

writer could conceive of the possibility of boasting in Gentile identity. The general Jewish evaluation of all Greco-Roman religion as idolatrous and the general Jewish rejection of Greco-Roman norms for sexual behavior are unhesitatingly maintained within early Christianity.

These differences in the ethical dimensions of conversion for Jews and Gentiles coming to faith in Christ confront us once again with the difficulties of defining conversion in the Bible. Scholarly attempts at definition struggle to embrace all significant aspects of the growing body of relevant semantic material while retaining explanatory power. The closer a definition, the more likely it is to appear incomplete. One is thus pointed back to one of the most famous biblical statements about conversion, which emphasizes its ultimate mystery: "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

[See also Apocalypticism; Baptism; Call; Covenant; Discipleship; Ecclesiology; Forgiveness; Gospel; Grace; Holiness; Reconciliation; Redemption; and Soteriology.]

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1 AND 2 CORINTHIANS

See Pauline Letters.

COVENANT

Covenant denotes a promissory agreement establishing a kinship bond between two parties by a verbal or ritual oath or its equivalent. Between unrelated parties, a covenant creates a kinship bond (Ps 89:26–28; cf. Ps 2:7); between blood relations, it renews or reconfigures it (Gen 31:43–54). The specific kinship obligations undertaken by the parties are often stated verbally or in writing, in the form of promises, conditions, and/or laws, which can be brief (e.g., Gen 31:49–53) or extensive (e.g., Deut 12–26).

Covenant Terminology. "Covenant" is the least problematic of the various terms ("testament," "pact," "alliance," "contract," etc.) used to translate the Hebrew *bērît* (289 times in the Masoretic Text). In Hebrew, one typically "cuts" a covenant (*kārat bērît*; Exod 24:8); thereafter one "establishes" or "confirms" it (Heb. *hēqûm* [*hiph.*], lit. "to cause to stand"; Lev 26:9). A faithful party "keeps" or "guards" the covenant (Heb. *šāmar*; e.g., Gen 17:10; Exod 19:5), whereas the unfaithful one "breaks" it (Heb. *hēpēr* [*hiph.*]).

Covenant partners are kin and therefore must show *hesed*, or "covenant faithfulness" (cf. Deut 7:9, 12; Isa 55:3; often translated "mercy," "lovingkindness," or "steadfast love"; 256 times in MT) toward one another, a concept rendered with the Greek *eleos* ("mercy") in the New Testament (cf. Luke 1:50, 54, 72,

78). In the psalms, *emet* and *šemuná*, “truth” and “fidelity,” can be virtual synonyms for *hesed* (cf. Pss 25:10; 26:3; 36:5, 40:10–12; 88:11; 89:1–2; 92:3; 98:3; 100:5; MT; cf. Hos 2:20). Family language—“father,” “son,” “brother”—describes persons in covenant relationship (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7; 89:24–25, 33, 49; 92:2; 98:3; 1 Kgs 20:32). Partners recall and act upon their covenant obligations when they “remember” (Heb. *zākar*) the covenant (e.g., Gen 9:15; Exod 2:24; 6:4; Luke 1:72). Because a covenant was formed by swearing a verbal or ritual oath (Heb. *nišbaʿ* [*nipʿal*]; Deut 4:31; 7:12; 8:18; 31:20; Josh 9:15; Judg 2:1; 2 Kgs 11:4; Ezek 16:8; Ps 89:3), the Hebrew terms for “oath” (*ʾālā* and *šebūʾā*) were sometimes synonyms for *bērīt* (*ʾālā*: Gen 26:28; Deut 29:11, 14; Ezek 16:59; 17:13–19; Hos 10:4; MT; *šebūʾā*: Ps 105:8–10/1 Chr 16:15–17; also Gen 26:3; Deut 7:8; Josh 9:20; 2 Sam 21:7).

Covenant rituals could include a succinct statement of the relationship being formed: thus, “I will be your father and you will be my son” (cf. 2 Sam 7:14; Pss 2:7; 89:26–27), “I will be your husband and you shall be my wife” (cf. Deut 21:13; Hos 2:2, 16, 23; Gen 2:23), and, in the case of divine covenants, “I will be your God and you shall be my people,” which scholars call the “covenant formula.” Thus, a constellation of terms are associated with covenant in scripture, and a covenant may be present even without the term *bērīt*, as in Nathan’s oracle to David (2 Sam 7:4–17), which omits *bērīt* yet was clearly recognized as a covenant grant in later scriptures (2 Sam 23:5; Ps 89:3–4, 19–37; Jer 33:19–21, 25–26; Isa 55:3; 2 Chr 13:5; 21:6).

Difficulties in Defining and Translating “Covenant.” From antiquity to the present, translating *bērīt* has been notoriously difficult. The Septuagint consistently employed Greek *diathēkē* (lit. “disposition”) with the cognate verb *diatithēmi* (lit. “to dispose”) for covenant making. Within Greek-speaking Judaism, *diathēkē* took on the nuances of *bērīt*, as it does in the New Testament (33 times in the *Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament*, 27th ed. [NA27]). However, in non-Jewish Hellenistic literature *diathēkē* typically meant “last will and testament,” and *sunthēkē*, “compact,” was actually closer to *bērīt* (cf. Septuagint [LXX] 1 Mac 10:26; 2 Mac 12:1; 13:25; 14:20, 26–27; Wis 1:16; 12:21; Isa 28:15).

Perhaps influenced by the secular meaning of *diathēkē*, St. Jerome translated *bērīt/diathēkē* with *testamentum* (occasionally *pactum* or *foedus*). In Greco-Roman law, however, *testamentum* denoted a bequest (“last will and testament”). This was very misleading, for the ancient Israelite *bērīt* shared almost nothing with Greco-Roman testamentary practices, although translators suspect testamentary concepts in some New Testament texts (e.g., Gal 3:15; Heb 9:16; but see Hahn, 2004, 2005c).

One legitimate point of convergence between Israelite *bērīt* and Greco-Roman *testamentum* occurs in those biblical covenant renewals performed by an ancestral leader just before his death: Jacob (Gen 48–49), Moses (Deut 33), Joshua (Josh 23–24), Samuel (1 Sam 12). Second Temple sources expanded this tradition in the *Testaments of Adam, Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the Twelve Patriarchs, Moses, and Solomon*, many of which are extant among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Typically in these texts a paternal figure facing imminent death gathers his sons to impart premortem blessings, commands, oracles, and warnings, along with appointing a successor(s) in order to ensure the continuity and sacred legacy of the family, precisely by covenant renewal. Thus, sometimes “testament” can convey the meaning of covenant kinship, especially the intergenerational aspects (family inheritance and succession). Still, it is inexact, for in ancient Israel’s culture, covenants accomplished more than any testament could. In fact, the covenant *was* Israel’s culture, the bond constituting its life, law, and liturgy.

Covenant and contract. Biblical *bērīt/diathēkē* must be distinguished not only from a “testament” but also from a “contract.” Ancient contracts were based on promissory agreements of limited duration between two parties involving an exchange of properties. Covenants were also promissory agreements but always reinforced by oath swearing (Heb 6:13–16), which forged permanent interpersonal bonds by divine sanctions. Contracts exchange properties (“this is yours, that is mine”), while covenants bind persons (“I am yours, you are mine”). Contracts were based on mutual self-interest; covenants required selfless loyalty (*hesed*) and sacrificial love (*ʾahābā*;

Deut 6:5). Finally, contracts were temporary; covenants were permanent, even intergenerational (Exod 20:5–6; Deut 4:9–5:3).

Defining covenant in critical scholarship. Critical scholars have debated the definition of *bērit* since Julius Wellhausen, who argued that the divine *bērit* was a late Deuteronomic (Deuteronomist source) development reconfiguring Israel's religion in terms of law and obligation and denaturalizing more primitive conceptions of God as divine kinsman (Yahwist–Elohist source). Hence, God's previously unconditional promises (e.g., the land) became strictly conditional. Defining *bērit* as "law" (*Recht*) or "obligation" (*Pflicht*) has attracted some modern scholarly support (Kutsch, 1973; Perlitt, 1969; Nicholson, 1986).

