

Part 1 of a series on Old Testament Covenant Theology

Covenant and Promise

The Revd J. Alec Motyer
 Vicar of Christ Church, Westborne

The covenant idea in the Old Testament can be very simply expressed in the words 'God makes and keeps promises'. It is the nature of God that moves him to make his promises, and in keeping the promises which he makes, God does not take anyone into partnership. He is not only totally able to keep his promises without assistance, but he insists upon doing so. As these promises emerge they are focussed upon the central theme of salvation. The God of the covenant is revealed as God the Saviour. The point of the promises is that he pledges himself to a total work of salvation.

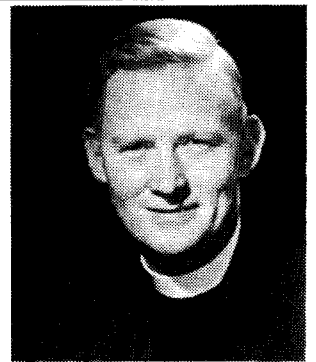
1 The Covenant Promises in Relation to Noah

Following the narrative of the fall in Genesis 3, the theme of chapters 4 and 5 is entirely given to the thought of the prevalence of sin over man and over his world. We see in chapter 4 that sin spreads to the descendants of Adam and that it increases in corruption. We see in chapter 5 that sin reigns, for however these great men who lived before the flood managed to prolong their days to such enormous ages, the one epitaph is written over them all — that they died, so that sin reigns. In chapter 6, in the mysterious reference with which the chapter begins, we see that sin reaches a cosmic scale of corruption. 'It came to pass . . . that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all that they chose. And the LORD said, My spirit shall not strive with man, (6.1-3). God saw in this circumstance something to which he was bound to say no. The divine verdict was this: 'The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man.' (6.5-7)

Notice how the word 'man' rings out over and over again in that narrative. Verse 5 is the divine assessment: God saw the wickedness of man; verse 6 is the divine reaction: He repented that he had made man; verse 7 is the divine resolve: 'I will destroy man'. God is reviewing man in totality. Noah belongs with that lot. Noah was with the rest of the world under the wrath of God. Noah is corrupt man under threat of destruction, but he is promised salvation. The covenant God is the Saviour God. When he finds man under threat of destruction, there is that about him that prompts him to effect salvation.

Let me elaborate this truth in three ways. (i) *The judgement of God.* There is no need to say much more under this heading. God is the sole sovereign in his own

Alec Motyer, until recently Principal of Trinity College, Bristol, is both an Old Testament scholar and a preacher. In these studies in the covenants of the Old Testament we see the pulpit and the lecture-room drawn together.



world; he does not have to ask permission to pass judgment. When he sees a universal situation requiring a universal judgement he says, 'I will destroy'.

(ii) *The Mercy of God.* But into that judgment of God comes the mercy of God. 'The LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground... But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.' (6.7-8). Here we see the mercy or grace of God. If you look up this expression 'X found grace', you will discover it in situations like David and Mephibosheth, or in Genesis 19 in the case of Lot being rescued from Sodom. Every time this expression occurs, it focusses attention as far as the receiving end is concerned on a meritless situation. If a person testifies 'I have found grace', he is saying 'There is nothing about me that could have earned or prompted this'. When, therefore, we read in Genesis 6.8 'Noah found grace', the scriptural understanding of that phrase is that 'grace found Noah'. There came into his meritless situation that which, left to himself, he could never have achieved.

Notice how carefully Genesis safeguards this truth. After verse 8 there comes one of Genesis' own chapter headings, 'these are the generations of Noah'. This phrase occurs about twelve times in Genesis and always has the effect of drawing a line across the narrative. It says, 'so far so good; now look at it this way'. Consequently, when Noah appears before us in verse 9 as Noah the righteous man, there is a line between that statement and the statement at the end of verse 8 where Noah is as we have seen, the man upon whom grace comes from God. We are not permitted by Genesis to reverse the order of verses 8 and 9. We cannot say, 'Now we see why Noah was chosen'; for not only would this be untrue to the way in which Genesis uses its chapter headings, 'These are the generations of', but it would also set Genesis out of the context of the rest of Scripture. For Scripture forbids the thought that there is that in any man

or woman which explains the electing mercies of God. What we must say when we come to verse 9 is not 'Now we see *why* Noah was chosen', but 'Now we see *that* Noah was chosen'. Genesis 6.9 sets before us the mark of the truly elect, the marks of the man or woman upon whom mercy has come from God.

It was to that man that the word 'covenant' was spoken for the first time by God. 'I do bring the flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven... But I will establish my covenant with thee' (Genesis 6.17-18). The covenant is shorthand for 'my promise of salvation'. The expression used here is 'I will establish my covenant' and the inner meaning of the word is 'I will set my covenant in operation'. If on the one hand the wrath of God is flooding in over a corrupt world, God sets another agency in action, 'I will set my covenant in action, the outreaching of my grace which will lay hold upon you and will keep you while the world is perishing'.

(iii) *The righteousness of God* We have noted already in this situation judgment and mercy, and I want you to

As soon as God lets man into the secret, the sign of the covenant begins to speak to the covenant man concerning the promise of God. Thus, covenant signs declare covenant promises to covenant people. It is a token and guarantee of the word of God.

note thirdly the righteousness of God. God does not say to Noah 'My covenant is a divine helicopter which is going to come and lower an escape net for you, to lift you to heaven until I have finished with the earth'. Noah was left to endure the flood just like the rest of mankind. What the covenant did for Noah was that it wrapped Noah round with the certain protection (the ark), which guaranteed that when the waters of judgment fell upon him, they would fall upon him unto salvation. He was left in the place of judgment, but he was so secured by the covenant that the very form of the judgement guaranteed his salvation. Noah had to endure judgment because this covenant-making and covenant-keeping God is the God of the utmost righteousness who remains just. He deals with Noah on the basis of that which sin merits, and yet he sets himself forth as the Saviour of sinners.

The covenant with Noah is accompanied by a sign, 'And God said . . . I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.' (Genesis 9.12-15) The bow is a sign of the covenant which God makes. It is appointed by God — 'I set my bow in the

clouds', and it is even appointed in the first instance for God. How wonderful it is that this Noah narrative focusses all attention upon God. But then God lets man into the secret. He tells man what the bow means. As soon as God lets man into the secret, the sign of the covenant begins to speak to the covenant man concerning the promise of God. This, covenant signs declare covenant promises to covenant people. It is a token and guarantee of the word of God.

2 The Covenant Promises in relation to Abraham

In the narrative of Noah God was the sole agent. The Abraham narrative underscores this same theme.

