The Mediator of a New Covenant

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We have long been familiar with the idea that Jesus believed himself to be the 'Messiah', although his ministry showed virtually no points of similarity with the Messiah of popular expectation. Jesus (if one may state an opinion on a highly controversial issue) knew himself to be the fulfiller of Israel's destiny, perhaps through his sense of the anointing by the Holy Spirit.[1] That is to say, one central element in a highly complex pattern of expectation was accepted, while the remainder was rejected. Hence it came about that Jesus was in fact the promised Messiah, though he avoided the term as far as possible because it was open to serious misinterpretation.

Of far more importance for Old Testament religion was the concept of covenant. The early Church believed that Jeremiah's prophecy of a New Covenant was fulfilled in Jesus. Nevertheless, apart from the words over the cup at the Last Supper, the term 'covenant' does not appear in our Lord's teaching.[2] This is an extraordinary situation, yet, so far as the present writer is aware, there has been no attempt to investigate systematically whether the covenant idea may not be found in fact (though not in name) as a significant element throughout our Lord's interpretation of his mission. If the analogy with the term 'Messiah' is valid, we shall expect to find some central element or elements in the complex amalgam of ideas which cluster round the word *berith*, where the term itself was avoided. If so, it may be claimed that in his earthly ministry Jesus saw himself renewing the covenant relationship with God, and we may hold that the belief that a New Covenant was instituted by his death grows naturally out of other and earlier elements in his teaching.

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[1] Cf. the significant article by W. C. van Unnik, 'Jesus the Christ' in *New Testament Studies*, Vol. VIII, 1961-62, pp. 101-116. The crucial verses are 1 Sam. 10:1 ff. and 9 ff., 1 Sam. 16:13; Luke 4:18 ff.

[2] The problem is perceived but not, I think, fully solved by R. H. Fuller, *The Mission and Achievement of Jesus* (S.C.M. Press, 1954), p. 73.

I

The Concept of Covenant

In her recent study of the idea of the covenant at the beginning of the Christian era[3] Mlle. Annie Jaubert has indicated three main elements in the Old Testament doctrine of the covenant: it is based upon election, God's call and promise to the Patriarchs and to David; it imposes upon the nation the conditions of the Law to which obedience is demanded; but, in the third place, it expresses the inner relationship between Jahweh and Israel, an everlasting and irreversible covenant of peace, which is intimately bound up with Jahweh's steadfast love.

While Jesus certainly cherished the significance of the covenant with the Patriarchs[4] and honoured the Law, albeit as something to be radically transcended,[5] it is in the experience of the covenant as an inner relationship to God that we come nearest to the heart of his teaching. It is in the light of this third principle that the other two are to be interpreted.

There is an impressive agreement among Old Testament interpreters that this is the basic significance of the covenant, and that it is central to the Hebrew people's understanding of their relationship with God.[6] The Hebrew *berith* is basically a form of personal relationship. Certain rules and obligations may be necessary to determine that relationship, but essentially *berith* is more than any such code. The most startling expression of this aspect of covenant is in Ezekiel 16:8:

> 'When I passed by you again and looked upon you, behold, you were at the age for love; and I spread my skirt over you, and covered your nakedness; yea, I plighted my troth to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became mine.'

At the same time, the terms of this gracious covenant relationship between God and Israel were enshrined in the Decalogue. Hence Vriezen summarizes his conclusions as follows:

> 'The doctrine of the covenant implies, therefore, (1) the absolute recognition of the reality of a true *communion* between God and man; (2) the absolute recognition of God

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[3] A. Jaubert, *La Notion d'Alliance dans le Judaisme aux abords de l'ère chrétienne.* (Editions du Seuil, 1963).

[4] Cf. Mark 12:26; Matthew 8:11/Luke 13:28; Luke 13:16, 19:9.

[5] Cf. the recent important studies by G. Barth, 'Matthew's Understanding of the Law' (in G. Bornkamm, G. Barth and H. J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, S.C.M. Press, 1963) and W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge University Press, 1964).