There is a valid point here: in some human covenants, the kinship bond could become a formality in order to create an obligation, and Deuteronomic texts do shift the emphasis toward law and duty. However, kinship and law are not mutually exclusive: kinship bonds create obligations that must be regulated, giving rise to law. Thus, the Deuteronomic shift reflects a different approach to covenant from its origin or definition. To varying degrees and proportions, conditions and obligations are present in all divine covenants, within all sources and traditions. Yet even in Deuteronomy the kinship and familial love between God and Israel is not forgotten (Deut 4:37; 5:10; 6:5; 7:8–13 *passim*). Therefore, defining *bērit* as merely "law" or "obligation" must be considered reductionistic. Recognizing *bērit* as a legal and sacral kinship bond has greater explanatory power, elucidating why kinship terms ("father," "son," "brother," "bride"), blood rituals (Exod 24:8; Luke 22:20), familial meals (Gen 31:54; Exod 24:11), and affection language (*'ahābā*, *hesed*, *'emūnā*) are associated with *bērit* throughout scripture.

Covenant and Kinship. Covenant and kinship are distinct but closely related concepts. Covenants were usually made between unrelated parties in order to extend kinship bonds (Abraham/Abimelech; Gen 21:21–31) but could also renew or reconfigure existing bonds (Jacob/Laban; Gen 31:43–54). Similarly, David makes a covenant with Jonathan, his brother-in-law (1 Sam 18:1–5; 20:12–17), and with tribal

leaders of Israel, reaffirming a kinship bond ("bone and flesh"; 2 Sam 5:1) while reconfiguring the relationship with David as king.

Covenant and kinship should thus be distinguished but not separated. Several modern scholars have taken this approach, including Frank Moore Cross:

Kinship relations defined the rights and obligations, the duties, status and privileges of tribal members, and kinship terminology provided the only language for expressing legal, political, and religious institutions.... Often it has been asserted that the language of "brotherhood" and "fatherhood," "love," and "loyalty" is "covenant terminology," but this is to turn things upside down. The language of covenant, kinship-in-law, is taken from the language of kinship, kinship-in-flesh. (1998, p. 11)

From a theological perspective, covenant shows how family bonds are divinely sanctioned and should thus transcend mere biology or sociological convention. At the same time, kinship takes the formal notion of covenant and adds material content from real relations in human experience and Israel's communal history.

Covenant Solemnization and Renewal. Covenants were solemnized (i.e., formally established) and subsequently renewed through rituals consisting of words and actions reflecting the kinship bond being created and the divine sanctions enforcing that bond. Blood rituals (Gen 15:10; 17:10–11; Exod 24:5–8; Jer 34:18–20), meals (Gen 26:30; 31:54; Exod 24:9–11), gifts (Gen 21:27–32), and the exchange of clothing (1 Sam 18:4) were employed as signs of the familial relationship being created. Blood could indicate both kinship (i.e., "we are one blood"; cf. Exod 24:6–8; Luke 22:20) and oath curse (i.e., "may my blood be shed if I violate the covenant"; cf. Jer 34:18–20; Heb 9:15–22; 10:26–29). Because animal sacrifice produced blood for rituals as well as food for a meal and invoked the divinity as witness, sacrifices were commonly offered to establish or renew covenants (cf. Gen 8:20–9:17; 31:54; Exod 24:5–8; Ps 50:5), giving rise to the Hebrew idiom "to cut a covenant" (*kārat bērit*).

The same kinds of rituals recorded in biblical covenant solemnizations are attested in ancient Near Eastern texts, where covenant making had a pronounced cultic–liturgical dimension. Covenants were concluded by lengthy invocations calling upon the Near Eastern gods to witness and enforce elaborate oaths with blessings for faithfulness and curses for transgression. Covenant making was a liturgy: ritual words and actions performed in the presence of divinity. The liturgical dimension of covenant making appears quite clearly in the Old Testament, where the covenant is established through cultic ritual (e.g., Exod 24:4–11) and liturgical functionaries or “celebrants” (i.e., priests and Levites) mediate the covenant blessings and curses on behalf of God (Num 6:22–27; Deut 27:14–26). In the New Testament, the book of Hebrews develops at length the idea of Christ as high priest establishing a new covenant through a new liturgy.

Covenant Typology. Previous attempts to classify covenants, usually as conditional or unconditional, have reached an impasse. Older theological debates (law vs. grace, faith vs. works) have unduly shaped how divine covenants have been classified (e.g., Mosaic as conditional, Abrahamic as unconditional) and obscured the complexity of the scriptural text, in which covenants have an admixture of both conditional and unconditional elements, including unconditional grace in the Mosaic (Deut 30:1–10) and conditional obligations in the Abrahamic (Gen 15:9–11; 17:1–14).

The focus has shifted to oath swearing in order to classify covenants. Which party swears the oath indicates on whom the obligations primarily fall, allowing identification of three basic types of covenant (Hahn, 2009, pp. 28–31): first, both parties swear and share obligations mutually (“kinship” type; Gen 21:31); second, the inferior party swears in submission and loyalty (“vassal” or “treaty” type; Gen 17:9–14); third, the superior party swears to benefit the inferior (“grant” type; Gen 22:15–18).

Applying this taxonomy to the biblical texts shows the diversity within each of the divine covenants. The Noahic and Davidic covenants are primarily grant types, with some conditional elements. The Abrahamic

and Mosaic covenants are dynamic: the Abrahamic is established as a kinship covenant (Gen 15) but later reconfigured as a vassal type (Gen 17) and finally as a grant type (Gen 22); the Mosaic, for its part, begins as kinship (Exod 24:1–8) but is reconfigured after the calf as a vassal type (Exod 34—Lev 26) and again, more severely so, in Deuteronomy.

Covenants in the Ancient Near East. Covenant making was widespread in the ancient Near East, forming the very fabric of ancient societies, including Israel. Most of these covenants were made between human parties, apart from any divine initiative. These are often referred to as “secular” covenants. However, that terminology is misleading since every covenant is wrapped in the sacred: ritual sacrifice, the invocation of the divine name, divine sanctions, etc. The gods were an essential part of covenant making and keeping, as witnesses and enforcers. However, there is still no clear ancient extrabiblical evidence of a supreme deity entering into a covenant with humans. Only in Israel did God enter into a covenant with his people. In fact, the Lord’s essential activity in scripture is making and keeping covenant(s).

The forms of human covenants in antiquity vary widely, stretching from marriages to international treaties and imperial relations. A multitude of ancient Near Eastern treaties are extant, from the second half of the third millennium (Ebla, Mari) to Hittite treaty covenants of the second millennium to neo-Assyrian texts of the first millennium B.C.E. (Esarhaddon) Whatever their scope, these covenants created personal relationships analogous to family ties (kinship-in-law), employing kinship terms to specify the duties and obligations between the parties, hence the widespread use of familiar terms with distinct covenantal associations: “father,” “son,” “brother,” “love,” “know,” “peace,” “loyalty,” etc.