The story of Abraham focusses upon his childlessness. He starts out as the man who is unable to contribute, saying at the beginning of chapter 15 'I go childless'. The story proceeds by telling us that he is disallowed from making any contribution. In accordance with the law of the land of the time, and prompted by Sarah, Abraham takes a second wife and has a child, Ishmael, whom Sarah recognises as her child. But God simply disallows this device. He will not permit Abraham to contribute to the fulfilling of the divine promises. When Abraham does seem to make a contribution, when he and Sarah have a child by the ordinary processes which God has ordained, the narrative is very careful to tell us that he does so *totally* by the enabling of God. God fulfils his promises in his own time, in his own way, and by his own power. The covenant points to a salvation which is all of God; man is in no position to contribute or to co-operate.

Now the Abraham narrative focusses attention on at least the following three central points: (i) *God's work in election* In Genesis 15.6 we read of Abram that 'He believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness. 'Abraham comes to this tremendous moment of trusting the divine promises. Here is the essence of justification by faith. But notice what God says to him in verse 7; 'I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.' 'Now Abraham', says God, 'please don't think that by believing you have climbed into a position by your own merits or deservings. Let me take your story back to where it began. I brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees.' The first

So God comes in regenerating power to make the man into the new man, to make Abram what he was not before — Abraham — to give him capacities which he did not possess before, to make the childless man a father on a colossal scale.

movement was God's movement. The story does not elaborate the truth beyond that point, but it does insist on the priority and primacy of the work of God.

(ii) *God's work in self-obligation* The narrative in chapter 15 continues in verse 9, 'Take me an heifer of three years old . . .' You know that Abraham was called upon to set up a very elaborate sacrificial situation. He was to take a

variety of animals, great and small, and having slain them to divide their carcasses so as to leave a pathway between the slaughtered bodies. Notice two things : Firstly, the sacrifice was organised at the divine behest, 'Take for me'. God is the mover in providing this sacrifice. Sacrifice is not a technique whereby man twists the arm of God; sacrifice is God's own provision. Secondly, notice that in this ceremony, which now centres upon these slaughtered animals, God is the sole agent. 'A deep sleep fell upon Abraham.' (15.12) He is immobilised in order that God might be the only one active in this situation. When Abraham was so immobilised and when the sun had gone down a furnace that smoked and flashed passed between these pieces (15.17). To pass between the severed pieces was the taking of a very vivid and terrible oath: 'So may it be done to me if this oath is broken.' God alone passes between these severed pieces. Not only does Abraham not pass, but he is disallowed from passing. God takes upon himself the total obligation of the covenant. So verse 18 goes on: 'In that day the LORD made a covenant.' The narrative does not stop to spell out details, but look back through the Bible and ask yourself what that commitment of himself by God meant. It meant that God was saying, 'If this covenant is broken I will take the obligation for it.' So there in Genesis 15, in implication, is the day of Calvary, when he became a curse for us.

(iii) *God's work in regeneration* The third stress in the story of Abraham is the stress on regeneration, God's work in making Abram into Abraham, in making the man

And Abraham cannot look at the mark of circumcision and glory in the promises without at the same time being reminded over and over again in his commitment to obey God.

into the new man. In Genesis 17. 1-5 we read that, 'The LORD appeared to Abram and said unto him, I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. . . Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee.' So God comes in regenerating power to make the man into the new man, to make Abram what he was not before — Abraham — to given him capacities which he did not possess before, to make the childless man a father on a colossal scale. So when the child will be born, they will say that 'this is what God has done.' This promise God now proceeds to wrap up in a covenant sign, the sign of circumcision.

In Genesis 17, the narrative falls into two parts, and the word 'covenant' occurs in each part. The covenant is first of all defined in a series of promises: personal (verse 5), domestic (verse 6), spiritual (verse 7), and territorial (verse 8). But then, in verses 9-10 you find this: 'God said unto Abraham, As for thee, thou shalt keep my covenant, thou, and thy seed after thee throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every male among you shall be circumcised.' So, on the one hand,

the covenant is a series of promises, on the other, it is circumcision. Every time Abraham therefore observed the mark of circumcision in his own body, he would declare, 'I am the man to whom God has made promises.' Covenant signs declare covenant promises to covenant people.

3 The Covenant Man

Thus far we have looked at the covenant promises as they emerge in the stories of Noah and Abraham. Now I want us to look at these covenant men themselves. As these men are displayed in the stories about them, there are again three focal points: election, mediation and law.

(i) *The objects of divine election* The covenant men were what they were because God chose them to be so. Noah was the man immersed in the world's corruption until grace found Noah. Abraham was the man to whom God said, 'I brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees.' What happened to Noah and Abraham happened by divine decision.

(ii) *Mediatorial men* In each case the covenant man stands in a mediatorial position to others. If you will take this clue and go back especially to the stories of Noah, you will discover this sort of sequence over and over again, 'My covenant which I make between you and all flesh.' And when Noah is to gather his family and the animals into the ark, it is specified more than once, they are in the ark *with you*. They are not there in their own right, but only in a derived right. They come under benefits because *you* have come into covenant.

The same truth emerges with Abraham. To Abraham God declares, 'In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed' (Genesis 12.3). Abraham comes before us as the man through whom the world will be blessed. Covenant men are mediatorial men.

(iii) *Under the law of God* Noah had no sooner stepped out of the ark than God declared his law to him. Genesis 9.1 describes how 'God blessed Noah and his sons, and he said to them, Be fruitful and multiply'. God then goes on to lay down law concerning man's food and concerning the sacredness of human life. He brings Noah under the law of God.

With Abraham, and especially at the moment of circumcision, we see clearly that covenant man is obedient man. In the case of Noah the covenant sign is one that God put there. But when it comes to Abraham God says, 'Now Abraham, the sign of the covenant, the sign that I am giving promises to you, is circumcision. You do it.' At the very moment when the promises light upon a man he is pressed into obedience. As soon as Abraham marks his body with the knife of circumcision he glories in the promises and he responds in obedience. Circumcision does not symbolize obedience, it does not symbolize response. It symbolizes promises, it summons obedience. But at the one moment those two things come together. And Abraham cannot look at the mark of circumcision and glory in the promises without at the same time being reminded over and over again in his commitment to God — 'Walk before me and be thou perfect.' Therefore, the law of God is written into the heart of the covenant idea.

Part 2 of a series on Old Testament Covenant Theology

The Normative Covenant

The Revd. J.A. Motyer

Vicar of Christ Church, Westborne

1. Exodus: The Covenant Continued

The whole action of the book of Exodus begins at this moment which is recorded for us in chapter 2:23 'And it came to pass in the course of those many days, that the king of Egypt died; and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried and their appeal for help came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. And God saw the children of Israel and God took knowledge of them.' People were the object of the genocidal impulse of Pharaoh, and there the matter would have rested except that God remembered his covenant.