[6] W. Eichrodt has made this the cardinal theme of his *Theology of the Old Testament* (E.T., Vol. I, S.C.M. Press, 1961). Cf. also the basic role played by *berith* in J. Pedersen, *Israel* (Oxford University Press, Vols. I-II, 1926, Vols. III-IV, 1940, and Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Blackwell, 1958).

as the Holy One, the Supreme, who has established and guides this relationship; (3) the acknowledgement of the rules of the covenant. Thus the doctrine of the covenant is the clearest illustration of communion with God, the fundamental idea of the Old Testament message.'[7]

Old Testament religion oscillated between the two poles of outward legalism and inner communion, without ever becoming exclusively identified with either. While the more legalistic understanding of the covenant reached its climax in the Deuteronomic reformation under Josiah, the prophets at first neglected the term 'covenant' altogether, and then, from Jeremiah onwards, began to speak of a *New* Covenant which would give the emphasis to the personal element of communion with God.[8] It is this formulation of the eschatological hope in terms of a New Covenant which is particularly relevant to the teaching of Jesus. It is to be found in Jeremiah, Ezekiel and II-Isaiah, and a brief analysis of its main elements will prepare the way for our interpretation of the Synoptic record.[9]

For the actual term 'New Covenant' the key passage is of course Jeremiah 31:31–34 which, though very familiar, may be quoted in full as we shall have occasion to study it in some detail:

> 'Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, "Know the Lord", for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.'

We may also refer to the briefer and less well-known passage in Jeremiah 32:36–41.

This idea of the eschatological fulfilment of the covenant is taken up by both Ezekiel and II-Isaiah. In Ezekiel we twice have the promise of a covenant of peace,[10] of which we may quote the following:

> 'David my servant shall be their prince for ever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an

[7] Vriezen, *op. cit.*, pp. 142 f.
[8] Eichrodt, *op. cit.*, pp. 45–63.
[9] In addition to Eichrodt, *loc. cit.*, cf. M. D. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant* (S.P.C.K., 1959), pp. 32–40, and A. Jaubert, *op. cit.*, Chapter 3.
[10] Ezekiel 34:25, 37:26.

everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore' (Ezekiel 37:25 f.).

In II-Isaiah the pattern is more complex. The fundamental reality of God's dealings with Israel is his steadfast love in a covenant of peace (Isaiah 54:10). There is the promise, however, that this will be renewed as an everlasting covenant in the last days,[11] and, most notable of all, in two famous passages II-Isaiah speaks of the servant himself as a covenant for the peoples:[12]

> 'I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,
> I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
> I have given you as a covenant to the people,
> A light to the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, etc.'

We shall, I hope, not do violence to the whole complex of ideas represented here if we select the particularly significant items from this picture of the time of restoration in terms of the New Covenant.

(*a*) *The Knowledge of God.*—This is the most striking feature of Jeremiah 31:34, especially when it is remembered that the prophets more often gird at Israel for her failure to know God than speak of man's achievement of this goal. The category of knowledge in the Old Testament demands special attention. It is agreed that it represents not intellectual apprehension, but a deep personal communion. I may quote Eichrodt's remarkable formulation:

> 'The act whereby man admits the nature and will of God as these have been revealed into his inmost spiritual self, with the result that that self now seems permeated and conditioned by the essential character of God.'[13]

We may also recall how Pedersen links this with the idea of covenant:

> 'To speak "peace" with someone and to speak "love" are two manners of expressing the maintenance of the common covenant; it is practised by those who "know" each other, because knowing indicates a thorough mutual feeling.'[14]

Hence Israel's apostasy and moral failure is repeatedly castigated as a lack of knowledge of God, e.g. Hosea 4:1:

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[11] Isaiah 54:10, 55:3, 61:8.
[12] Isaiah 42:6, 49:8.
[13] Eichrodt, *op. cit.*, p. 359. Cf. Vriezen, *op. cit.*, Chapter 6.
[14] Pedersen, *op. cit.*, Vols. I-II, p. 309, cf. p. 109. For the Maccabean period the link between 'knowledge' and 'covenant' is well illustrated by Daniel 11:32.

'There is no faithfulness or kindness
And no knowledge of God in the land.'[15]

While, however, the general burden of the prophets (Hosea in particular) is that Israel does not know God, it is always implied that she should know him, and would know him if only she would repent. Hence an important feature of the time of restoration is that men *will* know God. We have already noted this in Jeremiah 31:34, to which we may add Isaiah 11:9:

'The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.'[16]

Similarly we find this hope in Hosea 2:20, which uses all the covenant formulae without the actual word *berith*:

'I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord.'