Two of the larger ancient Near Eastern collections of covenant texts are the Hittite covenant treaties (fourteenth–thirteenth centuries B.C.E.) and the vassal treaties of Esarhaddon of Assyria (eighth century B.C.E.). The Hittite treaties are covenants made by the king of Hatti-land (i.e., Asia Minor, modern Turkey) with rulers of the surrounding peoples. The

treaty texts of these covenants followed a formal pattern, similar to the structure of Deuteronomy:

- I. Title and Preamble (cf. Deut 1:1–5)
- II. Historical Prologue (Deut 1–3)
- III. General Stipulations (Deut 5)
- IV. Specific Stipulations (Deut 6–11; 12–26)
- V. Dual Sanctions: Blessings and Curses (Deut 27–28)
- VI. Documentary Instructions to Store, Read, and Renew the Covenant (Deut 31:9–13)
- VII. Invocation of Witnesses (Deut 31:14–29)

Some form-critical scholars note the remarkable parallels between Deuteronomy and the Hittite treaties in support of an early dating for a form of Deuteronomy (second millennium B.C.E.). In contrast, first-millennium neo-Assyrian treaties diverge from this pattern; for example, the vassal treaties of Esarhaddon (eighth century B.C.E.) omit several elements, notably the historical prologue and blessings, although they do have some close verbal parallels with the curses of Deuteronomy.

Human Covenants in Scripture. A number of human covenants are found in the Bible: between Abraham and Abimelech (Gen 21:22–23), Isaac and Abimelech (Gen 26:26–33), Jacob and Laban (Gen 31:43–54), Israel and Gibeon (Josh 9:15), David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18:1–4; 20:8), Ahab and Ben-Hadad (1 Kgs 20:32–34), Jehoiada and the palace guards (2 Kgs 11:4). These human covenants forged sacred kinship bonds that could not to be violated without dire consequences, even if they were made under false pretense or duress (Josh 9:19; Ezek 17:11–21).

Divine Covenants in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. A pattern of divine covenants characterizes the whole economy of salvation history, starting with creation. God's "fatherly plan" for his family advances at every stage of salvation history through a series of divine covenants with chosen mediators: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus Christ. This sequence of divine covenants may be interpreted in theological terms as God accommodates himself to the developmental stages of the human family: marriage, household, tribe, nation, international kingdom, and the universal church of the new covenant.

Adamic or creation covenant. The presence of a covenant with Adam can be debated. Although the Jewish and Christian traditions have affirmed its existence, the word *bērît* is lacking in Genesis 1–3. Therefore, most scholars dispute the presence of a covenant in scripture until the explicit appearance of the term in Genesis 6:18. However, not all covenant texts employ *bērît* (notably 2 Sam 7:4–17). Moreover, the creation week concludes with the sabbath, which was understood as the "sign" of God's "covenant" (Exod 31:16–17); and the "image and likeness" of God (Gen 1:26, 28) is the language of sonship (see Gen 5:3), implying a covenantal relationship between God and Adam (cf. 2 Sam 7:14). Clearly, Adam is God's vice-regent, and vice-regents in the ancient Near East were regarded as the covenant "sons" of their "father," the "great king" or emperor (2 Kgs 16:7).

One of the earliest of the prophets, Hosea, compares Israel and Adam, both sons of God, in terms of their covenant infidelity: "But they, like Adam, transgressed the covenant" (Hos 6:7 MT, although the meaning of the text is disputed). Likewise, Sirach, referring to Genesis 2:17, says, "The covenant [*diathēkē*] from of old is, 'You shall surely die'" (Sir 14:17). For these reasons and others, even critical scholars like Wellhausen have recognized that Genesis intends to portray a divine covenant with Adam in the garden on the mountain of Eden (see Ezek 28:13–14) as a prototype of Israel, the tabernacle, and Mt. Sinai (Mosaic covenant) and later Solomon, the Temple, and Mt. Zion (Davidic covenant). Thus, the presence and importance of a divine "cosmic covenant" established in the "creation liturgy" is embedded in ancient Israel not only in Torah (Balentine, 1999) but also in Second Temple sources (*Jub.* 36:7), most notably perhaps the "Song of the Cosmic Oath" (*1 En.* 69:13–22; Murray, 1992). Jewish tradition affirms the creation narratives (Gen 1–2) as the canonical source and primordial form of God's "everlasting covenant," where God enacted a dual covenant: first, with the cosmos as consecrated on the seventh day (sabbath as covenant sign; Exod 20:8–11; 31:12–17) and, second, with Adam and Eve in the marriage covenant (Mal 2:15).

Noahic covenant. We first encounter the word *bērît* in Genesis 6:18, when God, in response to rampant sin, announced that “my covenant” would be made with one person, Noah, yet encompassing not only his family and descendants but “every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth” (Gen 9:8–17). Scholars have treated the Noahic covenant as less important than the other divine covenants (Abraham, Moses, David) because of its perceived lateness (Priestly source). However, the canonical priority and universal scope of this covenant reveal an important twofold function: first, it brings creation and covenant together; second, it relates the subsequent covenants with God and Israel to the cosmic order and all humanity. As an “everlasting covenant” (9:16), it is also a reference point for the prophets, especially where intertextual echoes are found (Hos 2:18; Isa 11:6–9; 24:3–5; 33:8–9; 54:9–10; Jer 5:22–25; 14:20–22; 33:20–22; Ezek 34:25–30; 37:26). Overtones of the Noahic covenant are also heard in other texts (Pss 74:9; 148:6).

God will “establish” (*hēqîm*) his covenant with Noah, but *hēqîm* does not usually refer to initiating but rather “upholding” or “confirming.” This suggests that God is not making a covenant for the first time but rather confirming or renewing a previous one, that is, the cosmic covenant at creation. The importance of this cosmic covenant may be underappreciated since it represents a unilateral commitment on God’s part with creation and humanity and a structuring concept for the subsequent stages of the history of salvation. The Noahic covenant opens up a theology of creation that is in close and profound dialectal relationship with covenantal history.

The narrative of Genesis 6–9 shows how God’s unilateral pledge involves a grant-type covenant, which is renewed with Noah for his faithful obedience (Gen 6:8–9; 7:5; Heb 11:7). Cultic aspects of the covenant are present: Noah erects an altar on which “every clean animal” is sacrificed as a burnt offering (Gen 8:20). This is not exceptional in the patriarchal period since fathers carried out priestly functions of covenant ritual before this was reassigned to Aaron and the Levites (Exod 32:25–29). In response to Noah’s liturgical sacrifice, God sets a rainbow in the

clouds—as the covenant sign—that God will see and “remember” (Heb. *zākar*; Gen 9:12–17).

Abrahamic covenant. Most scholars recognize at least two divine covenants with Abraham (Gen 15:1–21; 17:1–27). However, since “covenant” and “oath” can be synonymous (Gen 21:31–32; 26:28; Deut 29:12–14; Josh 9:15; Ezek 17:13–19; Luke 1:72–73), God’s self-sworn oath to Abraham in Genesis 22:15–18 (the only divine oath to any patriarch) after the *Aqedah* represents a third and climactic divine covenant, summarizing and reconfiguring the previous ones. Later scriptures appeal to this singular oath as the definitive expression of the Abrahamic covenant (Exod 32:13; Deut 4:31; 7:12; 8:18; Luke 1:72–73; Acts 3:25; Heb 6:13–17).

Critical scholarship explains the two Abrahamic covenant-making rituals as a doublet resulting from the combination of the Yahwist–Elohist (Gen 15) and the Priestly (Gen 17) sources. Synchronic analysis recognizes a literary strategy in which three covenant-making episodes (Gen 15; 17; 22) correspond to the three specific promises made to Abraham at the beginning of the narrative cycle (Gen 12:1–3). These promises are (1) great nationhood (Gen 12:2a), (2) great name (Gen 12:2b), and (3) universal blessing (Gen 12:3) (Hahn, 2009, pp. 101–35).

