasized. In a very striking way God regularly appears as the speaking subject in the quotations made from the Old Testament. Where Paul contents himself with the formula, "as it is written", or "as the Scripture says", Hebrews prefers to make the affirmation of the divine authorship explicit and employs the formula "God says". That this is not the result of meaningless habit, but possesses doctrinal significance, appears from the cases, where, rhetorically considered, it would be unnatural to introduce God as the speaking subject, since in the passage quoted He is the Person spoken of. Even in such cases the author insists upon emphasizing that the statement about God came from the mouth of God Himself. It is God who said "the Lord shall judge His people (x. 30). And so vivid is the realisation of this supreme fact of the direct divine authorship of Scripture that what we call the secondary authors, that is, the writers of the Biblical books, are, again in distinction from Paul's custom, scarcely ever mentioned. The only case where the name of a Bible writer is introduced is chap. iv. 7, and even here the phrase is not "David saying" but "God saying in David." There are even passages where pains seem to have been taken to bring out the relative unimportance of the secondary authorship by more positive means than the mere omission of the writer's name. In a couple of instances use seems to have been made for this purpose of the indefinite pronoun "some one" and the indefinite adverb "some-

where": "One has *somewhere* testified saying" (ii. 6); "For He hath spoken *somewhere* of the seventh day on this wise" (iv. 4). By this manner of statement the impression is conveyed that in view of the authority wherewith God invests every word of Scripture the human instrumentality through which the divine word was mediated becomes a matter of little or no importance. As a matter of fact the word of revelation is so literally to the writer's mind the word of God that it is represented as having been spoken by God being locally present in His messengers: "God of old times spoke unto the fathers *in* the prophets"; "God said *in* David". The conception is not instrumental, as if "in" were a Hebraizing construction for "by means of"; it should rather be compared with the similar form of statement by our Lord to the disciples: "it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you" (Mat. x. 20), and by Paul who offers to the Corinthians a proof of Christ speaking in him (2 Cor. xiii. 3).

But, while this immediateness of the approach of God to man through His word is made a characteristic of all revelation, and found illustrated in the Old Testament Scriptures, the writer evidently associates it in the highest degree with the New Covenant. Over against the many portions and the many modes in which the ancient speech of God came to the people in the several prophets, he places that uniform and undivided revelation that was concentrated in Him who is a Son. The purpose for which the author draws this contrast is precisely to exalt the New Covenant by reason of the absolutely unmediated and most intimate union with man upon which in it through Christ God's revelation-speech has entered. Revelation in a Son is superior to that in prophets and superior to that in angels because as Son of God Christ is the effulgence of the divine glory and the expressed image of the divine substance, in no wise differing from God Himself, so that to hear His voice is to hear in the most literal sense God's own voice and to come in direct touch with the divine life expressing

itself in the divine word. It is characteristic of the Epistle that, in connection with the revealing office of Christ, it places all the stress upon His divine nature, whereas in connection with His priestly office, the reality of His human nature is strongly emphasized. Both features are explainable from the covenant-idea. In regard to the priestly function we shall have occasion to show this later on. At this point it may be observed that the ideal revelation, if it is to fulfill its covenant-purpose of establishing real contact between God and man, can have no other than a strictly divine Mediator. Otherwise the bearer of the divine word would intervene between the covenant-God and the covenant-people and stand as a barrier to the close union contemplated. The perfect identification of Christ with God, therefore, is necessary to the belief that the Son has brought the highest and final revelation and raised the covenant-intercourse to a point beyond which it cannot be perfected. This can be observed most clearly perhaps on the negative side. Repeatedly the readers are warned in the Epistle that unbelief over against the New Testament revelation and rejection of its Gospel are a far more serious offense and must be followed by far more tremendous consequences than a similar line of conduct under the old dispensation. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation (ii. 1-3)?" And "A man that hath set at naught Moses' law dieth without compassion on the testimony of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith He was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace" (x. 28-30)? "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not when they refused Him that gave oracles