Moreover, in Isaiah 11:9 this knowledge of God is one of the gifts of the Messianic king, a point to which Sigmund Mowinckel gave great prominence in his study of the Messianic hope.[17]

When we pass beyond the Old Testament, it is important to note that there is a great deal about 'knowledge' in the Qumran writings. The sectarians seem to have believed that they had access, through the Teacher of Righteousness, to a profound eschatological knowledge although, for the most part, it seems to refer to a knowledge of God's secret purposes in history or the laws of the cosmos rather than moral obedience and personal relationship.[18] On the other hand, some of the Thanksgiving Psalms seem to speak of knowledge in much more intimate terms, which have led some scholars to speak of mysticism. We may refer to two passages (in the translation by G. Vermes):

'And likewise for the son of man . . .
Thou wilt increase his portion in the knowledge of thy truth, and according to the measure of his knowledge, so shall he be honoured . . .
(For the soul of) thy servant has loathed (riches) and gain, and he has not desired exquisite delights.
My heart rejoices in thy covenant and thy truth delights my soul.'[19]

'I, the Master, know Thee, O my God, by the spirit which thou hast given me, and by thy Holy Spirit I have faithfully hearkened to thy marvellous counsel.

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[15] Cf. Hosea 4:6, 5:4, 6:6, 13:4; Jeremiah 2:8, 4:22.
[16] Also Habakkuk 2:14. Cf. Hosea 6:3; Isaiah 19:21, 52:6; Jeremiah 16:21, 24:7.
[17] S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (Blackwell, 1956), p. 180.
[18] Jaubert, *op. cit.*, pp. 125 ff. H. Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran* (Fortress Press, 1963), pp. 114–119.
[19] Psalms, col. X, G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Penguin Books, 1962), p. 184.

In the mystery of thy wisdom
Thou hast opened knowledge to me, and in thy mercies
(Thou hast unlocked for me) the fountain of thy might.'[20]

How far Jesus was acquainted with the Dead Sea Sect is a question still undecided. We can, however, certainly infer from quotations such as the foregoing and many others which might be given that the idea of 'knowledge' as communion with God was not foreign to some circles in first-century Judaism.

We may deal with the remaining aspects of the New Covenant more briefly.

(*b*) *A Covenant of Peace.*—The word 'peace' is a characteristic covenant word, and we may be permitted one more quotation from Pedersen:

> 'These two words (sc. *shalom* and *berith*) are of different origin and scope, but they do not designate different kinds of relationship. *Shalom* means the state prevailing in those united; the growth and full harmony of the soul; *berith*, the community with all the privileges and duties implied in it. Therefore both words may be used together, "a covenant of peace" being only a stronger expression for "covenant". The two words are often used interchangeably.'[21]

(*c*) *The Forgiveness of Sins.*—This promise occupies a central place in Jeremiah 31:34, in Ezekiel 36:25 and elsewhere.[22]

(*d*) *The Inwardness of Religion.*—This emphasis is expressed in Jeremiah by saying that Jahweh's Law will be written on the heart.[23] Similarly, Ezekiel speaks of the renewal of the heart through the gift of God's Spirit.[24] We should not fail to note, in view of the prevailing stress on 'corporate personality', the individualizing emphasis here and elsewhere in the prophets during and after the exile. However, the following point must be equally stressed.

(*e*) *A Renewed Community.*—Jeremiah's New Covenant is with the house of Israel. The covenant formula for the future

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[20] Psalms, col. XII, Vermes, p. 189. Cf. Ringgren, *op. cit.*, pp. 118 f.

[21] Pedersen, *Israel*, Vols. I-II, p. 285. J. Behm (T.W.N.T., Vol. II, p. 129) translates the phrase *didomi autoi diatheken eirenes* as *'eine Verfügung, die ihm Heil bringt'* (a decree which brings salvation). For reasons for rejecting this interpretation of covenant as 'decree' *see* J. C. Hindley, 'The Translation of Words for Covenant', *The Indian Journal of Theology*, Vol. X, 1961, pp. 13 ff.

[22] Cf. Micah 7:18–20; Zechariah 13:1; Daniel 9:24.

[23] Jeremiah 31:33. For the interpretation *see* J. Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion* (Cambridge University Press, 1922), Chapter 18.

[24] Ezekiel 36:26 f., 11:19.

remains, 'they shall be my people and I shall be their God.'[25] The classic claim to realize this ideal with Judaism is, of course, the Qumran community.

(*f*) *The Covenant Mediated by an Individual.*—While not commonly found, this idea is obviously stated in the Isaiah passages to which we have referred. Is it, however, not also implied in Ezekiel 37:26, where the promise of the covenant follows directly upon the statement, 'David my servant shall be their prince for ever'?[26]

II

The Covenant realized in Jesus

(*a*) *Matthew 11: 25–30.*—There will not be much difficulty in seeing the application of the foregoing six points in general to the teaching of Jesus. But we may risk one or two precise applications. One of the notable improvements to the Methodist Covenant Service made in the C.S.I. Liturgy is that the passage Matthew 11:25–30 is appointed as the lesson at the beginning of the service. I wish to venture the thesis that this juxtaposition is not only liturgically apt, but historically well grounded: that in fact Jesus may well have had the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 in mind when he spoke these words.