The promise of great nationhood is raised to the solemnity of a covenant in Genesis 15, where God’s presence passes between the pieces of the animals that had been ritually sacrificed by Abram, meaning “May I share the fate of these animals if I do not fulfill the covenant obligations” (cf. Jer 34:18). If it is implied that Abram, too, passed through the pieces while slaughtering the animals (Gen 15:10), then this is a kinship covenant; otherwise, it is a divine grant type. The covenant promises include the two components of “great nationhood”: numerous descendants (v. 5) and land (vv. 18–21). Nothing is said as yet of “great name” or universal blessing. The divine oracle predicts the Exodus, which is precisely the time period other Pentateuchal texts refer to Israel becoming a “great nation” (Gen 46:3; Deut 26:6). In fact, apart from Deuteronomy 4:6–8, these are the only passages in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament that describe Israel as a “great nation.” The covenant

with Abram in Genesis 15 is thus fulfilled principally in the Exodus and the Mosaic covenant.

The promise of “great name”—which implies kingship in ancient Near Eastern context (cf. 2 Sam 7:9)—is raised to a covenant in Genesis 17. In this vassal-type covenant, the Lord imposes the ritual oath sign of circumcision on Abram, meaning “May I be cut off like this piece of flesh should I break the covenant” (see v. 14). God lengthens Abram’s name to “Abraham,” literally “making his name great(er).” Furthermore, for the first time God promises kingship to Abraham’s line (v. 6), and the next time “great name” is applied to a human being in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament is in Nathan’s covenant oracle to David (2 Sam 7:9). Genesis 17, then, clearly anticipates the covenant of kingship granted to David (2 Chr 13:5), by which David became the suzerain (“father”) of many nations, Genesis 17:5 being fulfilled through Abraham’s descendant (cf. 2 Sam 8:1–14; 10:18–19; 12:29–31; 1 Kgs 4:21; Ps 72:17//Gen 22:18).

The promise of universal blessing is taken up in the last covenant-making episode, Genesis 22, the *Aqedah*, the near-sacrifice of Isaac the “one and only” son (Heb. *yāhîd*; Gen 22:2, 12, 16; cf. John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18) on the wood at the top of the future Temple Mount (cf. Gen 22:2; 2 Chr. 3:1), which evokes the only self-sworn oath of God to any of the patriarchs (Gen 22:15–18), an oath recognized by subsequent scriptures as the definitive form of the Abrahamic covenant (Exod 32:13; Deut 4:31; 7:12; 8:18; *As. Mos.* 3:9; Luke 1:72–73; Acts 3:25; Heb 6:13–17). For the first time the promise of universal blessing (Gen 12:3) is made a benefit of the covenant (Gen 22:18; the tradition—Acts 3:25; Gal 3:8; LXX, Vulg.—takes the *hitpa’el* as a passive). In the Christian canon, this clearly anticipates the sacrifice of the “one and only” Son of God on the wood of the cross near the Temple Mount, ratifying a new covenant and unleashing the blessing of the Holy Spirit upon all nations (Gal 3:6–17, esp. 13–14 Greek). Thus, from a biblical-theological perspective, the progressive reconfiguring of the Abrahamic covenant through Genesis 15, 17, and 22—interpreted canonically—grounds and anticipates the subsequent divine covenants (Mosaic, Davidic, New) in sacred history.

Mosaic covenant. The scriptures present the Exodus from Egypt to Sinai (Exod 1–18) as a demonstration of God’s faithfulness to the covenant with Abraham and his “seed” (Gen 22:18; Exod 2:24). God promises Israel the status of “royal priesthood” (Exod 19:5–6 LXX; 1 Pet 2:9)—an Adamic status (cf. 1QS 4:23)—contingent upon keeping (Heb. *šāmar*) the covenant (Exod 19:5). The covenant law is relatively brief, including major principles (Exod 20) and civil applications (Exod 21–23). The kinship-covenant solemnization (Exod 24:1–8) includes a sacrificial blood ritual mutually accepted by God (represented by the altar) and the people (Exod 24:6, 8), followed by a shared familial meal (Exod 24:10–11).

The golden calf rebellion breaks the covenant, triggering the curse of death symbolized by the blood ritual (Exod 32:10; Heb 9:16–18); but Moses pleads the oath of the Abrahamic covenant (Exod 32:13//Gen 22:15–18) to persuade God to relent. God renews the covenant (Exod 34:1–28) but not without reconfiguration: Levites replace firstborn in priestly service (Exod 32:29; Num 3:11–13), and a substantial amount of cultic legislation is added into the covenant (Lev 1–25), concluding with the statement of blessings and curses (Lev 26) that marks the end of a covenant document.

Wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites break covenant fidelity repeatedly (Num 11; 12; 14; 16; 17), culminating in a calamitous sin by the second generation at Baal-Peor (Num 25:1–15), a kind of recapitulation of the calf debacle, resulting in another delimitation of the priesthood (Num 25:12–13). The defections of Israel in the wilderness, especially Baal-Peor (cf. Deut 4:3; Josh 22:17; Ps 106:28), necessitate a second covenant renewal and reconfiguration: the book of Deuteronomy. Structured like a vassal treaty, the Deuteronomic covenant is distinguished from Sinai (i.e., “Horeb”; see Deut 29:1). Moses now becomes Israel’s lawgiver and gives them many novel and unanticipated statutes: permission for monarchy (17:14–20), total (*herem*) warfare (20:16–18), usury (23:20), divorce, and remarriage (24:1–4). Jesus will teach that these Deuteronomic statutes were not the divine ideal but concessions to Israel’s “hardness of heart” (Matt 19:8–9).

Davidic covenant. Under the Davidic covenant, the Lord elevates the nation of Israel to an international kingdom or empire. This covenant is announced in Nathan's prophetic oracle (2 Sam 7:5-16), although the word "covenant" (*bērit*) only appears in other texts (2 Sam 23:5; Pss 89:19-37; 132:1-18; Isa 55:3; 2 Chr 13:5; 21:7; Jer 33:20-22). Distinctive aspects of the Davidic covenant include an everlasting throne (2 Sam 7:13-16), the gift of divine sonship for anointed heirs (2 Sam 7:14; Pss 2:6-9; 89:26-27), and the centrality of Zion and the Jerusalem Temple, to which pilgrims come from all Israel and the nations (1 Kgs 8:41-43; Isa 2:1-4; 56:6-7).

After a brief period of Solomonic glory, when the features of the Davidic covenant seemed to be partially fulfilled (1 Kgs 4-10), the kingdom entered a long period of division and decline (1 Kgs 12-2 Kgs 25), during which the prophets announced a new covenant (Jer 31:31; compare Isa 55:1-3; 59:20-21; 61:8-9; Ezek 34:25; 37:26). This new covenant is set in sharp contrast to the broken Mosaic covenant (Jer 31:32; cf. Ezek 20:23-26; Isa 66:3-4) but in continuity with the Davidic covenant, which it would restore in a transformative manner (Jer 33:14-26; Isa 9; 11; 55:3; Ezek 37:15-28).

Covenant in the Prophets. Most of the prophetic books ("Latter Prophets" in Judaism) reflect a strongly covenantal perspective on the history of Israel. The prophetic ministry involved both condemnation and consolation (Jer 1:10): the prophets condemned Israel for violating the Mosaic covenant (Jer 31:32) but consoled Israel with the promise of a new (or renewed) covenant in days to come (Jer 31:31).

The Mosaic covenant and the new covenant in the prophets. The violated Mosaic covenant forms the basis for prophetic oracles of judgment (Isa 5:24; Jer 6:19; Ezek 22:6-16; Hos 4:6; Amos 2:4; Hab 1:4; Zeph 3:4; etc.) because Israel has triggered the covenant curses (Lev 26:14-46; Deut 28:15-68). Typically, Israel did not neglect cultic regulations (Isa 1:10-15) but the moral law (Isa 1:16-23) and worshipped foreign gods (Isa 2:8; Jer 2:20-25; Ezek 14, etc.), spurning the first and fundamental commandment (Exod 20:3).