Again, we read in Exodus 6:2-8: 'And God spoke unto Moses and said unto him, I am Yahweh and I showed myself unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, in the character of God Almighty, but as to my name Yahweh, I did not reveal myself to them. And I have also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan the land of their sojourning, wherein they sojourned. And moreover I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am Yehweh, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, . . . and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and ye shall know that I am Yahweh thy God . . . And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning which I lifted up my hand to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you for an inheritance: I am Yahweh.' The covenant notes ring through this passage. Not only does the word 'covenant' appear but also the main covenant ideas. The great covenant promise is stated here in its normative form, 'I will take thee to me for a people and I will be to you a God.' God had said to Abraham that he would be a God to him and to his descendants after him and had promised him the inheritance of the land. That promise is taken up here, and the action which is now going to take place is a direct continuation of God's covenant with the fathers.

Even more significant than the actual occurrence of the word 'covenant' is the situation in which the book of Exodus is set. Pharaoh, the king of the world, had determined on the utter destruction of this people. Little did he know that he was challenging the promise that God had made to Abraham. God had said to Abraham, 'I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse.' (Genesis 12:3) Pharaoh, therefore, all unwittingly, was setting himself up to challenge the covenant. When his covenant was challenged God rose to defend it. Both the vocabulary and the setting of the book of Exodus proclaim to us that it is the continuation of the covenant narrative.

2. Exodus: The Covenant Perfected

In the covenant with Noah in Genesis 8 and 9, the basic idea was that God makes and keeps promises and that those promises home in on the idea of salvation: God pledges himself to save sinners; and so he does. In the continuation of the narrative there are two features upon which the narrative focusses some attention. First there is the feature of sacrifice.



Alec Motyer, until recently Principal of Trinity College, Bristol, and a leading evangelical Old Testament scholar, continues his studies in the covenants of the Old Testament.

The first action of Noah after the flood after his exit from the ark is to offer burnt offerings, consecration offerings, to the Lord. The narrative does not at this point stop to say what the relationship of sacrifice is to the covenant, nor does it stop to explain how sacrifice works. It simply records that the covenant man offered a burnt offering to God. And immediately following that, God comes to Noah with a declaration of his law, saying to him in so many words: 'You are a covenant man, I have redeemed you, now this is the way you are to live.' Therefore, alongside the covenant idea of God making and keeping promises, there are these two ideas in association: sacrifice and law.

In the covenant which God made with Abraham, you will remember these same two elements: sacrifice and law. The first time that God drew near in covenant with Abram was in Genesis 15, where we read in verse 18: 'In that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram.' That is to say, in the day that God went on oath by means of a specified sacrifice. So the idea of sacrifice is no longer lying in some sort of loose, undefined relationship to the idea of covenant, but has been brought into the very heart of God's covenant dealings, though we are not told what it means. In the same way we noted earlier how circumcision by its nature committed Abraham to a life of obedience. Circumcision was the first act of the obedient man,

Even more significant than the actual occurrence of the word 'covenant' is the situation in which the book of Exodus is set. Pharaoh, the king of the world, had determined on the utter destruction of this people. Little did he know that he was challenging the promise that God has made to Abraham.

and it is interesting to note that Genesis 17, in which circumcision becomes the sign of the covenant, begins on a note of law: 'He said unto him: I am God Almighty, walk before me, and be thou perfect.' So law is brought into the heart of the covenant. But it is not a very informative law. It does not declare what constitutes an obedient walk and a perfect

life.

But now we come to God's covenant dealings with Moses and with Israel in Egypt. We turn to that sequence of events which includes both Passover and Mount Sinai. Here sacrifice is seen to be at the heart of covenant and is explained; law is seen to be at the heart of covenant and is elaborated. Thus, in this Exodus covenant document you have the perfection of God's covenant dealings with his people. You have the covenant in its normative form. The promises remain constant and the other constituents are brought into their appropriate places and are given their full explanation and elaboration.

3. Exodus 1-12: The God Who Speaks

How does God reveal himself? Now the current emphasis in Old Testament studies is on the God who acts. Revelation is by the acts of God; G.E. Wright has written a book under that title, *God Who Acts*. But the idea itself is considerably older than contemporary Old Testament theologians. One of the most striking statements of this view is to be found in William Temple's book *Nature, Man and God*. Temple puts it in this way: 'There are no revealed truths; there are only truths of revelation.' That is to say, God does not commit himself to propositions; he acts, and people contemplating these acts perceive what God is like. Revelation comes by correct thinking about the acts of God. According to this view, Holy Scripture is the first of a potentially long chain of attempts to interpret the acts of God.

Now that is not what Exodus 1-12 asserts happened. Exodus 1-12 insists that the word of God comes first and the deed of God follows, and that revelation is not contained in a word which arises by *interpretation* from a deed. Revelation consists rather in a word which is subsequently *confirmed* by a deed. Moses is not an interpreter after the event: Moses is a man made wise before the event.

Here are the truths which God made known to Moses: a) He told Moses that he was the *God of the Fathers* and the God of the covenant, and that what he was proposing to do was in pursuance of that covenant. b) Before anything else, God reveals himself as the *God of holiness* (Exodus 3:5). It is interesting to note that this is in fact the first time in the Bible

God does not commit himself to propositions; he acts, and people contemplating these acts perceive what God is like. . . . Now that is not what Exodus 1-12 asserts happened.

that holiness is directly ascribed to God. c) God informs Moses that he *purposes to bring his people out from Egypt* (3:7-8). d) He makes Moses aware of Israel's position as God's adopted son. 'Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, my firstborn' (4:21, 22). e) Moses is made aware of *the actual course that events will take*. 'When thou goest back into Egypt, see that thou do before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, and he will not let the people go. And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, my firstborn: and I have said unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me; and thou hast refused to let him go: behold, I will slay thy son, thy firstborn.' (4:21-23). The whole sequence

of events is in principle stated here before Moses — the mighty deeds of God which provoke increasing opposition and the climactic deed in which it is either Pharaoh's firstborn or God's firstborn. f) Moses is made aware that God is a God who *purposes redemption*. In Exodus 6 when the people are in Egypt and things look at their blackest God commits himself to redeem (Ex. 6:6). This is the first time that the verb 'to redeem' is used in the Bible in what afterwards became its normative sense; indeed it is only used once at all in the book of Genesis. g) But chief among all the things which God revealed to Moses before sending him into Egypt was *the significance of his own name Yahweh*. The name 'Yahweh', which appears in some Bibles as 'Jehovah' and in most Bibles as 'LORD', is related to the Hebrew verb 'to be'. It is helpful to understand something

God is giving us here an object lesson, spelling out the fact that he ever mingles forbearance with his judgment. He does not spring catastrophic judgment upon people. He approaches them with gentler, less disastrous judgment. When they fail to take the warning he will try again.

of the significance of the verb 'to be' in Hebrew. Over and over again in the Old Testament you come across the familiar phrase, 'The word of the LORD came to . . .'. Now in Hebrew that is: 'The word of the LORD was to . . .'. The verb used is the verb 'to be', not a verb of motion but a verb of realistic experience. 'The word of God became a living reality to . . .'. The verb 'to be' in Hebrew means living reality, living presence, not just some bare abstract idea of existence as compared with non-existence. When God focusses attention upon this divine name, 'I am Yahweh', he is saying, 'I am the God of living presence with my people. I am the God who is with you to redeem you and to overthrow your enemies.'