Aware of the intense controversy surrounding the passage we have just mentioned (Matthew 11:25–30; Luke 10:21-22), most New Testament theologians prefer to avoid giving it a central place in their thought. This is prudential, but a serious handicap for those who believe it to be substantially authentic. For the purpose of this paper, I shall assume that it is in essence an authentic utterance of Jesus, referring to the defence of its genuineness by William Manson and, more recently, by A. M. Hunter.[27] Also, with somewhat less confidence, I accept the argument that the passage was originally a unity standing in 'Q', and that Luke omitted verses 28–30 of Matthew because they were inappropriate to his context, the return of the Seventy.[28]

In this Matthean passage, one of our covenant themes is the dominant motif, but two others can also be discerned. Taken together they suggest that in this rare glimpse of his

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[25] Jeremiah 24:7. Cf. Deuteronomy 29:12; Jeremiah 30:22; Ezekiel 11:20, 14:11, 34:30; Hosea 1:9, 2:23; Zechariah 8:8.

[26] Cf. Mowinckel's exposition of the king's essential task 'to be the instrument of Jahweh's justice and covenant blessing among men. He is a true king in so far as he "knows Jahweh and the law of His moral being."' *He That Cometh*, p. 94 and Chapter 3, *passim*.

[27] W. Manson, *Jesus the Messiah* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1943, reprinted in 1952), pp. 71–76. A. M. Hunter, 'Crux Criticorum—Matthew 11:25–30—A Re-appraisal' in *New Testament Studies*, Vol. VIII, 1961-62, pp. 241 ff.

[28] R. H. Fuller, *The Mission and Achievement of Jesus*, pp. 90 f.

inner awareness, which we must always handle with the utmost reverence, Jesus reveals that he sees in his own experience the fulfilment of the New Covenant.

(1) *The Mutual Knowledge of the Father and the Son.*—This clearly reflects the Old Testament background which we have delineated. That the Son knows the Father (as well as the reverse) is not a proof of Hellenistic origin, as Bultmann and others have claimed. It is rather to be seen as a further indication that in Jesus the Jewish eschatological hope begins to be realized.[29] It seems entirely possible that Jesus formulated his experience in these terms through long meditation on the prophetic passages we have examined, which promise the knowledge of God as the fulfilment of the covenant in the time of restoration.

As the clearest expression of this hope, Jeremiah 31 may with good reason be considered as the leading influence here. Two other considerations make this inference more probable.

(2) *The Yoke of the Law.*—In the words 'take my yoke upon you' Jesus probably puts himself and his way in place of the *Torah*. In their celebrated note on the passage, Strack-Billerbeck[30] give many parallels from rabbinic writing, but the dominant theme seems to be found in those passages where the yoke is the Law. The same is true of Ben Sirach 51:26, the passage in which many scholars have seen a parallel to our Lord's words here. Wisdom invites men to come to her, to take her yoke upon them (viz. instruction in the Law) and so find refreshment.[31] In view of the close association between Covenant and Law, it is perhaps also relevant to recall that in 1 Maccabees 1:15, those who have apostasized from the covenant are described as 'yoked' to the Gentiles.[32] Moreover, 'covenant', 'yoke' and 'law' are strikingly linked at II Baruch 41:3:

> 'I see many of thy people who have withdrawn from thy covenant, and cast from them the yoke of thy law.'

For Jesus the 'law written on the heart' of Jeremiah becomes 'his' yoke: a saying true both to his teaching regarding personal responsibility before God and the primary need to make the heart good,[33] and also true to his affirmation that men's destiny depends on their attitude to himself.[34] In effect,

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[29] Cf. C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (Nisbet, 1952), p. 46, and *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 166.

[30] *Kommentar*, Vol. I, p. 608.

[31] Cf. T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (S.C.M. Press, 1949). pp. 185 f.

[32] *ἀπέστησαν ἀπο διαθήκης ἁγίας καὶ ἐζευγίσθησαν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν καὶ ἐπράθησαν τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ πονηρόν.*

[33] Cf. especially the conclusion of the parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:36; Mark 7:18–23; Matthew 12:33; etc.

[34] Mark 8:38; Luke 10:16; etc.

throughout the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere, Jesus puts himself in place of the *Torah*.[35]

(3) *Forgiveness.*—The third element in Jeremiah's vision is the forgiveness of sins. Here we are on much less firm ground, for the Matthean *logion* makes no explicit mention of this part of the covenant. It should not be forgotten, however, how rarely the language of sin and its forgiveness (though not the fact) appears in the Gospels at all. Jesus did not frequently speak of men as sinners. He used metaphors, such as being 'lost' or 'in debt', and addressed himself to men's particular needs. In the case before us, the words 'You will find rest to your souls' are widely regarded as a quotation of Jeremiah 6:16, and the context of the latter passage is a call to repentance, to turn back to the way of God:

> Thus says the Lord:
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> 'Stand by the roads and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.'