Several prophetic texts (Hos 1-3; Isa 1:21-26; 5:1-7; 54:4-8; Jer 2:1-3:20; Ezek 16; 23) construe the Sinai covenant as a betrothal of the Lord and Israel, which Israel subsequently violated like an unfaithful spouse. Yet the prophets foresee a coming new or renewed covenant of God and Israel as a resumption of nuptial love between spouses (Ezek 16:59-63; Isa 49:14-19; 54:4-8; 62:1-5; Hos 2:14-3:5; Jer 31:2-4; 33:10-11; Zeph 3:14-18). Israel understood marriage as a covenant between man and woman (Mal 2:13-16); therefore, the prophets found it apt to describe Israel's covenant in marital terms.

The prophets employ various terms and images to describe the anticipated new covenant in the coming age. Jeremiah alone employs the exact term "new covenant" (31:31-34). Jeremiah contrasts the "new covenant" with the broken Mosaic covenant (31:32). The "new" will be superior because it is established by divine initiative for interior transformation: "This is the covenant that I will make... I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts" (v. 33). Further, it will involve divine intimacy ("They shall all know me," v. 34) and forgiveness of sin ("I will remember their sin no more," v. 34).

Several other prophets speak of the same reality, employing alternative diction or imagery: "everlasting covenant," "covenant of peace," or nuptial motifs. Isaiah indicates that the mysterious "servant of the LORD" will actually *become* a covenant for the people (Isa 42:6; 49:8). God will resume his marital covenant with his people (54:4-8), constituting a "covenant of peace" as unbreakable as the Noahic (Isa 54:9-10). God will invite the poor to a free banquet, which will inaugurate them into an "everlasting covenant" described as God's *hesed* ("covenant fidelity") to David (Isa 55:1-3; cf. 61:8). Like Jeremiah, Isaiah describes this covenant as God placing his Word and Spirit in the mouths of his people (Isa 59:21).

Ezekiel, too, foresees the renewal of God's marital covenant with his people (Ezek 16:59-63), when God will shepherd his people through the Davidic king (34:11-24; 37:24-28), creating an everlasting "covenant of peace" (34:25; 37:26) characterized by the blessings of Eden (34:25-30; 36:39-35, i.e., renewing

the Adamic/creation covenant), the forgiveness of sins, and interior renewal: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you... A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you" (36:25-26).

The Edenic imagery also appears in Hosea, who describes the coming resumption of God's nuptial covenant with Israel in language taken from the creation narratives: "On that day... you will call me, 'My Husband'.... And I will make for you a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow... and make you lie down in safety. And I will take you for my wife forever" (2:16-19).

Other covenants in the prophets. As seen, the prophets employ Edenic motifs and references to the renewal of the creation covenant (Jer 31:12, 35-36; Isa 51:3; 65:17-25; 66:22-23; Ezek 34:25-28; 36:29-36; cf. Hos 14:5-7; Amos 9:13-15) and/or the Noahic (Isa 54:9-10). Surprisingly, the prophets seldom mention the Abrahamic covenant, except at the end of Micah, where this patriarchal covenant is the motive for God's faithfulness and compassion on Israel, in a passage often considered a late redactional ending to the book (Mic 7:18-20). Two prophets develop the theology of the Levitical covenant: Jeremiah insists it is unbreakable (Jer 33:14-28), whereas Malachi foresees an eschatological purification of this covenant, its priesthood, and the cult (Mal 2:1-9; 3:1-4). Finally, the prophets include several emphatic oracles about the restoration of the Davidic covenant economy (Isa 9:1-7; 11:1-5, 10; 55:1-3; Jer 23:5-8; 30:8-9; 33:14-26; Ezek 34:23; 37:24-28; Amos 9:11-12; Mic 4:8; 5:1-4; Zech 9:9-10; 12:7-9). Jeremiah famously declares the Davidic covenant as unbreakable as God's covenant "with the day and with the night" (33:20-21; cf. Gen 1:14-19; 8:20-9:17, esp. 8:22); therefore the "new covenant" (31:31) in the latter days (and its analogues in Isaiah and Ezekiel) must restore the essential features of the Davidic covenant. Particularly striking is Ezekiel's juxtaposition of the restoration of the Davidic monarch with the "covenant of peace" (34:23-25; 37:24-26). This trajectory continues in the gospels, where Jesus's new covenant ministry is draped with Davidic covenant motifs.

Covenant in the Psalms. The psalms celebrate Israel's covenant relationship to God. Although the term *b'rit* is used infrequently (albeit strategically) in the psalms (21 times in MT), other covenant terms permeate the Psalter (esp. *hesed*, 130 times; *'emet*, 37 times; and *'emuná*, 22 times), which invariably presumes the worshiper is a party to Israel's covenant with the Lord. This refrain summarizes the message of the Psalter: "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, and his *hesed* ["covenant love"] endures forever" (see Pss 107 passim; 118:1-4, 29; 136 passim).

A few psalms stress the importance and excellence of the Mosaic covenant law (Pss 1; 19; 119). However, the Davidic covenant dominates the redactional structure of the Psalter, with royal Davidic psalms at key positions:

- Psalm 2, probably the ancient royal coronation hymn, forms (with Ps 1) part of a dual introduction to the Psalter, exalting the Davidic covenant (i.e., the "decree" [*hōq*] in v. 7) by which the king enjoys divine sonship (v. 7) and, therefore, universal suzerainty (vv. 8-9).
- Psalm 72 concludes book II by exalting the reign of Solomon as a manifestation of God's faithfulness to his covenants with David (cf. 72:8 with 89:25-27) and Abraham (cf. 72:17 with Gen 22:18).
- Psalm 89 concludes book III with an emotional low point. After the most emphatic doxology of the Davidic covenant in all scripture (89:1-37), the psalmist laments its apparent total destruction (89:38-52).

Read canonically, book IV (Pss 90-106) is a theological meditation in response to the trauma of the collapse of the Davidic covenant (Ps 89:38-52). Without the Davidic king, Israel seeks consolation from another covenant mediator, Moses (Ps 90, the only Mosaic psalm), who leads them to recognize that the Lord is still the refuge of his people (Ps 91) and still reigns as king over all the earth (Pss 93-98). Book IV concludes with two historical retrospectives that seek to make theological sense of the exile: Psalm 105 recounts Israel's early history, taking note of God's fidelity to his covenants, especially the

Abrahamic (vv. 6–11, 42). In contrast, Psalm 106 notes Israel's covenant violations from Egypt onward, provoking God's just punishment. Nonetheless, God remembers his covenant with them (106:45). The psalm ends with a prayer for salvation and restoration.

Book V of the Psalter begins, "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his *hesed* endures forever!" (107:1). God has answered the prayer of Psalm 106 and gathered his people back from distant lands (Ps 107:3). After giving many examples of God's fidelity, the psalm calls the worshipers to "consider the *hesed* of the LORD" (v. 43). This is the joyful theme of book V, whose heart consists of the 15 psalms of ascent (120–130), psalms for pilgrimage to the rebuilt Temple. Psalms celebrating the Davidic covenant occur at strategic points in the flow of the book (Pss 110; 132), and a Davidic collection (Pss 138–145) precedes the symphonic finale of hallelujah psalms (146–150), indicating that the Psalter's editors, for all the tumults of history, have not abandoned hope in the fulfillment of God's covenant with David (cf. 144:10; 145:13; cf. 2 Chr 13:8) because his "*hesed* endures forever" (136:1 *passim*).

Covenant in the Wisdom Literature. Scholars have often regarded the Wisdom literature as isolated from the covenant traditions of Israel. For example, Gerhard von Rad was unable to incorporate these texts in his *Old Testament Theology* (1965) and dealt with them in a separate volume (1972). However, the canonical tradition ties the Wisdom literature to the Davidic covenant by attributing it largely to Solomon. Canonically, the Wisdom literature, with its international character, functions as the form of instruction associated with the international empire of the Davidic covenant, much as the Mosaic law was the form of instruction associated with the national covenant made at Sinai.