4. Exodus 1-12: The God Who Acts

Things happened in Egypt exactly as God said they would happen; that is to say Moses goes to Pharaoh and begins to perform the wonders which God commanded him to perform. The reaction of Pharaoh was as God said it would be; that is to say, this series of plagues effected no salvation. Rather, the situation worsened until things reached a climax where Pharaoh broke off diplomatic relations with Moses saying, 'Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in the day thou seest my face thou shalt die.' (Exodus 10:28). So Moses is made aware that the moment of climax has come; it comes at the beginning of chapter 11, the contest of the firstborn, God's firstborn or Pharaoh's firstborn. But the contest of the firstborn, contrary to anything which has hitherto been told to us, is set in the context of the Passover.

Let us ask two questions. First of all, *Why the plagues?* Before anything has happened, God tells Moses that they will not do any good, that Pharaoh will harden his heart. Only when the contest of the firstborn comes will there be release. Why then the plagues? I suggest that the answer is this: God is giving us here an object lesson, spelling out the fact that he ever mingles forbearance with his judgment. He does not spring catastrophic

judgment upon people. He approaches them with gentler, less disastrous judgment. When they fail to take the warning he will try again. In all he will try nine times, so that when the judgment comes it has been established beyond doubt that here is a people set in its opposition to God and unwilling to hear his word. He will only bring judgment when forbearance has been exhausted.

So far so good. But if in fact it is the last judgment, the contest of the firstborn, that is going to bring the people of God out from the land of Egypt, *why the Passover?* The answer to that question is this: because when the wrath of God is applied in its essential reality, no one is safe. There were two nations in the land of Egypt, but they were both resistant to the word of God. If God comes in judgment none will escape unless God makes some prior provision which will guarantee the safety of those whom he has chosen to save. The provision which God made was the Passover lamb and its blood, and the smearing of the blood, and the safe sheltering of the people in the place where the blood had been shed.

I want to set before you the five key words in which the theology of the story of the Passover may be expressed.

a) **Propitiation.** The chosen setting for the passover is a setting of divine judgment. God purposes to come wrathfully into the land of Egypt. He says so in Exodus 12 verse 12: 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and I will smite . . .' Any Israelite who was abroad that night, having failed to heed the Passover regulations, is implicated; the fact that he is an Israelite does not exempt him. Verse 23 makes that clear: 'For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he sees the blood upon the lintel and on the two side posts the LORD will pass over the door, and will not allow the destroyer come into your houses.' So apart from the Passover blood, the destroyer would enter. All alike are under the wrath of God that

'There was not a house where there was not one dead' — in every Egyptian household the death of the firstborn, in every Israelite household the death of the lamb. We cannot resist the word substitution.

night. Nevertheless it says in verse 13, 'The blood shall be to you a token upon the house where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over.' Not 'when I see you', but 'when I see the blood I will pass over.' The blood is a token to me that you are there; but it is 'when I see the blood that I will pass over.' Putting the matter bluntly, there is something about the blood which changes God. The God who comes in wrath looks upon that household with absolute satisfaction. There is nothing there to move him to wrath any more, and he passes by. That is the truth which is safeguard by the word 'propitiation', that which appeases divine wrath. There is no reference in this narrative to any subjective state of the people of God, and therefore words like 'expiation', which signify the wiping away of sin in the heart of man, will not suffice.

b) **Security** or salvation. Verse 22 reads, 'Ye shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike

the lintel and the two side posts with the blood in the bason; and none of you shall go out of the door of this house.' The people of God are secure from destruction while they shelter in the place where the blood has been shed. God-ward the blood works propitiation, manward security.

c) **Substitution.** Is there any clue in the narrative as to why the blood of the lamb has such amazing efficacy that it can propitiate a wrathful God? We can see the answer to this most clearly if we remind ourselves that the judgment of God was in terms of death. But a death had taken place in every Israelite house already. The narrative is perhaps more truthful than the narrator intended when he says in verse 30: 'There was not a house where there was not one dead' — in every Egyptian household the death of the firstborn, in every Israelite household the death of the lamb. We cannot resist the word substitution. The narrative rubs our noses in the exact equivalence of that lamb to the people of God. See verse 3: 'They shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their father's houses, a lamb for a household: and if the household be too little for a lamb, then shall he and his neighbour next unto his house take one according to the number of the souls; according to every man's appetite ye shall make your count for the lamb.' The lamb represents exactly the number and the needs of the people of God. That was the lamb that died; that was the precious blood under which they had sheltered, the lamb that was exact in its measurement to the number and needs of the people of God. If that is not substitution then you must be very hard to please!

d) **Deliverance**, or accomplished redemption. The death of the lamb did not make redemption *possible* for the people of God; it made redemption *actual* and *inevitable*. Redemption was accomplished through the death of the lamb. Before the lamb died they could not go; after the lamb died they could not stay. We read that the Egyptians were urgent upon them to make them leave. The death of the lamb effected redemption.

e) **Pilgrimage.** Exodus 12:11 reads: 'Thus shall ye eat it; with loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S Passover.' They must eat it as those who are already committed to pilgrimage. They cannot eat the Lord's Passover and live in Egypt. They can only eat the Lord's Passover if they have made a free commitment to go walking with God out of this place wherever he will lead them. The people who went into safety through the door plastered with the blood of the lamb came out through the same bloodstained door into pilgrimage. The blood which ushered them into safety ushered them out to walk with God.

Part 3 of a series on Old Testament Covenant Theology

Covenant, Law and Sacrifice

The Revd.J.A. Motyer

Vicar of Christ Church, Westborne

We have been tracing the covenant narrative of the Old Testament from the first time that the word occurs in God's dealings with Noah, through Abraham to the normative establishment of the covenant through Moses with Israel at the time of the exodus. And we noted that those who ate the Passover were committed to pilgrimage. They had no option but to go walking with God. The destination of that walk was mount Sinai.

We might have been inclined to think Mount Sinai was purely incidental; was not the land of Canaan their destination? It is worth giving just a moment's consideration to the fact that, though God was going to lead his people into the land of Canaan in fulfilment of his promise, Mount Sinai was the primary destination towards which they were aiming when they left the land of Egypt. In Exodus 3:12 God speaks to the uncertain and hesitant Moses, 'But I will be with thee; and this shall be the token to thee that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.' To Moses the arrival at Mount Sinai and the worship of God there was the crown upon the whole enterprise. When that happened it would be to him a divine token that God had engineered the whole enterprise. In Exodus 13:17 we read, 'And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not by way of the land of the Philistines, though the way was near . . . but God led the people about . . .' God managed this march out of his own perfect design for the people and he led them on course to Mount Sinai. (See also Exodus 3:18).