Matthew 11:29 may also contain an allusion to Jeremiah 31:25, which refers to the blessings of the eschatological restoration, viz. fellowship with God, to which sin is the barrier. *Ἀνάπαυσις* may naturally be taken to refer to the release from the burden of sin which follows forgiveness. We may also say that the use of the words *ἀναπαυσω, ἀνάπαυσις* is entirely in keeping with Jesus' attitude to the misunderstanding of the Torah-Covenant in Pharisaism. Such legalism was the main object of his attack, because it excluded men from God's presence just as much as, if not more than, flagrant 'sin' in the sense normally given to that word. By the very stress it laid on self-made righteousness it loaded men with 'burdens grievous to be borne' (Luke 11:46; Matthew 23:4). It is in this context that the easy yoke of Jesus offers 'relief', and against this background that it may be read as the equivalent of the prophet's words about the forgiveness of sins.

Before leaving Matthew 11:25–30 we may make one further point. Jesus is here the mediator of the covenant knowledge of God to other men. It may well be that in this affirmation we may see the fulfilment of what is said by II-Isaiah of the Servant as a covenant to the people. Not only does Jesus realize the covenant knowledge of God in his own experience, but he is the mediator of this knowledge to others. The thought may be further illustrated by Jesus' teaching on prayer. If the Lukan record is correct, when Jesus gave the pattern prayer he taught the inner circle of his disciples to call upon God as *abba*, the intimate form of address which he used

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[35] *N.B.* the suggestive comments of G. Barth, *op. cit.*, p. 104, and C. H. Dodd, *Gospel and Law* (Cambridge University Press, 1951), p. 77.

himself.[36] This *'abba'* is the utterance of one who knows God as the Son, one who shares this deeply spiritual covenant knowledge of God. Jesus introduces men to this knowledge.

(*b*) *Covenant Peace.*—We have seen that alongside the concept 'knowledge of God', the covenant is otherwise described as a condition of 'peace'. With this in mind we may examine the occurrences of εἰρήνη in the Gospels. It would be unreasonable on the basis of the word εἰρήνη alone to find allusions to the covenant in our Lord's words. But if our argument so far is sound, it provides a basis for the view that he was thinking in terms of the New Covenant, and it may therefore be legitimate to take some of the references to peace in this sense.

The clearest example is Luke 19:41:

> 'And when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it, saying, "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace!" But now they are hid from your eyes.'

The placing of the saying is significant. Jesus says these words as he comes to Jerusalem as Messiah: he is the peace-bringer, the bearer of God's covenant peace. This has been recognized by the words of the people at verse 38:

> 'Blessed be the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.'

Unfortunately there are elements here which make one suspect that a certain theologizing on Luke's part may have intruded. The words 'king' and 'peace' are notable additions to St. Mark's account of the crowd's utterance, and appear to be a deliberate reference back to the song of the angels at Jesus' birth (2:14). Moreover, the structure of the whole passage (verses 28–44) shows an anticipation of the Johannine doctrine of κρίσις, which is also to be discovered in the words of Simeon at Luke 2:33, and the words regarding division which will follow Christ's coming (Luke 12:51 ff.). In chapter 19 this pattern is revealed by the balancing of the triumphal entry (28–40) with the meditation on rejection (41–44). Any allusions to 'covenant peace' in this passage may therefore be secondary.

However, that Jesus did speak of the coming of the kingdom through his ministry as the coming of covenant peace is confirmed by the 'Q' passage, Luke 10:6/Matthew 10:13:

> 'As you enter a house, salute it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.'

The blessing of 'peace' here is an almost tangible reality, and when these words are read in the light of the principle 'he that receives you receives me . . .' (Matthew 10:40) we can see that

[36] Luke 11:2; Mark 14:36. Cf. J. Jeremias, *The Central Message of the New Testament* (S.C.M. Press, 1965), Chapter 1.

they indicate the peace which comes from Christ. The preaching of the kingdom offers men entry into covenant blessing, and their rejection of it shuts them out.

It may indeed be (though this is far less clear, and we would hesitate to place any weight on it) that the words 'Go in peace' which frequently follow healing or forgiveness also reflect this. The wholeness of life which Jesus brings to such sufferers is that of covenant communion with God (e.g. Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50).

