

Law – Testator

Adam Clarke Commentary

For where a testament is - A learned and judicious friend furnishes me with the following translation of this and the 17th verse: -

"For where there is a covenant, it is necessary that the death of the appointed victim should be exhibited, because a covenant is confirmed over dead victims, since it is not at all valid while the appointed victim is alive."

He observes, "There is no word signifying testator, or men, in the original. Διαθεμενος is not a substantive, but a participle, or a participial adjective, derived from the same root as διατηκη, and must have a substantive understood. I therefore render it the disposed or appointed victim, alluding to the manner of disposing or setting apart the pieces of the victim, when they were going to ratify a covenant; and you know well the old custom of ratifying a covenant, to which the apostle alludes. I refer to your own notes on Genesis 6:18; (note), and Genesis 15:10; (note). - J. C."

Mr. Wakefield has translated the passage nearly in the same way.

"For where a covenant is, there must be necessarily introduced the death of that which establisheth the covenant; because a covenant is confirmed over dead things, and is of no force at all whilst that which establisheth the covenant is alive." This is undoubtedly the meaning of this passage; and we should endeavor to forget that testament and testator were ever introduced, as they totally change the apostle's meaning. See the observations at the end of this chapter.