Proverbs mentions *bērît* only once (2:17), but the dominant metaphor of Lady Wisdom as the ideal wife, and marital fidelity as paradigm of wise behavior, in the prologue (chs. 1–9) and epilogue (31:10–31) suggests that the reader, in some mysterious way, should enter into a covenant relationship (i.e., a marriage) with divine Wisdom. For all its alleged eroticism, the Song of Songs also extols the virtue of fidelity

within the marriage (i.e., covenant) relationship (Song 3:11; 4:12; 8:8–10); and from Second Temple times the Jewish tradition read it in light of the powerful nuptial oracles of the prophets as a poetic account of Israel's covenant relationship with the Lord and/or the Messiah. In the Catholic canon, the Wisdom of Solomon employs romantic and nuptial imagery from the Song of Songs to develop Proverb's trajectory of describing Lady Wisdom as the ideal covenant partner or spouse (Wis 7–9). Finally, Sirach integrates the Wisdom tradition with other elements of the religious culture of Israel: the (covenant) law, the (covenant-renewing) liturgy, and sacred history (of divine covenants). Thus, Sirach identifies the book of the covenant law of Moses as the singular instantiation of divine Wisdom (Sir 24:23–25) and Israel's sacred history as a series of covenants (see Sir 44–49; Noahic, 44:17–18; Abrahamic, 44:19–23; Mosaic, 45:1–5; Levitical, 45:6–26; Davidic, 47:1–22) culminating in the celebration of the covenant-renewing liturgy by the current high priest (Sir 50:1–24). The liturgy is the climactic visible expression of God's wisdom in Israel since wisdom begins and ends with "fear" (i.e., worship) "of the LORD" (Prov 1:7; Sir 1:18).

Covenant in the Chronicler. Chronicles is a work of prophetic historiography reflecting a profound covenantal worldview. The chronicler recalls the postexilic people of Judah to God's original intention to establish sacred covenant kinship with Israel, all humanity, and creation itself.

The chronicler focuses on the Davidic covenant because it establishes the Kingdom and the liturgy of the Jerusalem Temple. Indeed, this covenant culminates history since it fulfills and advances God's purposes in all the previous covenants—especially the Mosaic and Abrahamic—and in creation itself.

The chronicler repeatedly refers to the liturgical assembly of Israel in the Jerusalem Temple as the *qāhāl* (LXX *ekklēsia*), a term he uses more (37 times) than any other canonical book. In the chronicler's theocratic vision, the kingdom of Israel under David and Solomon is the Kingdom of God on earth, a liturgical empire whose heart is the *qāhāl*, the worshiping assembly of the 12 tribes, who exist to praise the God of Israel and all creation.

The concept of God's Kingdom is rare in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, and the phrase "Kingdom of God" never occurs. Chronicles alone employs the equivalent phrase "Kingdom of the LORD" (*malkût/mamleket Yahweh*), identifying it with the kingship given to David "by a covenant of salt," such that the "kingdom of the LORD" is in the "hands of the sons of David" (2 Chr 13:8; cf. 1 Chr 28:5). The chronicler refers to God's kingdom or reign 16 times, always in relation to the Davidic kingdom. No other kingdom in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament is established by a covenant or identified as divine. David's covenant manifests God's reign on earth. Thus, the chronicler shows the threefold interrelationship between (1) the Davidic covenant, (2) the *ekklēsia*, and (3) the Kingdom of God later presumed by the New Testament documents, especially Matthew (e.g., 16:18–19). Like Chronicles, Matthew begins with a Davidic genealogy, underscoring the unity of God's covenantal plan in the Old and New Testaments. Furthermore, as in Chronicles the Davidic covenant is renewed under Hezekiah and Josiah by reconstituting the *qāhāl* of Israel in Jerusalem around the Passover; so in the Gospels Jesus institutes the Eucharist as the liturgy of the new covenant Passover (Luke 22:20), conferring (Greek *diatithēmi*, possibly "covenanting") the (Davidic) kingdom of his Father upon the 12 (22:29) as representatives and viceroys over the reconstituted 12 tribes of Israel (22:30).

Covenant in the New Testament. The term "covenant" (Gk *diathēkē*) occurs only 33 times in the New Testament, and while those occurrences are indeed strategic, the question may still be asked why, with the exception of the book of Hebrews and certain passages of Paul (e.g., Gal 3–4), there is relatively little explicit discussion of the covenant(s) in the second half of the Christian canon. Some propose that the concept of covenant had become marginalized by the New Testament era, but this is unlikely in light of the Second Temple literature, which shows no abatement of covenant thought vis-à-vis the Old Testament.

Others, following E. P. Sanders (1976, 1977), argue that covenant thinking had become ubiquitous in

the Judaism of Jesus's day, such that covenant concepts were assumed without being mentioned explicitly. Surely there is much truth in this view. Certain terms like "son of David" (10 times in Matthew) powerfully evoked expectations of covenant fulfillment even without the term *diathēkē*. Jesus speaks and acts throughout the Gospels in ways that recall and recapitulate the great covenant mediators of the Old Testament, especially Moses and David, implying that the covenants they mediated are coming to fulfillment in himself.

Finally, one can observe, in moving from the Old to the New Testament, a transition from *explicit covenant language* to *explicit kinship language*. From the start of his ministry, Jesus uses divine kinship terminology with unprecedented frequency and force. In the Sermon on the Mount alone, Jesus refers to God as Father 17 times, more than in the entire Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The language and theology of divine sonship in the Johannine and Pauline literature and Hebrews far exceeds the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament's few references to divine filiation, which never include the phrases "sons of God" (cf. Matt 5:9; Luke 20:36; Rom 8:14–19; Gal 3:26) or "children of God" (cf. John 1:12; 11:52; Rom 8:16, 21; 9:8; Phil 2:15; 1 John 3:1, 10; 5:2) applied to Israel. Covenants were always ordered to the establishment of kinship. In the new covenant, Jesus effects a fulfillment of the old that far exceeds Israel's hopes; as a result, the language of divine kinship must increase, while that of covenant must decrease.

Covenant in the Gospels and Acts. All the Gospels portray the person and ministry of Jesus as fulfilling the promises associated with the various covenants of the Old Testament. This is especially clear in Matthew and Luke.

Matthew. The first verse of Matthew is formulated according to Israelite covenant expectations: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." The phrase "book of the genealogy of" links Jesus to Adam (cf. Gen 5:1) as a new Adam, a new father of the human race, who restores the peace with God characteristic of the original creation covenant. Further, Jesus is not simply "a son" but "the son" of David and Abraham, that is,

the "seed" or heir of both their covenants (cf. Gen 22:18 MT; 2 Sam 7:12 MT), through whom solemn promises would be fulfilled: the blessing of all nations (Gen 22:18) and establishment of an everlasting kingdom (2 Sam 7:12–16). Matthew proceeds to highlight Jesus's Davidic descent (1:1–17), birth in David's city Bethlehem (1:18–25), veneration by wise men of the East like Solomon (1 Kgs 4:30, 34), choosing of 12 officers over Israel (Matt 10:1–6; cf. 1 Kgs 4:7) and the royal steward (Matt 16:19; Isa 22:20–22), entering Jerusalem on the royal donkey (Matt 21:6–7; 1 Kgs 1:48–50), accepting acclamation as the "Son of David" (Matt 20:30–31; 21:9, 15), being "tested with hard questions" like Solomon (Matt 22:15–46; cf. 1 Kgs 10:1; 3:16–28; 4:34), recognition as "King of the Jews" by the Roman authorities (Matt 27:37), and finally claiming worldwide authority according to the Davidic covenant promise of Psalm 2:8–9 (Matt 28:18–20). These are only the most obvious connections to Davidic covenant concepts.