(*c*) *The Covenant Community.*—Covenant peace is of course the mark of the covenant community. In two passages of Ezekiel the covenant of peace is promised to the people as God's flock, under the guidance of David as their shepherd. By way of example, we may take Ezekiel 34, where Israel is spoken of at length as God's flock, first under judgment and then with the promise of restoration:

> 'And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them . . .
>
> I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land . . .
>
> And they shall know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, says the Lord God. And you are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, says the Lord God' (Ezekiel 34:23–31, cf. 37:24–28).

On the basis of these Ezekiel passages it would be natural to see the kingdom interpreted in terms of covenant peace to be realized in the fellowship of the disciples, when Jesus says, 'Fear not little flock, it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom' (Luke 12:32). We may further recall that he sees the people as 'sheep without a shepherd' (Mark 6:34). The allegory of the shepherd in John 10 develops the same thought, and it is worth noting that C. H. Dodd has recently argued for an authentic tradition behind John 10:1-5.[37]

The remaining reference to peace has an intriguing obscurity, but is held by some scholars to be a reference to covenant, and further underlines the thought of a covenant community.

'Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another' (Mark 9:50). It is widely admitted that the conclusion of Mark 9 is a catena of sayings, related only by catch phrases. Each is therefore to be studied independently. The extent to which the first and second halves of verse 50 originally belonged together is itself doubtful. The first part of the verse ('Salt is good', etc.) echoes the thought of Matthew 5:13 ('Ye are the salt of the earth'). The second half of the verse, however,

[37] C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 382–384. I leave one further shepherd saying (Mark 14:27, par. Matthew 26:31) out of account because the reference is to Zechariah 13:7, which is not a covenant context.

concerns the disciples' relationships with one another. How far is this an appropriate conclusion to what has preceded? The connection, while difficult, is not impossible, but it would require that we take the symbol 'salt' to have the same meaning in both halves of the verse. The meaning, however, would be, on this interpretation, obscure, and it seems better to take the second half as an originally independent *logion.* In this case the term 'salt' may have a fresh meaning. The double use of the symbol of leaven (applied to the kingdom of God and to hypocrisy) shows that there is nothing impossible in the supposition that Jesus used the same image in different meanings on different occasions.

Considering the last half of Mark 9:50 on its merits, we note that εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἀλλήλοις would be an exact paraphrase for 'Maintain covenant among yourselves', and we then discover that twice in the Old Testament a particularly binding covenant is called a covenant of salt (Numbers 28:19; 2 Chronicles 13:5).[38] Moreover, a peculiarly intimate relation between the Persian satraps and King Artaxerxes is expressed by saying that they 'eat the salt of the palace' (Ezra 4:14). It seems likely therefore that Jesus was here exhorting his disciples to exhibit covenant peace in their fellowship with one another.

We have already seen that Jesus sought to mediate his knowledge of God to the disciples in the prayer he taught them. We now see that he was seeking to build up through them a new Isarel: the little flock to whom the kingdom is given. This may otherwise be expressed by calling them the community of the covenant.[39]

Whatever may be thought of our attempt to find this idea in Mark 9:50, there would be general agreement that it underlies Luke 22:28-30:

> 'You are those who have continued with me in my trials; as my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'

R. Otto and others[40] would seem to be right in stressing that the Greek διατίθεμαι in this passage corresponds to the Hebrew *karath berith.* Indeed we might go beyond Otto and suggest an even closer parallel to the general conclusions of this paper. Not only does Jesus 'covenant a kingly power' to his disciples, but this is said to be on the basis of the βασιλεία which God has already covenanted with him. Formally this is precisely

[38] Cf. Pedersen, *op. cit.*, p. 306, and A. Jaubert, *op. cit.*, pp. 35 (note 22), 39 f., 481.

[39] R. N. Flew, *Jesus and His Church* (2nd ed., Epworth Press, 1943), pp. 71–77.

[40] R. Otto, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man* (Lutterworth Press, 2nd ed., 1943), pp. 291–295.

like the relationship which we have found in Matthew 11:25-30. God has kept Jesus in the intimate communion of covenant-knowledge: Jesus in his turn mediates this covenant-knowledge to the disciples. The same relationship underlies the very different terminology of John 17, where the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son is to be shared by the disciples.

From this Lukan saying three conclusions are to be drawn: (1) We have here an explicit indication that the covenant which Jesus brings is for the community of his followers, the New Israel. R. N. Flew has demonstrated that the gathering of such a community was part of our Lord's purpose, even if he has not shown complete continuity between that 'little flock' and the post-resurrection church. (2) The latter part of the saying (Luke 22:30) links the covenant community with the symbol of table-fellowship. (3) The verse also indicates an intimate connection between covenant and kingdom.

