conditions, was it possible to his own? Or does He not stand out so much their superior as to be, while a Child of time, the Son of the Eternal, the only Begotten who has descended to earth from the bosom of the Father, that He might declare Him?

A. M. FAIRBAIRN.

TESTAMENT OR COVENANT?

A NOTE ON HEBREWS ix. 15–22.

No English reader who has carefully followed the train of thought contained in Chapters viii. to x. of the Epistle to the Hebrews, can fail to have been perplexed by the sudden transition in the Authorized Version from the notion of a "covenant" to that of a "testament" in Chapter ix. 15–20. It has been said, indeed, that the transition is not so sudden as it seems, because the mention of an "inheritance," at the end of Verse 15, suggests the notion of a will or bequest. Accordingly those who take this view do not introduce the changed signification of the term *διαθήκη*, at the beginning of the fifteenth Verse, as our translators did, but at the beginning of the next Verse, returning to "covenant" again in Chapter x. 16. But the connection between an inheritance and a will, though familiar to a Greek or Roman mind, was by no means so familiar to the Hebrew mind. To the Christian Jews here addressed, the term *διαθήκη* would inevitably bear the usual meaning attached to it throughout the Septuagint Version as the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew word denoting a covenant (*Berîth*), unless their attention was specially directed to the introduction of another and a

less familiar signification. The mere fact that such a sense might be inferred by implication from the mention of an inheritance (κληρονομία), would not be sufficient of itself to suggest it to them, without some plainer indication of a change in the usage. Moreover, this very notion of "the inheritance" of Canaan was constantly associated in the mind of a Jew with God's covenant made with his nation.[1]

The section contained in Verses 15 to 22 of this Chapter can by no means be treated as parenthetical or supplementary. It is an essential portion of the writer's argument, and is connected with the preceding paragraph by the words "and for this cause" (καὶ διὰ τοῦτο) in Verse 15, and with the following paragraph by the conjunction "therefore" (οὖν), at the beginning of Verse 23. There is no break or dislocation in the chain of reasoning, if we retain the sense of "covenant" given to διαθήκη in other parts of the Epistle, such as immediately occurs, if we substitute for it the novel rendering "testament," either in Verse 15 or Verse 16.

In the preceding Chapter (viii. 8), the expression καινὴ διαθήκη is quoted from the prophecy of Jeremiah,[2] and is there rendered "a new covenant," but in the ninth verse of the fifteenth Chapter the very same phrase is translated "the new testament." Why, again, should Christ be called "the mediator of the new *testament*," in Chapter ix. 15, when we find Him called "the mediator of a better *covenant*" in the preceding Chapter? Is it not most natural, in the absence of any indication to the contrary, to infer that καινὴ

[1] See Deut. iv. 20, 23; 1 Chron. xvi. 15-18; Psa. cv. 8-11.

[2] The citation is from Jer. xxxviii. 31-34, LXX., with a few unimportant variations.

διαθήκη has precisely the same meaning in both Chapters, and that in both the author is alluding to the passage which he had already cited from the Septuagint?

The prominent idea pervading the whole of the section, beginning at Chapter viii. and ending at Chapter x. 18, is the analogy, and, in some respects, the contrast between the "old," or Mosaic "covenant," which was soon to be superseded (viii. 13), and the "new," or better "covenant," of which Christ was the Mediator (μεσίτης) and the Surety (ἔγγυος). The turning point, both of this analogy and this contrast, is the fact that both the covenants were inaugurated and ratified *by death* (θανάτου γενομένου), not ordinary natural death, but a sacrificial, expiatory, violent death, *accompanied with bloodshedding* as its essential feature. That such a death was denoted by the phrase, "by means of death," in Verse 15, is plain from the addition of the words εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῶν ἐπὶ τῇ πρώτῃ διαθήκῃ παραβάσεων, "that death having taken place for expiation of the offences committed under the first covenant." And yet, if we adopt the change from "covenant" to "testament" in Verse 16, the word θάνατον must there be taken to mean natural death in its ordinary sense, for it cannot be affirmed that a testament implies of necessity a violent death by bloodshedding of the testator. In interpreting this Epistle it must never be forgotten that the writer was a Jew writing to Jews, and must therefore be understood to refer to Jewish modes of thought and Jewish usages. When, therefore, he says that death and bloodshed were necessary to the validity of a covenant, he meant that they were necessary under the provisions of the law of sacrifice,

as known to the Hebrews whom he was addressing. In like manner, when he lays down the general principle that "without shedding of blood is no remission," we must obviously limit his meaning by supplying the words "by the law" (*κατὰ τὸν νόμον*), from the preceding clause.

If, then, we retain the usual rendering of *διαθήκη*, the passage may be thus translated:—"And for this reason (because of the superior *moral* efficacy of Christ's blood, as contrasted with the ceremonial efficacy of the legal sacrifices) He is the Mediator of a fresh covenant, that, death having taken place for expiation of the offences committed under the first covenant, they who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (as distinguished from the temporal inheritance attached to the old covenant). For where there is a covenant, the covenanter's death *must* (according to the Law) be borne (*i.e.*, by the victim which dies for him vicariously); for a covenant is ratified over dead bodies (of sacrificed animals), since it never is valid when the covenanter lives (*i.e.*, so long as his life is not forfeited, or acknowledged to be forfeited, for sin by the vicarious death of the victim offered for him). And hence the first covenant also was not inaugurated without *blood* (*i.e.*, sacrificial bloodshedding)." Now the fact here expressly affirmed, that no covenant with Jehovah was held valid under the old dispensation till it had been ratified with the bloodshedding of slain victims, was perfectly familiar to a Jew. It is plainly assumed in the following passage in the Book of Psalms (l. 5):—"Gather my saints together unto me, *those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice*"

(ἐπὶ θυσίαις, LXX. = ἐπὶ νεκροῖς in Heb. ix. 17).[1] Here it is implied that the Jewish people were called God's "saints," or his sacred people, as having made a covenant with Him, and accepted his covenant with them by offering sacrifices to Him. Thus it appears that the blood of vicariously slain victims was the divinely-appointed means of ratifying a covenant between God and his chosen people, and that without his death, thus vicariously and symbolically borne, the covenanter could not obtain expiation or remission of sin (Verse 22) as the preliminary condition of a valid covenant. As then under the Law the victim bore the death of the covenanter, so Christ, *our* sin-offering, vicariously bore death for those who made in Him a new and better covenant with God, ratified and made eternally valid for the remission of sins by the blood of Him "who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God."

Thus interpreted, this passage contains one of the clearest and most explicit statements in Holy Scripture of the true meaning of the law of sacrifice. It is much to be regretted, therefore, that its teaching should have been confused and obscured by the unfortunate and needless substitution of the word "testament"[2] for "covenant."

J. S. PURTON.

[1] See Psa. xlix. 5, LXX. Συναγάγετε ἀυτῷ τους ὁσίους ἀυτοῦ τοὺς διατιθέμένους τὴν διαθήκην ἀυτοῦ ἐπὶ θυσίαις. The phrase διαθέσθαι διαθήκην is commonly used of God making a covenant with man, but it is also used of man making a covenant with God, as in the above passage.

[2] The Vulgate is so far consistent that it adheres to "testamentum" throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews. A return to the older Latin equivalent, "fœdus," is rendered still more difficult than it would be otherwise, by the fact that the terms Old and New Testament are now completely established in popular usage as names for the two divisions of the Holy Scriptures.