The Place of the Law in the Life of God's People

We are enabled here, by a simple observation of a sequence of events, to give a biblical perspective on the place of the law in the life of the people of God. The folk who had rested underneath the sheltering blood, who were committed thereby to pilgrimage, discovered that the immediate objective of their pilgrimage was the place where they might hear God speak of the word of law and of commandment. In the Old Testament, the law is not a ladder whereby the unsaved seek in vain to climb into the presence of God. The law is a divinely given pattern of life for those who have been redeemed by the blood of the lamb.

Notice the way in which the law was set before the people. Look at one reference chosen almost at random out of many. Leviticus 19 is a chapter in which are gathered many diverse kinds of law, for the law of God spoken through Moses was a comprehensive law, covering every aspect of his people's life. Notice first of all the point at which this chapter begins: 'Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.' (v. 2) The purpose of the law was to make God's people like God himself. Now notice the echo that runs right through this chapter: at the end of verse 3, 'I am the LORD your God'; verse 10, 'I am the LORD your God'; at the end of verse 12, 'I am the LORD'; verse 14, 'I am the LORD', and so on right through the chapter. As God declares his law in summary form here, he reminds his people over and over again that these commandments are not arbitrary: The law is what it is because God is who he is. The law is a reflection of the divine nature and its design is to make God's people into the same image. There are two images of God on earth: there is the image of God in man, and there is the

Alec Motyer, until recently Principal of Trinity College, Bristol, and a leading evangelical Old Testament scholar, continues his studies in the covenants of the Old Testament.



image of God in the law of God. If a man is to manifest the image of God in which he has been made and to live a normative and truly human life, then he must deliberately pattern his life upon the law of God, because that law is the verbal statement of what God is like. The law is what it is because God is who he is and in order that man may become what he should be. That is the central place that Mount Sinai has in the covenant and in the total covenant document which is the Holy Scriptures.

Approaching the Unapproachable God through the Blood of the Covenant

Now we return to Exodus 19. Mount Sinai spoke with a yes and a no to the people of God. In Exodus 3, in the incident of the burning bush, we read, 'Moses said, I will turn aside and see this great sight why the bush is not burnt: And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the bush and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I, and he said, Draw not nigh hither' (3:3-4). Now when the people came to Mount Sinai they found the burning bush on a large scale, for it was the whole of mount Sinai that was aflame and smoking. 'And Mount Sinai was altogether shrouded in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire,' (Exodus 19:18). But while God came down to be amongst his people, there was the same ambivalence that there was in Exodus 3. 'Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God' (Exodus 19:17). But 'Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for thou didst charge us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it' (v. 23) and 'Let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the LORD.' (v. 24) In Exodus 3 God called Moses, and when Moses responded God said, 'Don't come'; in Exodus 19 Moses brings the people by divine invitation to meet God, and God says, 'Don't let them come near.' Mount Sinai speaks with a double voice. It speaks of a people who are brought near, and it speaks of a mountain with a fence round it whereby they cannot come near.

This situation is solved in the covenant ceremony of Exodus 24:4-8: 'And Moses . . . builded an altar under the mount, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath spoken will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it upon the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you on the basis of all these words'. First of all we have the symbol of covenant reality: 'Moses . . .

built an altar under the mount, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel' (v. 4). In this symbol, the twelve pillars represent the twelve tribes who are gathered round the altar. God has brought his people to himself, and there he is in the midst of his gathered people. The covenant has been fulfilled, and there it is in symbolic reality.

But how is this covenant symbol to become a reality? Look at what verses 5 & 6 say about the blood of the covenant Godward; 'And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood and put it into basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.' In the symbol, God is present as the altar; he is symbolised as the one who is present in the midst of his people in terms of sacrifice and blood. And Moses lives out that symbolism now by taking half of the blood and making it exercise its influence Godward, sprinkling it on the altar, reaching back to the Passover blood. The Passover blood, as we saw in our last study, exercised its primary influence towards God in propitiation; the holy God was turned from the wrath which was proper to him, and there was peace between him and the people who were beneath the sheltering blood. And I guess that this is why the sacrifices specified here are burnt offerings and peace offerings, two thirds of the Levitical system. The missing sacrifice was the sin

This means that, just as the blood of the covenant on the one hand establishes the relationship of peace with God by propitiation, so, on the other hand, the blood of the covenant *maintains* the relationship of peace with God for a people who are committed to walk in obedience.

offering. I offer you the suggestion that what Moses is doing here is bringing into full expression that which was first expressed in the Passover sacrifice in the land of Egypt. There, peace was established with a holy God; all that is necessary now in order to present the blood of the covenant is to bring that to its fulness by the offering of burnt offerings and peace offerings.

The blood moves first Godward in propitiation, but then, secondly, manward. 'And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the hearing of the people: and they said, All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people.' (vv. 7-8). First comes the commitment to obedience, 'All that the LORD has said we will do, and we will be obedient', then the sprinkling of the blood manward. This means that, just as the blood of the covenant on the one hand establishes the relationship of peace with God by propitiation, so, on the other hand, the blood of the covenant *maintains* the relationship of peace with God for a people who are committed to walk in obedience. God knows that the people are professing beyond their strength: 'They have well said in what they have said. O that there were such a heart in them, that they would . . . keep my commandments always.' (Deuteronomy 5:28ff) But they are professing beyond their ability. 'Very well', says God, 'I will make a provision for them.' The same blood which has made

peace with God will keep peace with God. As they walk in the way of obedience, the blood is available for them. As they stumble and fall, so the covenant blood will be available for them.

See here, *the nature of Old Testament religion*. Old Testament religion is a complex of grace, law and grace. We have seen the grace that brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, the law that was spoken to them because they were redeemed people, and now the grace that was made available for them as they committed themselves to a life of obedience. Notice how this solves thorny problems which have been raised by Old Testament specialists, e.g. the supposition that there was a battle in Israel between those who thought that religion was purely a matter of the cult and the sacrifices and those who thought that religion was purely a matter of ethical observance. It cannot be so because the Sinaitic Mosaic ground work of Old Testament religion is the binding together of the commitment to obedience and the blood of sacrifice. Naturally when the prophets found that sacrifices were getting out of place, they countered that by reasserting the priorities for the people of God. The prior call was to holiness and within that context the blood of sacrifice makes provision for the lapses of the people. It is round this point that the totality of Old Testament religion finds its unity.

Notice also, *the unity of the Old and New Testaments*. I John 2:1-2 reads, 'My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.' People of God under the new covenant have no permission to sin; they are summoned to a life of holiness. 'But if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins'; God has made a provision whereby those who are committed to obedience may, in spite of their disobedience, still be kept at peace with God and maintained in the covenant relationship. The whole of the Bible speaks with one voice.