To work out the latter connection is one of the major questions raised by the thesis of this paper, and cannot be attempted here. I would merely note in passing that something like initiation into covenant communion with God would be more persuasive than some other explanations of the mystery of the kingdom which is said to be given to the disciples at Mark 4:11.[41]

We may, however, offer a word or two more about the second point, table-fellowship. Pedersen and others have shown that a common meal was frequently held to confirm a covenant:[42] indeed this may be at least a part of the idea of the covenant sacrifice, though we will not venture into this hotly disputed territory. The point may, however, now be greatly strengthened by our knowledge that at Qumran great importance was attached to solemn meals, at the centre of the community life practised by this people of the covenant.[43] The symbol of table-fellowship is used in our Lord's parables to stand for the closest fellowship with God.[44] Not only so, table-fellowship of a highly unorthodox kind, with tax-collectors and sinners, played a considerable part in the ministry of Jesus. We may recall the stress recently laid on this by G. Bornkamm and E. Fuchs. In Bornkamm's words, 'what the parables say actually happens in Jesus' fellowship with other people.'[45]

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[41] Cf. T. W. Manson, 'Realized Eschatology and the Messianic Secret' in *Studies in the Gospels*, ed. D. E. Nineham (Blackwell, 1955).

[42] Pedersen, *op. cit.*, p. 305. Also Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites* (A. & C. Black, 2nd ed., 1894), p. 269.

[43] Cf., e.g. F. M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran* (Duckworth, 1958), pp. 62–67; M. Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (Nelson, 1961), p. 112; A. Jaubert, *op. cit.*, pp. 198–209.

[44] Matthew 8:11; Mark 2:15 f.; Luke 14:16 ff.; Matthew 22:1 ff.

[45] G. Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1960), pp. 80 f.; E. Fuchs, *Studies of the Historical Jesus* (S.C.M. Press, 1964), pp. 24, 61. *N.B.* also the discussion by H. E. Tödt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition* (S.C.M. Press, 1965), pp. 306–311.

Not only in a solemn religious ritual, but in the presence of Jesus at the tax-collector's feast, the covenant peace of God becomes a reality, and the beginnings of covenant community can be discerned. These considerations strengthen A. Schweitzer's view that the Feeding of the Five Thousand was primarily a symbolic foretaste of the Messianic banquet, and we may now consider the table-fellowship which is implied here as an expression of covenant fellowship. Moreover, it has always seemed to me that there is much force in the argument that behind the recognition of Jesus' characteristic way of breaking bread (Luke 24:30 f.) there must lie a whole series of fellowship meals.[46] The symbol of the Messianic banquet, therefore, which Jesus employed in his teaching and actualized in his social intercourse on many different occasions, is as much a covenant symbol as a symbol for the kingdom, and the Last Supper must be understood at least in part from this point of view.

(*d*) *The Covenant Sacrifice.*—We may summarize the pattern that has emerged so far. In the prophetic hope, the covenant idea came to signify an inner relation of deep communion between man and God, as well as obedience to his will. This was expressed through the twin concepts of mutual knowledge and peace which were promised as part of the eschatological fulfilment. In Jesus' own perfect communion with God this eschatological hope became a reality: it constituted the inner secret of the power of the kingdom of God which he shared with his disciples, and it was the source of wholeness for men (*shalom*) in their relationships with God and with one another. The New Covenant is the inner side of man's well-being which is achieved when he receives or enters the kingdom of God. It is not, however, a merely individualistic matter, but constitutes a community of right relationship whose depth is the peace of God.

It is with this pattern in mind that we can approach the words of institution over the cup at the Last Supper. Without going over familiar ground, it may merely be suggested that in the light of our discussion the discrepancy between the Synoptic and the Pauline form of the words does not present so great a problem as has sometimes been assumed.[47] Nor can

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[46] T. W. Manson in *Christian Worship* (ed. N. Micklem, Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 48 f. The Qumran evidence would seem to cast grave doubt on Jeremias' assertion that 'All ideas of a . . . brotherhood meal, etc., are alien to the concept and are the results of modern thought'. *Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Blackwell, 1955), p. 134, note 4.