Matthew also shows Jesus to be a new Moses: he ascends the mountain to teach divine law (Matt 5:1), promising to "fulfill" every "jot and tittle" (5:18 KJV) of the Mosaic Torah by, among other things, purifying and clarifying it (Matt 5:21–48). Matthew organizes Jesus's teachings in five major discourses (Matt 5–7; 10; 13; 18; 24–25), recapitulating the five books of Moses. Yet, like the other Synoptics, Matthew develops his most explicit and significant covenant theology in the Eucharistic institution narrative (Matt 26:26–29). Jesus's words over the cup (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24 NA27) echo Moses's very phrase "blood of the covenant" (*to aima tēs diathēkēs*) found only in the solemnization ceremony in Exodus 24:8 (LXX). With the 12 apostles on Mt. Zion, Jesus recapitulates and surpasses what Moses did with the 12 tribes at Mt. Sinai.

Luke. Mosaic covenant themes also appear in Luke since Jesus brings about both a new Passover and a new Exodus (Luke 9:31; 22:14–20). However, as in Matthew, Abrahamic and Davidic themes are more prominent, especially in the infancy narratives. At the annunciation, Gabriel's prophecies about Jesus (Luke 1:32–33) summarize Davidic covenant prom-

ises (2 Sam 7:4–14). Mary's "Magnificat" praises God for the "remembrance" (Gk *mimnēskomai* = Heb. *zākar*) of his "mercy" (Gk *eleos* = Heb. *hesed*) as he "spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed [Gk *sperma*] forever" (Luke 1:54–55), alluding to the covenant oath of Genesis 22:15–18. Likewise, Zechariah's song, the "Benedictus" (Luke 1:68–79), is full of Hebrew covenant terminology: "visit," "redeem," "remember," "mercy," "oath," "swore." God is keeping promises to the "house of David" (1:69), performing the "mercy" (*eleos/hesed*) promised to the fathers and fulfilling the "holy covenant" (*diathēkē agias*), identified as the "oath which he swore to Abraham" (1:72–73; cf. Gen 22:15–18). Like Matthew, Luke highlights the Davidic significance of the Bethlehem birthplace (2:4, 11), including the Davidic image of shepherds called to witness the birth (2:8–20; cf. 1 Sam 16:11–12). Luke records the divine voice echoing the key verse of the royal Davidic coronation psalm (Ps 2:7) at Jesus's baptism (Luke 3:22//Matt 3:17; also at the transfiguration, Luke 9:35//Matt 17:5) and traces Jesus's lineage back to David (Luke 3:23–31). Later, Jesus is hailed as "Son of David" (18:38–39), tells a parable likening himself to one who will receive "kingly power" (19:12, 15), and receives acclamation as the "king who comes in the name of the Lord" (19:38).

As in the other Synoptics, the institution narrative is key to Luke's covenant theology. Luke alone records Jesus identifying the cup as "the *new covenant* in my blood" (i.e., "consisting of my blood," 22:20), echoing Sinai (Exod 24:8) but, more specifically, Jeremiah's famous prophecy of the "new covenant" (Jer 31:31) of interior transformation (Jer 31:33–34). Jesus's identification of his blood (and, by extension, his body) as the "new covenant" fulfills the otherwise mysterious prophecy of Isaiah that the servant of the Lord would *become* a covenant to the people (Isa 42:6; 49:8). At the same supper, Jesus "covenants" (Greek *diatithēmi*) a kingdom to the Twelve so that they may "sit on thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel," (22:30) a Davidic kingdom image (cf. 1 Kgs 4:7; Ps 122:5). Thus, he links the "new covenant" to a new economy for God's people, involving a restoration—but

also transformation—of the governing structure of the kingdom of David.

John. Covenant imagery in John is more subtle as John exhibits the tendency to replace the language of covenant with the language of kinship (sonship, childhood, divine fatherhood). Nonetheless, John also ties Jesus to the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. John four times identifies Jesus as “the only-begotten [Gk *monogenēs*] son” (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18), picking up the image of Isaac as the “one and only” (Heb. *yāhīd*) son of Abraham in Genesis 22 (vv. 2, 12, 16). Jesus is the new “one and only” son through whom blessing will flow to all nations (Gen 22:18). Furthermore, from the outset John identifies Jesus as the true Temple builder (John 2:19–21), the role of the son of David according to the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7:13). Jesus performs seven “signs” in connection with seven Temple feasts (2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 9:14; 10:22; 11:55), to show how the risen Christ is the new Temple (John 2:19–20). Jesus’s declaration of a “new commandment” (13:34) implies a new covenant order since law and covenant were inextricably bound in Israel’s tradition. This “new commandment” is precisely that life-giving “love” (*agapē*) that he embodies and imparts to all believers (13:34; 15:12; 17:23–26). *Agapē* here probably renders Hebrew *hesed*, with all its covenant connotations.

Acts. In Acts, we continue to see Jesus’s ministry interpreted especially in light of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. To cite the most important examples, in Peter’s first sermon (at Pentecost), he proclaims Jesus as the promised Son of David (Acts 2:22–36; esp. 2:30), even citing the “oath” sworn to David (2:30; cf. Ps 89:3, 34–37). In his second sermon (in the Temple), he identifies Jesus as the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant promise in Genesis 22:18 (Acts 3:25–26). For his part, Paul combines both Abrahamic and Davidic fulfillment themes in his first recorded sermon (Acts 13:16–41; esp. vv. 17, 22–23, 26, 32–39). Two chapters later, James sees the church’s growth among Jews and Gentiles as a fulfillment of Amos’s promise that God would restore the fallen “tent” (i.e., kingdom) of David (Acts 15:13–18; cf. Amos 9:11–12).

Covenant in Paul. In Paul, we find some of the most explicit covenant theology in the New Testament.

Paul contrasts the “old” and “new” covenants, linking the “old” to tablets of stone, a written code, death, and a veil (i.e., Mosaic images) and the “new” to the Spirit, life, freedom, and unveiled glory (2 Cor 3:1–18). In Galatians 3–4, Paul argues that the new covenant brought by Christ fulfills the promises and terms of the grant-type Abrahamic covenant (3:6–9, 14, 16, 29; 4:28), which is prior to, and more fundamental than, the vassal-type Mosaic covenant with its laws and curses (3:15–18), which were provoked by Israel’s sin (3:19). Thus, the “old” covenant is associated with Sinai (i.e., Moses; Gal 4:24), and the “new” covenant is associated with the true Jerusalem (i.e., David’s city; Gal 4:26; 2 Sam 5:6–7) and with Isaac (i.e., heir of Abraham’s covenant; Gal 4:28). The same fundamental contrast between the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, with the gospel fulfilling the Abrahamic while surpassing the Mosaic, undergirds the theological argument in Romans 3–4. Paul’s covenant thinking, however, is finally absorbed by the reality of divine filiation (Rom 8:14–17) and familial love (8:31–39) offered to all in Christ. In Ephesians, somatic and marital language predominates: even the Gentiles enter the “covenants of promise” (i.e., the Abrahamic and Davidic; Eph 2:12) and become part of Christ’s body (Eph 2:16; 3:6) in a one-flesh spousal (= covenantal) union (Eph 5:29–32).

Covenant in Hebrews. Containing over half the occurrences of *diathēkē* in the New Testament (17 of 33), the book of Hebrews is unusual for its emphasis on the concept of covenant as a *cultic* and *liturgical* institution. This is most obvious in Hebrews 8–9, where the author contrasts two covenant orders: the old (Heb 8:3–9:10) and the new (Heb 9:11–28). Both covenant orders have a cultus that includes a high priest (Heb 8:1, 3; 9:7, 11, 25; *archiereus*) or “celebrant” (Heb 8:2, 6; *leitourgos*) who performs ministry (Heb 8:5; 9:1, 6; *latreia*) in a tent-sanctuary (Heb 8:2, 5; 9:2–3, 6, 8, 11, 21; *skēnē*), entering into a holy place (Heb 8:2; 9:2–3, 12, 24; *agios*) to offer (Heb 8:3; 9:7, 14, 28; *prospheō*) the blood (Heb 9:7, 12, 14, 18–23, 25; *aima*) of sacrifices (Heb 8:3–4, 9:9, 23, 26; *thusiai*), which effects purification (Heb 9:13; *agiazō*; Heb

9:14, 22–23; *katharizō*) and redemption (Heb 9:12, 15; *lutrōsis*) of worshipers (Heb 8:10; 9:7, 19; *laos*; Heb 9:9, 14; *latreuontes*) who have transgressed cultic law (Heb 8:4; 9:19; *nomos*).