The Efficacy of the Blood

We saw above how Mount Sinai posed a great tension between God's welcome of his people and the impossibility of sinners coming into the presence of a holy God. This tension was solved by blood. We move on now to take up the thought of the efficacy of the blood.

Notice first of all the sequence of events which binds the book of Exodus and the book of Leviticus together. The second half of the book of Exodus is concerned with the plans for the

'And Moses was not able to enter' So here again is the same tension; God is present but is not available.

tabernacle and the setting up of the tabernacle. Look first of all at chapter 29:44, 'I will sanctify the tent of meeting and the altar: Aaron also and his sons will I sanctify, to minister to me in the priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and I will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, in order that I might dwell among them.' The tabernacle is the visible focus of the covenant and the climax of redemption; he brought them out of Egypt for this very purpose, that he might dwell among them.

With what anticipation the people must have looked forward to the setting up of the tabernacle! Consider the situation at the end of Exodus: 'Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.' (40:34) God had taken up residence in the midst of the people. But in verse 35 we read, 'And Moses was not able to enter. . . .' So here again is the same tension; God is present but is not available.

How is this situation to be resolved? Look at Leviticus 1:1, 'The LORD called unto Moses, and spoke unto him out of the tent of meeting, saying 'Speak unto the children of Israel and say, When any man offers an oblation unto the LORD' Now literally that is, '*when any man brings near that which is brought near*'. The glory banishes, but the sacrifices unite, the people cannot enter, but they can come near. The sacrifices are designed to maintain a redeemed people in closeknit fellowship with their God.

The sacrifices are not available to the unconverted. If a man joined the people of God under the old covenant, he signalled that by circumcision and Passover. The Passover is the model of the one sacrifice for sin for ever because it is an Egypt sacrifice. The Passover can only be sacrificed in Egypt because it is designed to get the people out of Egypt. Once they are out it can only be remembered; it cannot be repeated. Therefore the Passover is the model of Calvary, and if a man joins himself to the people of God he must come in at that point; then the other sacrifices become available to him. They are to maintain the redeemed in fellowship with God, just as the blood of Jesus Christ his Son keeps on cleansing us from all sin. Just as that one sacrifice at Calvary is endlessly efficacious to maintain us in fellowship with God, so under the Old covenant the blood of the covenant which was offered normatively in Egypt is endlessly available in terms of the Levitical sacrifices to maintain the redeemed people in fellowship with God.

We must now concentrate in brief on two features of the sacrifices. The sacrificial system was a complex one with three categories of sacrifice; but running through its complexity and common to all its categories, there were two features: the offerer had to lay his hand upon the head of his offering, and there had to be a certain ceremonial to deal with the blood that was shed when the animal was killed.

The laying on of hands is mentioned, for example, in Leviticus 1:4, 'He shall lay his hand upon the head of the burnt offering', and you will find a similar reference for each of the other types of offering in Leviticus 3:2 and 4:4. Now in Numbers 8:11 we read, 'And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD for a wave offering, separating them from among the children of Israel that they may be to do the service of the LORD.' Verse 16 reads, 'For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel, instead of all that openeth the womb, even the firstborn of all the children of Israel. . . .' Notice the phrase, 'instead of'. The Levites were taken in substitution for the people to do in their place the service of the Lord. This relationship was symbolised by the laying on of hands. By this ceremony the Levites were appointed to stand in a certain relationship to the people who performed the laying on of hands; they were appointed to stand in their place and to fulfil certain functions on their behalf. Look now at Leviticus 16:21-22: 'Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat.' What does the laying on of hands now signify? It signifies the transference of sin and guilt. These two illustrations help us to understand the symbolism of the laying on of hands in the Levitical sacrifices. The offerer was appointing one to stand in his place, and where necessary he was off-loading onto the animal all his iniquities, transgressions

and sins, as in the case of the sin offering. The symbolism of the laying on of hands is the symbolism of the appointment of a substitute.

The key verse for understanding the meaning of the blood is Leviticus 17:11: 'The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life.'

Notice firstly that the function of the blood is stated here: 'I have given it to you . . . to make atonement.' The blood must have a meaning that enables it to fulfil the function of making

'The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life.'

atonement. Now the noun 'atonement' has the consistent meaning of 'a ransom price', 'a payment that is appropriate to discharge a certain indebtedness'. The verb 'to make atonement' means the making of such a payment. So the blood makes a payment; it envisages a situation of indebtedness and it discharges that debt. The basic literal meaning of the verb is to hide. But it is not consistent with the divine nature to sweep sin under the carpet and hide it merely out of sight. That is not dealing with sin; that is conniving with sin. And so, when God hides the sin of his people, he hides it by means of a payment that is satisfactory to discharge their indebtedness. On Passover night the wages of sin was death, and so the payment which will discharge their indebtedness is the death of the Passover lamb. The efficacy of that death is prolonged by means of the threefold system of sacrifices. If the blood is to perform the paying of a debt, then it can only be significant of a life terminated; it can only mean that a death has taken place.

Notice secondly that the life of the flesh is laid down as an equivalent payment for the debt incurred by sin. This life of the flesh is in the blood. When that blood is shed, that life is terminated and laid down as a payment for sin. The last phrase of Leviticus 17:11 fits ideally into that interpretation; literally translated the phrase is: 'For the blood makes atonement by the life.' 'By the life' is exactly the same expression as that found in Deuteronomy 19:21, where Moses announces the fundamental legal precept for all time: 'Thine eyes shall not pity, life shall go for life.' It is a preposition (in Hebrew) of exact equivalence and one that is used in commercial transactions as well as legal. Thus the sacrifices are a divine provision to maintain a redeemed people in fellowship with their God; but they do so by prolonging amongst the people of God the virtue and meaning of the initial sacrifice, where life went for life and on the basis of substitution God was propitiated and God's people were made secure.

The Final Part in a Series on Old Testament Covenant Theology

The Perfection of the Covenant

The Revd J.A. Motyer

Vicar of Christ Church, Westborne

The Old Testament envisages a perfection of the Covenant. Jeremiah was the man who used the expression 'the new covenant' (Jer. 31:31), but the idea is more widespread than the expression. The root of the idea of an envisaged perfection of the covenant was planted with Moses.

1. The Vengeance or Curse of the Covenant

In Leviticus 26:14 Moses alludes to the possibility that at the human end the covenant may be broken. He speaks in verses 14 and 15 of the people failing to do all these commandments. When such a situation arises then God 'will bring a sword upon you which will execute the vengeance of the covenant' (v. 25). That is to say, on God's side there is no repudiation of the covenant, but an act of vengeance within the covenant.