[47] E.g. V. Taylor's conclusion that he must exclude a reference to Jeremiah 31, *Jesus and His Sacrifice* (Macmillan, 1937), pp. 131 ff. and 203–206.

one be convinced that Jeremias is right in eliminating the covenant idea altogether from the original form of the saying.[48] If we are right, there is ample evidence that Jesus thought of his mission as a realization of the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31. He could therefore hardly have used the term 'covenant' (even without the adjective 'new') without implying this. On the other hand, Jesus differed radically from Jeremiah in one vital matter. The prophets had eliminated the idea of sacrifice from the New Covenant and therein lay the weakness of their teaching. For the obstacles to communion with God imposed by sin remain, and Jeremiah does not tell us how they will be overcome. This problem reappears in acute form in the Qumran Psalms which set side by side an intense awareness of the utter holiness and righteousness of God and his readiness to forgive sin. We cannot here pursue the question of atonement theology which is the Christian answer to this unsolved tension in Judaism, except to say that an awareness of the problem and a conviction about its solution is already adumbrated in the words of Jesus. Even if in fellowship with him, men had been initiated into the covenant, what had happened in his ministry was only a foretaste. The blessings of the New Covenant could only become fully available for men through his suffering and death.[49] The New Covenant, as the old, must be ratified by the blood of sacrifice—the sacrifice of the Servant who was himself a covenant for the peoples.[50] It is essential to hold together Exodus 24:8, Jeremiah 31:31 and Isaiah 42:6 in interpreting the mind of Christ.

Jesus and Qumran

In conclusion we must attempt to face the problem which besets all hypotheses of the kind advanced in this paper. If the idea of the covenant was so important for Jesus, why does he make so little explicit reference to it? The answer runs along similar lines to those with which we are familiar in studying the term 'Messiah'. Mlle. Jaubert has given an exhaustive study of the idea of the covenant, which shows its role in different circles of Judaism at the time of Jesus. Pride of place is naturally given to the men of Qumran. Here was a group who proclaimed themselves as the people of the covenant, and (if, in contrast to other scholars, Mlle. Jaubert is to be believed)

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[48] J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, pp. 133–135. Cf. the valid criticisms in R. H. Fuller, *The Mission and Achievement of Jesus*, pp. 69 ff.

[49] Attention may be drawn to the most recent book by E. Best, which seeks to show that concern with sin and forgiveness is at the heart of Markan theology and (by implication) the thought of Jesus. E. Best, *The Temptation and the Passion* (Cambridge University Press, 1965).

[50] R. Otto, *op. cit.*, pp. 292 f. But we should perhaps not confine our attention to II-Isaiah as Otto does.

who had come to adopt some kind of realized eschatology to their view of the renewal of the covenant and gift of the Spirit.[51]

It seems legitimate to use references to the 'knowledge of God' in these documents as a further proof that our Lord's words in Matthew 11:25-30 have a secure place in first-century Palestinian Judaism.[52] In this doctrine of divine illumination and the forgiveness of sins, the Qumran group followed and developed the idea of the covenant as a personal relationship to God. But what strikes us even more forcibly is the intense legalism of their quest for holiness, and the more than Pharisaic separatism of their understanding of the covenant community. In these matters the sect stood for everything that Jesus opposed. Indeed, one of the few very probable references to the sect in the teaching of Jesus could be read as a rejection of their interpretation of what it meant to belong to the covenant community:

> 'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemies", but I say to you, love your enemies . . .'[53]

While therefore the idea of covenant was of great significance, at least for certain Jews in the first century, it was interpreted by them in a way which Jesus had to reject. In his life and ministry the essential elements of the New Covenant came to realization, but to use the term freely would have been to invite serious misunderstanding. Indeed, it seems that we have here one more example of what may be considered a characteristic of our Lord's teaching: because he was a supremely creative personality, he for the most part avoided, whether deliberately or unconsciously, the set religious terminology of his day.

Conclusion

The writer is aware that at some points in this paper evidence has been pressed to the limit. It would seem, however, that the covenant concept may well serve as a key for integrating into one pattern many of our Lord's words and actions which relate to the experience of God. Knowing covenant communion with God as the supreme reality of his own life, he leads others to share it. While it is a 'prophetic' communion, rather than a 'mystical' union, may not we in India still see in it the characteristic form of god-realization which this *Guru* imparts to his disciples?

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[51] A. Jaubert, *op. cit.*, pp. 227–249. Contrast K. Stendahl, 'The Scrolls and the New Testament: an Introduction and a Perspective' in *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (ed. K. Stendahl) (S.C.M. Press, 1958), Chapter 1.

[52] So W. D. Davies, 'Knowledge in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Matthew 11:25-30' in *Christian Origins and Judaism* (Darton Longman & Todd, 1962), Chapter 6.

[53] Cf. K. Schubert, 'The Sermon on the Mount and the Qumran Texts' in K. Stendahl, *op. cit.*, pp. 43 f.