

**THE COVENANT OF SALT: AS  
BASED ON THE SIGNIFICANCE  
AND SYMBOLISM OF SALT IN  
PRIMITIVE THOUGHT**

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The covenant of salt: as based on the significance and symbolism of salt in primitive thought by  
H. Clay Trumbull

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BY

H. CLAY TRUMBULL

Author of "The Blood Covenant," "The Threshold Covenant," "Kadesh-barnea," "Studies in Oriental Social Life," etc.

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By H. CLAY TRUMBULL.

## PREFACE

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In 1884 I issued a volume on "The Blood Covenant: A Primitive Rite and its Bearings on Scripture." Later I was led to attempt, and to announce as in preparation, another volume in the field of primitive covenants, including a treatment of "The Name Covenant," "The Covenant of Salt," and "The Threshold Covenant." In 1896, I issued a separate volume on "The Threshold Covenant," that subject having grown into such prominence in my studies as to justify its treatment by itself. These two works, "The Blood Covenant" and "The Threshold Covenant," have been welcomed by scholars on both sides of the ocean to an extent beyond my expectations, and in view of this I venture to submit some further researches in the field of primitive thought and customs.

Before the issuing of my second volume, I had prepared the main portion of this present work on "The Covenant of Salt," but since then I have been led to revise it, and to conform it more fully to my latest

conclusion as to the practical identity of all covenants. It is in this form that I present it, as a fresh contribution to the study of archeology and of anthropology.

As I have come to see it, as a result of my researches, the very idea of a "covenant" in primitive thought is a union of being, or of persons, in a common life, with the approval of God, or of the gods. This was primarily a sharing of blood, which is life, between two persons, through a rite which had the sanction of him who is the source of all life. In this sense "blood brotherhood" and the "threshold covenant" are but different forms of one and the same *covenant*. The blood of animals shared in a common sacrifice is counted as the blood which makes two one in a sacred covenant. Wine as "the blood of the grape" stands for the blood which is the life of all flesh; hence the sharing of wine stands for the sharing of blood or life. So, again, salt represents blood, or life, and the covenant of salt is simply another form of the one blood covenant. This is the main point of this new monograph. So far as I know, this truth has not before been recognized or formulated.

Similarly the sharing of a common name, especially of the name of God, or of a god, is the claim of a divinely sanctioned covenant between those who bear it. It is another mode of claiming to be in the one



vital covenant. A temporary agreement, or truce, between two who share a drink of water or a morsel of bread, is a lesser and very different thing from entering into a covenant, which by its very nature is permanent and unchangeable. This difference is pointed out and emphasized in the following pages.

In these new investigations, as in my former ones, I have been aided, step by step, by specialists, who have kindly given me suggestions and assistance by every means in their power. This furnishes a fresh illustration of the readiness of all scholars to aid any fresh worker in any line where their own labors render them an authority or a guide.

Besides my special acknowledgments in the text and footnotes of this volume, I desire to express my indebtedness and thanks to these scholars who have freely rendered me important assistance at various points in my studies: Professor Dr. Hermann V. Hilprecht, the Rev. Drs. Marcus Jastrow, K. Kohler, and Henry C. McCook, Professor Drs. Hermann Collitz, H. Carrington Bolton, William H. Roberts, Morris Jastrow, Jr., F. K. Sanders, William A. Lambertson, W. W. Keen, William Osler, J. W. Warren, and D. C. Munro, Drs. J. Solis Cohen, Thomas G. Morton, Charles W. Dulles, Henry C. Cattell, and Frederic H. Howard, Rev. Dean E. T. Bartlett, President Robert E. Thomp-

son, Drs. Talcott Williams, Henry C. Lea, and T. H. Powers Sailer, Messrs. Clarence H. Clark and Patterson Du Bois.

This third work is to be considered in connection with the two which have preceded it in the same field. It is hoped that it will be recognized as adding an important thought to the truths brought out in those works severally.

A previously published monograph on "The Ten Commandments as a Covenant of Love" is added to "The Covenant of Salt" as a Supplement, in order that it may be available to readers of this series of volumes on covenants, as a historical illustration of the subject under discussion.

H. C. T.

PHILADELPHIA,  
*October, 1899.*

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