Now the central problem which calls for this vengeance is described to us in verse 41: the people are uncircumcised in heart. That is to say, the promises of God have not got through to the place that matters. But when the vengeance of the covenant is in operation because of the uncircumcised heart, God has by no means abandoned his purpose. We read in the following verses, 'Then I will remember my covenant . . . with Abraham . . . I will not reject them. Neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant' (vv. 42, 44-45). They may break the covenant, but he won't.

Look now at Deuteronomy chapter 30. 'And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, that then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity' (vv. 1-3). 'The LORD thy God will gather thee' (v. 4). 'The LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed' (v. 5). 'The LORD thy God will circumcise thy heart' (v. 6). The Lord envisages a covenant action which will reach into the heart where the failure took place, an action which will remedy that wherein the defect was discerned and bring his people into a new place of covenant blessing.

2. The Failure of Covenant Institutions

Right throughout the story of the covenant it was at the point of failure that hope was prompted. I want to mention two things briefly and dwell in more detail on the third.

a) *The Covenant Priesthood* Within the main covenant of God, there was a particular covenant which God made with the priesthood. It is mentioned to us in Numbers 25:10-13. But the priests allowed their priestly privilege to be corrupted into a superstitious ritualism, and therefore they came under the prophetic flail. Malachi at the very end of the prophetic movement looks at the priesthood of his day and finds it to be far from what God intended (see particularly Mal. 2:5-7). The priests had not only corrupted their God-given ritual into a superstition, but they had abandoned and corrupted their office of teacher. The covenant institution of priesthood was a

Alec Motyer, until recently Principal of Trinity College, Bristol, and a leading evangelical Old Testament scholar, continues his studies in the covenants of the Old Testament.



failure.

b) *The Covenant Institution of the Tabernacle/Temple* This symbolised the perfect indwelling of God amongst his people, guaranteeing their security. This is the message which Zechariah brings in chapter 2 of his prophecy. A young man runs out with a measuring rod to measure the ruins of Jerusalem. He wants to determine the future by the measurements of the past, to limit the coming Glory to the glory of David and Solomon. He wants the security of a wall around the people of God. And the reply of Zechariah is that there is a coming glory which would outshine and outmeasure anything that has gone before, and that there is no need for a wall because God himself is dwelling in the midst of his people.

Yet both the tabernacle and the temple were destroyed. There is a perfection which could not be realised in the old institutions, else they could not have fallen. Of course, part of the reason why they fell was that the people corrupted them. Jeremiah tells us in 7:11 that they had made the house of God into a den of robbers. There is need therefore both of a fuller, more complete and more operative indwelling of God, and of a reformation in the heart of man, whereby he will see and respect the holiness of the divine indweller.

Nevertheless, the vision of the perfect tabernacle, of the perfect temple, was never lost. It shines out so clearly, for example in the teaching of Micah: 'Zion for your sake shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest. But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established . . .' (3:12—4:1). The vision was never lost, even though the glory had not yet been fully and properly realised.

c) *The Covenant Institution of Monarchy*

(i) Two views of monarchy in the Old Testament? The founding of the monarchy is given in the opening chapters of 1 Samuel. The majority view at the moment is that this literature is full of 'tensions, repetitions, parallels and different points of view' (cf. Fohrer's *Introduction to the Old Testament*), so that there are two views of the monarchy in these chapters. The first view of the monarchy, which is in 1 Samuel 9:1—10:16, is that the monarchy was set up by command of Yahweh and with Samuel's wholehearted co-operation. The other view is that there was popular pressure for a king, which Samuel resisted and which was not wholly according to the mind of God; for he said concerning it, 'It is not you they have rejected, but me.' (1

Samuel 8, 10:17-27).

But it is not possible to disentangle and to hold apart the 'two accounts' of the institution of the monarchy. 1 Samuel 10:22 is well within the favourable account of the monarchy and we read that 'They asked of the LORD further, Is there yet a man to come hither? And the LORD answered, Behold he hath hid himself among the stuff.' Now why would he do that? In the favourable view of the monarchy Saul has no reason to suppose that the choice is going to fall upon him, unless he knows that someone has rigged the ballot. We need the evidence of 10:1 which falls within the other view and which explains that Saul had previously been privately anointed by Samuel, and it is only if that belongs with the other account that the two things together make sense.

I would suggest that the ambivalence within these accounts, that the monarchy is both approved of and disapproved of, is entirely within the mind of Samuel himself. It is simply the reaction of the elderly, prejudiced, conservative, disappointed Samuel.

How then are we to understand God's words, 'They have not rejected thee, but me have they rejected?' (1 Samuel 8:7). The

When the servant comes as the arm of Yahweh, he comes as God with his sleeves rolled up, himself to perform this tremendous work of substitution and priestly offering whereby the people of God supernaturally born inherit a covenant of peace and are established in righteousness.

previous theocracy, exemplified with the judges, left the leadership in the hand of God only in this sense, that it all depended upon the Lord himself to take action to provide a leader for his people at the moment of crisis. In asking for monarchy the people departed from that principle by desiring the perpetuation of a human leader under the kingship of God; so that at any moment within the institution of monarchy there would be a built-in guarantee that the leader would be there.

And now, I can only promise you that if you take this as a clue and read 1 Samuel 1—12, you will find no need of the concept of two accounts of the monarchy. The ambivalence is entirely the old man's reaction which was partly selfish, partly sour, partly good and partly godly, but within the one man's mind. But Samuel, being the godly man he was, once he had received direction from God, wholeheartedly identified himself with what God was now ready to do.

(ii) The motivation for the Monarchy. The first motivation for monarchy was *dissatisfaction*. The last chapters of the book of Judges focus around the phrase, 'There was no king in Israel and every man did that which was right in his own eyes.' (17:6, 18:1 and 19:1). In 17:6 it has a *religious* context; the man Micah is setting up his house of God. In 18:1 it has a *political* context; there is unrest amongst the tribes of the people of God and the

tribe of Dan is on the warpath. In 19:1 it was a *moral* context in the fearful story of the Levite and his concubine. The monarchy, then, was seen as the solution of all the people's ills. And yet the monarchy proved a failure. If therefore it is right to follow the clue and say that failure gives rise to hope, then the hope of the ideal king is as near as does not matter co-terminus with the origin of the monarchy itself.

The second motivation for the monarchy was *insecurity*. Samuel himself speaks the cutting words, 'When ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said to me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us.' (1 Samuel 12:12). He throws that into contrast with the faithfulness of God who had raised up Jerubbaal and Bedan and Jephthah, and Samuel himself (v. 11). They saw Nahash the king of the Ammonites, and suddenly insecurity took hold of them, and instead of looking to God to raise up a leader they said to Samuel, 'Make us a king.'