The two aspects of the covenant, legal and liturgical, are reciprocally bound. On the one hand, cultic acts (i.e., sacrificial rites) establish the covenant (Heb 9:18–21, 23) and renew it (Heb 9:7; 10:3). On the other hand, the covenantal law provides the legal framework for the cult, determining the suitable persons, materials, acts, and occasions for worship (Heb 7:11–28; 9:1–5). Liturgy mediates the covenant, while law regulates the liturgy.

Law and liturgy are united in Christ, the king (legislator) and high priest (celebrant). This dual role, announced already in Hebrews 1:3, is brought to its quintessential expression by the use of Melchizedek, the priest-king (Heb 7:1), as a principal type of Christ.

Western modernity has tended to privatize liturgy and secularize law, but Hebrews confronts us with a radically different vision: law and liturgy as distinct but inseparable aspects of a single covenant relationship between God and his people. Hebrews 9:16–18 is a notorious interpretive crux, where the author appears to vacillate capriciously between the Jewish and secular meanings of *diathēkē* (i.e., between “covenant” and “will” or “testament”) because he speaks of a *diathēkē* being enforced at death. However, since covenant breaking triggered a death curse in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen 17:14; Exod 32:7–10; Ezek 17:16), the crux may be resolved by presuming the author is still speaking in verses 16 and 17 of the broken *diathēkē* of Moses (*tē prōtē diathēkē*) from verse 15, translating in this fashion (Hahn, 2004, p. 317): “For where a [broken] covenant is involved, the death of the one who made it must be endured. For a [broken] covenant is enforced upon dead bodies, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it still lives. Hence even the first covenant was not ratified without blood” (author’s translation).

Covenant in the Catholic Epistles and Revelation. Covenant language in the Catholic Epistles is rare because those of James, Peter, and Jude are too short and practical to develop abstract covenant concepts and the Johannine Epistles exhibit the tendency to

move toward kinship language (1 John 3:1–2, 10; 5:1–2). Nonetheless, the covenant theology of Second Temple Judaism does provide the background of the Catholic Epistles. James, for example, writes to “the 12 tribes in the Dispersion” (Jas 1:1), thus conceptualizing the nascent church as the reconstitution of Israel. At its roots, this concept of the church must go back to the traditions underlying the Eucharistic institution narratives of the Gospels, where Jesus’s words echoed Moses’s covenant solemnization ritual at Sinai, indicating that the Twelve in the upper room were the nucleus of a new Israel gathered around a new covenant. The same theology is found in 1 Peter 2:4–10, where the author first identifies the Christian community as a new Temple (2:4–8)—a central element of the Davidic covenant economy (2 Sam 7:13)—and then speaks to them as a “royal priesthood, a holy nation,” echoing the promise addressed to Israel gathered at Sinai (Exod 19:5–6). But the promise to Israel was contingent on keeping the covenant (Exod 19:5), which they broke (Jer 31:32). So Peter now recognizes the early Christian community as a new Israel that has received the covenant promises previously rejected.

The Apocalypse uses the word *diathēkē* only once (Rev 11:19), but the imagery of Old Testament covenantal history is everywhere in the book. The continuing repetition of the number seven—seven seals (6:1), angels (8:6), trumpets (8:7), plagues (15:1), etc.—recalls the rituals of sevenfold repetition associated with oath swearing and covenant making (Gen 21:27–32) in the Old Testament, such that “to swear” in Hebrew was literally “to seven oneself” (Heb. *nišba*) and the Hebrew *šebû ‘ā* could be either “seven” or “oath” (cf. Gen 21:31–32). The multiple sevenfold repetitions of the Apocalypse suggest final covenant consummation. The new Jerusalem presented as the climax of salvation history (Rev 21–22) is a bride, that is, a woman intended for a covenant relationship—in this case, with the Lamb (21:2, 9). The “wedding feast of the Lamb” appropriates the nuptial-covenantal imagery of God and Israel in the prophets. This bride is “the Holy City Jerusalem” (21:10), the great capital city of David and his covenant (2 Sam 5:6–9; Ps 2). Her spouse is the Son of David (Rev 1:5 [cf. Ps 89:27];

5:5; 12:5; 19:15 [cf. Ps 2:9]; 22:16). The city also has the features of Eden (Rev 22:2), suggesting a restoration of the original peace that characterized the covenant of creation. Therefore, an exegesis of the imagery of Revelation points to a comprehensive eschatological fulfillment of the promises associated with the divine covenants of salvation history, in the form of an eternal nuptial union of God and his people.

A Synthetic View of Covenant in the Scriptures. When it is understood that covenant is oriented to the establishment of kinship, it becomes possible to recognize the flow of sacred history in the Old and New Testaments as a progression of initiatives by God (i.e., divine covenants) inviting humanity into a familial relationship with himself, initiatives which have been, for the most part, resisted. Yet, for all the resistance, a certain progress is made as one can observe that the structure of God's people in the sequence of divine covenants grows from a married couple (Adamic) to a family (Noahic), a tribe (Abrahamic), a nation (Mosaic), a kingdom (Davidic), and an international *ekklesia* or church (new), which incorporates within itself elements of all the previous structures. The Christian canon exhibits a sort of *inclusio* or book-end structure inasmuch as the original peace and nuptiality associated with Eden and the Adamic covenant (Gen 1–2) reassert themselves at the end of sacred history (Rev 21–22) in a heightened form, indicating that the original kinship relationship of God and humanity (Gen 1:26, 28; 5:3; Luke 3:38) has been not only restored but also elevated and transformed through Christ, who is both high priest of the covenant liturgy (Heb 9:11–15) and the Lamb (John 1:29, 35) whose blood-and-body self-sacrifice establishes and renews the covenant (Luke 22:20; John 6:53–58). This leads to a familial relationship with God in which covenant language fades from view, absorbed by love between father and son (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6; 1 John 3:1), bride and groom (Eph 5:21–32; Rev 21:2, 9; 22:17).

[See also Abraham; Adam (Primeval History); David; Decalogue; Deuteronomy; Election; Genesis; Jeremiah; Land; Leviticus and Numbers; Marriage; Oaths

and Vows; Prophets and Prophecy; Salvation History; and Torah.]

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CREATION

"Creation" is one of the few terms in theology that not only managed to maintain its presence in everyday language but has also found its way into official legal texts (especially constitutions). The English term "creation" originally applied only to the work of God, but beginning in the eighteenth century it also was used poetically with respect to human work. This poetic use added several connotations to the meaning; namely, the world came to be understood as more than and different from simply material for human use, mastery, and exploitation. These overtones imply the notion of an idealized and unspoiled nature that is not necessarily part of the biblical concepts of "creation."

Biblical Terminology. The Old Testament does not have a nominal term for "creation." While it uses the verb *bārā'* for divine creation, which is without analogy, the substantive form *beriy'āh* is first attested in the Qumran text CD 4:21 (cf. 12:15) and appears in rabbinic literature. The situation is different in the New Testament, where both the verb *ktizo* ("create") and the noun *ktitis* ("creation") appear frequently.

History of Research. The treatment of the topic of creation in theology was strongly impacted by the important discoveries of texts in Mesopotamia in the nineteenth century. The revelation of Akkadian parallels to the biblical creation and flood narratives revealed the traditional and mythological character

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