

A Covenant between God and Man

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It was God who started to make a covenant with man. He wanted to have a relation with him under certain conditions. God executed his promises and was honest in spite of our dishonesty. The covenant of God with man was an everlasting one.

The first covenant that God made was in the days of Noah, before and after the deluge. The condition that God stipulated was that man should leave the wicked world that was condemned to death and annihilation, and enter into the ark. God would grant man life, security, peace and care. Noah and his sons joined that covenant, and thus they gained God's blessing.

After the ark had come to land, and after Noah had presented an acceptable sacrifice to God, God was satisfied and said, "And God said: `This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow 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; the waters shall never again become 'a flood to destroy all flesh. '"(Genesis 9:12-15)

The second covenant was made between God and the great patriarch- "Now the Lord had said to Abram: `Get out of your country, from your kindred and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. '"(Genesis 12:1-3)

Later on, there was another covenant with Abram, that is, the covenant of circumcision (Genesis 17), of which the Lord said, "This is my covenant which you shall keep between me and you and your seed after you. Every man or child (boy) among you shall be circumcised... And it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you. And the uncircumcised man or child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant. "

Circumcision was a symbol of the death of the body, so that we might obtain life. A part of the body is cut off to die, and this symbolises death as regards the body and matter. Circumcision was also a symbol for baptism, in which we die with Christ so that we may live with Him. The covenant stated that he who was not circumcised would be cut off from His people, exactly like anyone who is not baptised. We notice that the covenant included a blessing as well as a punishment. The blessing for anyone who entered the ark was a symbol for the life of anyone who entered the Church, as he would be under the guardianship and the care of God. There was a punishment for anyone who broke the covenant, like that which was given to the one who was uncircumcised.

The blessing as is seen in Deuteronomy 28, is for those who abide by the words of God, and the punishment is for those who disobey them. This covenant, which God gave to Moses, was sprinkled with blood and, for the first time, it was a written covenant for all people, including blessings and curses.

Moses took the Book of the Covenant and read to the people saying: "**All that God said shall he obeyed,**" then Moses took some of the blood and said, "**this is the blood of the covenant which God made with you about all these sayings.**"

The Ten Commandments constituted a covenant between God and the people. They were written on two tablets that were called the 'tablets of the covenant' and these were put into a tabernacle, also called the 'tabernacle of the covenant.' The tabernacle of the covenant was a symbol for the presence of God with his people. The observance of the commandments meant that God was their God and that they were his people. According to this covenant, God gave them the commandments to obey, and in return, He would guard and bless them.

All the commandments of God and all the scriptures were a covenant. This is why the old scriptures have been called 'the Old Testament' and the scriptures after the coming of Christ are called 'the New Testament.' The Holy Bible exemplifies a covenant between us and God, and we have become believers on the ground of our abiding by all the commandments included in it.

Whenever you see the Holy Bible, you should remember that there is a covenant between you and God. As long as we are the children of God, and as long as we are believers, we are bound by this covenant. We have to observe all the rules in that book and say, as our fathers have said before, "We obey all the commandments of God. " It is a covenant that is sprinkled with blood.

Thus, Saint Paul the apostle says of the Lord Christ that, "**He is the mediator of a better covenant which was established upon better promises,**" and they are really better promises. The Promised Land in the Old Testament is a symbol of the Land of the Living in the New Testament. The fact that it is overflowing with milk and honey is a symbol of what no eye has seen, no ear has heard of, and of what has never occurred to the mind of any human being. The abundance of posterity symbolises the spread of faith and the increase of the number of believers, and the extent of age symbolises eternity.

There is another covenant that we establish with God through baptism. During baptism, we repudiate Satan and all his evil deeds, his tricks, thoughts and all his hosts and say to him openly, 'I renounce you; I renounce you; I renounce you.'

Do we still renounce the devil and all his hosts? Besides this renouncement, during baptism we make a vow to believe in God and proceed in his ways, and in the new life in which we have worn Christ.

There is another covenant that we keep with God by partaking in the Eucharist and in repentance. In connection with Communion, God says to us, "**Each time you eat from this bread and drink from this cup you preach my death, acknowledge my resurrection and remember me until I come. "**

What indicates that the Eucharist is a covenant between us and God is that Maundy Thursday, the day on which God made the covenant with his disciples and gave them His Flesh and His Blood, is called by the Church 'Covenant Thursday.' We celebrate this day, keeping in our memory a covenant that we pledge with God each time we take part in the Eucharist.

We also enter into a covenant with God whenever we make a vow. We often undergo pressure in case of sickness, adversity, demands or desires, and make vows beyond our capacity and liability of execution, and later, we try to do away with those vows or try to change or delay them, forgetting the

scripture which says, "You had better not make vows at all, rather than make vows and not execute them. "

A covenant with God should be regarded with seriousness and not obligation. We should know with whom we are making an agreement. It is with God, the Creator, the Infinite, the Imperceptible, the God of gods. We should also know about the punishment for those who break the covenant.

Saint Paul the apostle explained this punishment in his message to the Hebrews, saying, "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye; shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and who hath done despite unto the spirit of grace? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. " (Hebrews 10:29-30)

All the covenants of God with the fathers are covenants with us personally. In this connection, the Prophet Moses says, "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. " (Deuteronomy 5:2 & 3)

Our covenants with God are sprinkled with blood and approved with the Blood of Christ. This is why Saint Paul says about the consecration of the believer that with the blood of the covenant with which he has been consecrated, "Our sins are obliterated at baptism by the Blood of Christ," and such is the case in the sacrament of Confession and the sacrament of the Eucharist, in which we take the Blood of Christ, which purifies everything.

How beautiful is the statement of the Prophet David, "O God, bless the covenants of my mouth." Therefore we ask God to give us the power of execution.

We pray to God to grant us His power so as to be honest towards Him.