on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that gives oracles from Heaven" (xii. 25, 26). In such passages the revelation mediated by angels and by Moses and by the prophets is represented as imposing a lesser degree of responsibility than that mediated by Christ. Now the reason for this cannot lie in the fact that the angelic or Mosaic or prophetic message was insufficiently authenticated as to its divine origin or less completely derived from God. On the contrary the author explicitly states that the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, *βέβαιος*, and the same thing is emphasized regarding the Mosaic revelation at Sinai: neither of these could be disobeyed with impunity. But neither of these two, nor even the prophetic word, could be placed on a line with the revelation in Christ because here the word spoken comes invested with the divine majesty which it derives from the unique organ of its transmission, the Son of God. The measure of responsibility here evidently is not the truthfulness of the message, for that is alike in all true revelation, but the closeness of contact with God that is effected. Under the Old Testament there was not that immediateness and directness which the author claims for the self-disclosure of God in Christ. Between God and the people there stood the angels and Moses; between God and us stands only the Son. And, strictly speaking, even this is an incorrect form of statement which fails to reproduce the author's intent at its most vital point: as regards Christ, no intervention between God and us in the matter of revelation can be affirmed. By Christ's activity in this sphere absolutely nothing is detracted from the immediacy of the divine approach to man. Hence "the word of Christ" (vi. 1) is spoken of in precisely the same sense as is ordinarily connected with "the word of God", and in which "the word of Moses" or "the word of the prophets" could never be referred to. A stronger proof of the author's belief in the deity of our Lord than this whole representation that God spake under the Old Covenant through inter-

mediate organs but under the New Covenant in Christ directly cannot be conceived.

But the practical character of revelation as a covenant-speech shows itself in still another way. The Epistle conceives of the divine word as not merely proceeding from God originally, but as also remaining in living contact with God ever afterwards. God continues to stand back of His revelation, nay abides immanent in it. The Scriptures of the Old Testament and the word spoken in Christ are as personal an address from God to the later generations as they were to those who first heard the divine voice proclaim them. The author is at the farthest remove from considering the word by itself as a detached deposit of truth separated from the mind that conceived or the mouth that spoke it, having its own objective existence. It is significant that all his statements on this subject refer to revelation in terms of speech and not in terms of writing. The speech is an organic, living process, a part and function of the speaking person, whereas the written communication is only a picture or symbol of the life-process it reproduces. But God's word, even when written, has this peculiarity that it retains the character of inspired, vitalized speech, opening up the depths of the divine mind and addressing itself in the most direct face-to-face way to the inner personality of the hearer. So vividly does the author realize this, that in a well-known passage it leads him to a formal personification of the *λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ* in which attributes and activities are predicted of the word, belonging, strictly speaking, to God Himself only, and in which a remarkable transition is made from the word to God as coordinate subjects in the same sentence: "The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, both in their joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in *His* sight; but all things are naked and open before the eyes of *Him* with whom we have to do"

(iv. 12-14). Misled by the vividness of the personification some have thought that the author here speaks of Christ as the personal Logos after the manner of the Johannine teaching. But of the Logos-Christ it would have been unnecessary to affirm with such pointed emphasis that in His operation He is living and active and incisive, because His personality is self-evident, and what the writer by means of these predicates here wants to affirm of the word of God is nothing else than that it works as a personal agent upon the soul of man as a personal reagent. God acts in and through His word and thus the word has the same power and effect that belong to God Himself. Especially the figure of the sword searching the vitals and laying bare the inner attitude and disposition of man is very striking. Because the word of God confronts man with God personally he cannot in the presence of it remain neutral and treat it after an indifferent, disinterested fashion; it is a challenge to his soul that must provoke reaction and incite to faith or unbelief according to the inner disposition of the heart with reference to God.

Owing to this permanent identification of God with His word, the lapse of time is not able to detract aught from the freshness and force that belonged to the self-disclosure of God at its first historic occurrence. It is not necessary to project one's self backward through the interval of the ages in order to feel near to the source of the revelation. The fountain of the living water flows close to every believer. The author might have said with Moses and Paul: "Say not who shall ascend into heaven, or who shall descend into the abyss? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart: such is the word of faith which we preach" (Rom. x. 6-8; Deut. xxx. 12-14). It is true, the Epistle speaks not only of the *καινή* but also of the *νέα διαθήκη* and the latter phrase represents the new covenant as fresh and recent in comparison with the more remote Mosaic revelation. It should, however, be observed that, although the Epistle is addressed to Christians of the second generation,

it none the less conceives of its readers as in the most immediate sense made recipients of the divine word spoken by Christ and through that word brought into no less direct communion with the supernatural world than the cotemporaries of the earthly life of Jesus. God spake unto the fathers in the prophets: He spake in a Son unto *us*. And through *this* speech they have come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, nay unto God and Jesus the mediator of a fresh covenant Himself and, as we have seen, the danger incurred by disregarding this speech of God in Christ is for them no less but greater than it was for those who refused a hearing to the terrible voice of the Sinaitic legislation. The word remains what it was at the beginning when it fell fresh from the lips of Christ, a signal of the presence of God and a vehicle of approach for the world of the supernatural.

(To be continued.)

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