The third motivation for monarchy was *divine mercy towards a distraught people*. 'Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man out of the land of Benjamin, and you are to anoint him to be prince over my people Israel, and he shall save my people Israel out of the land of the Philistines, because I have looked upon my people, because their cry has come to me.' (9:16). In Exodus 2:25 and 3:7-9 there is a most remarkable parallelism of phrasing: the Lord looked upon his people in Egypt and heard their cry and the Lord said, 'I know their sorrows and I am come down to deliver them.' Monarchy is a covenant reaction of the same merciful God. When the initial form of the theocracy (the judge) had done its work, God brought in as an act of mercy towards sinners a new theocratic form within the covenant which he purposed to bless and to use.

That new theocratic form, the monarchy, reached its climax in 2 Samuel 7 when the Lord entered into his everlasting covenant with the house of David. The climax of it was this — and this seems to me to be the point at which monarchic expectations began to take their characteristic form — that God said, 'I will be his father and he shall be my son.' (2 Samuel 7:14). What a dramatic thing to say, that the son of David should be the son of God! You see at once where it is going to end: the son of David who is the Son of God. (It is the Psalms which open this up. See particularly Psalm 2 and Psalm 72).

So you see the cluster of expectations which centred around

But the priests allowed their priestly privilege to be corrupted into a superstitious ritualism, and therefore they came under the prophetic flail.

the king who would be the son of David and the son of Yahweh. Do not let the greatness of them alarm you. Remember that the Lord constituted Israel to be his people by overturning the forces of the world. He destroyed Egypt in order to bring out Israel. Do not be alarmed therefore that, when they looked at this Yahweh-king upon his throne, reigning there at Yahweh's right hand, they saw him implicitly as monarch of the whole earth. Their faith would not allow them to see less, for he reigns as the covenant monarch by virtue of the covenant God who overthrew the nations in order to bring his people into this kingdom, tiny as it is at this point. And yet the monarchy was a

failure. David had failed morally, Solomon had failed politically, Rehoboam had failed religiously: the kingdom was divided, and a schismatic religion took hold of the North. The monarchy did not bring the people that religious, political and moral security which the rhapsodic author of Judges thought it would. It failed; but yet the vision remained, the vision of a righteous king who would be a son of David and a son of Yahweh.

3. The Vision of Covenant Perfection.

I would like to set before you four suggested categories in which your own study of the Old Testament can take you forward under the heading of 'the perfection of the covenant that is yet to be.'

a) *The Perfection of Monarchy in the Person of the Divine David*
The Davidic king was addressed on his wedding day, 'thy throne O God' (Psalm 45:6). It seems to me to be a great misunderstanding of the Old Testament which tries to avoid the straightforward translation of these words. The psalm continues, 'Thou has loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, who is thy God, has anointed thee' (v. 7). The Old Testament is taking account of a concept which it cannot wholly organise. If it takes seriously the covenant promise, 'He shall be my son', then it must address its king as God. But since he is manifestly not God, it must safeguard the concept and live in a conscious tension, by making it clear in the immediately following verse that God is his God also. The Old Testament does not and cannot resolve that tension, but it never loses its grip on the Divine Messiah. See Isaiah 9:6-7: the child who is to be born is the prince with the fourfold name; his name shall be called 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God.' In chapter 10 verse 21 Isaiah uses that identical expression for Yahweh himself; the translation 'Mighty God' cannot be resisted at that point, and we ought not under the dogmatic pressure of prejudice to alter the translation here.

Look next at Jeremiah 23:5-6 where David is again the subject. 'Behold the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise up to David a righteous Branch.' The branch springs out of David; he has a veritable human Davidic ancestry. 'He will reign as King and deal wisely, and execute judgment In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell in safety: and this is the name by which he shall be called, the LORD is our righteousness.' The same hint comes in Isaiah 11: 'There shall come a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots.' That is to say, out of the line of David there will come this perfect King on whom the Spirit of God will rest in fulness. The branch springs out of the stock of Jesse in verse 1, but in verse 10 he is called the root of Jesse. Whereas by the way of family tree he springs out of Jesse's line, in reality Jesse exists for the purpose of the branch. The branch comes before the tree. He is the root from which Jesse comes — the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star.

b) *The Perfection of Priestly Ministry in the Lord's Servant*
We turn here to Isaiah 53. Not the relationship between chapters 53 and 54. In 54:1 the topic is children without travail, children who have been born by some other means than human. How have such children come to birth? The answer is in chapter 53: 'he shall see his seed' (v. 10). 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied' (v. 11). Out of the work of the servant there come these children born not by natural agency. Then look at chapter 54:10: 'Neither shall my covenant of peace totter or shake'; the covenant of peace is the second theme in chapter 54. Where does it arise from? From the fact that the chastisement which brought our peace was laid upon him and by his stripes we were healed (53:5). Once more chapter 54 describes that which emerges out of chapter 53.

The third element in chapter 54 is righteousness; it is mentioned in verse 14, 'In righteousness shalt thou be established', and again in verse 17, 'This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness comes from me.' It is not a righteousness of their own; it is a righteousness which comes to them from God. What is the root of that righteousness? See chapter 53:11; 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant provide righteousness for many.' (Excuse a little bit of personal translation, but that is what the text means.) Here is the doctrine of imputed righteousness in the Old Testament coming out of the priestly work of substitution.

Who is this servant? 'He is the arm of Yahweh' (53:1). That is to say he is Yahweh himself come to take personal action. Compare 52:10: 'The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations.' When the servant comes as the arm of Yahweh, he comes as God with his sleeves rolled up, himself to perform this tremendous work of substitution and priestly offering whereby the people of God supernaturally born inherit a covenant of peace and are established in righteousness.

c) *The Perfection of Regeneration by a Final Dealing with Sin*
In Jeremiah 31 we read, 'Behold the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they broke.' There is the failure, 'they broke.' 'But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days . . . I will put my laws in their inward parts, and on their heart will I write it.' (vv. 31-35) God will come and will so transform the human heart that in its very nature it becomes a replica of the law of God, so that obedience and not disobedience becomes the natural life of the people of God. That is regeneration, the gift of a new nature by the work and act of God.

d) *The Perfection of the Divine Indwelling Secured by Princely Mediation*
This is the covenant vision of the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel takes up the failure of the tabernacle and says that God is going to set that right. 'Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them.' (He latches on to what Isaiah had predicted.) 'It shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will place them, and multiply them, and I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also will be with them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people' (Ezekiel 37:26-27). The covenant promise is fulfilled in terms of an envisaged perfect indwelling of God in the midst of his people.

The temple passage in Ezekiel chapters 40-48 is a spelling out at length of the reality and the security and the blessings which ensue when God perfectly tabernacles in the midst of his people. In 45:16-17 we learn that all of these blessings depend upon the activity of a prince who is also a priest. As mediator, he secures for the people of God the benefits of the covenant through the blood of the covenant. By this princely mediation the dwelling place of God is with his people, and they inherit benefits and blessings which had long been envisaged but had not previously been accomplished.