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A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

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THE  
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

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ARTICLE I.

THE OLD TESTAMENT COVENANT.<sup>1</sup>

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THE Old Testament is not an accidental collection of the literary remains of the Israelites in the sense in which we have an Indian, a Greek, or a Latin literature. In its highest and truest conception it is a revelation and the history of a revelation. Its chief virtue does not consist in its ability to furnish us the *data* for a clear conception of the intellectual, political, and social development of the most interesting member in the oriental family of nations; but its prime object is to hand down to us the revelations of God, through word and deed, designed to show fallen man the way back to reconciliation with God and to restoration to a lost estate, as also to point out how this revelation took historic form and growth in the development of that nation which the Lord had chosen to be the bearers of its important truths. In other words, the chief burden and central thought of the Old Testament is the plan of redemption adopted by Jehovah to be inaugurated and developed by means of a covenant with his own peculiar people. More particularly then, the covenant

<sup>1</sup> Based on a lecture delivered at the Hebrew Summer School, at Chicago.  
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between Jehovah and his people is the pivot around which all the other thoughts and facts of the Old Testament circle, and in relation to which they find their importance and mission. Such is certainly the view entertained by Christ and his apostles concerning the character of the Old Testament canon, and the Saviour with his revelation knew himself to be in the most intimate connection with that of Moses and the prophets (Matt. v. 17, 18). To regard these books, then, as literary productions, in the ordinary sense of the word, as is done by those critics who claim to be "unbiased by dogmatical prejudices" in their Scripture studies, may be "scientific," but it is unhistorical and false. In fact, this fundamental error is the *πρωτον ψευδος* of the new critical school. As they expel God from Israel's history and religion, they eliminate the divine element from his revelation.<sup>1</sup>

Since God then, in the Old Testament dispensation, is working out his plan for the deliverance of mankind through his covenant with Israel, and is preparing salvation for man and man for salvation; and since the Old Testament revelation is the record of this covenant from its inception to its transition into another state through Christ, the character of this covenant will naturally be a matter of the greatest importance for the student of God's word. Manifestly Old Testament theology has no profounder theme than the elucidation of the character and nature of this covenant, and its bearing and influence upon the whole spiritual, religious, and social life of those who lived under it, as also its connection with the covenant of the New Testament as established by Christ. No problem, then, in the Old Testament can surpass in importance the one concerning this covenant, concerning God's commands and behests within the relationship it

<sup>1</sup> Kuenen (*De Godsdiens* i. 5 sqq.), in defining his stand-point, says: "Of the different religions, that of Israel is one; nothing less, but also nothing more." "Judaism and Christianity belong to the leading religions, but between these two and all other religions there exists no specific difference."

established, the conditions of citizenship it imposed, its stages of development, the principles which guided the Lord of the covenant in his dealings with the people; or, in other words, the ground of righteousness and acceptance before God under it, the basis of justification and the foundation of hope in the hearts of the faithful; in short, the whole nature, aim, and object of this peculiar relation between God and Israel.

A brief exposition of this biblical problem may not be without a good purpose, not only on account of the intrinsic importance of the subject matter itself, but also because erroneous views are frequently entertained in respect to it. Not only is this done by negative critics, who frequently build their fantastic hypotheses on the foundation of a false conception of the religion of Israel, but also by devout believers. The notion is not infrequently expressed, and still more frequently implied, that the basis of the Old Testament covenant is Mosaism; that the righteousness demanded and taught by the Old Testament is a legal righteousness; that it demanded such a strict compliance with the *minutiae* of the Mosaic legal code as would make a sinner just and acceptable in the sight of God; or, in other words, that the principle of righteousness in the old dispensation was a righteousness through the works of the law; and that the faithful, in order to be just before the Lord within this covenant, would have to earn this distinction by obedience. This view proceeds from the premises that Mosaism is identical with the Old Covenant and the Old Covenant with Mosaism; and it is entertained by those who find in the Old Testament only law but no gospel, only condemnation but no grace and pardon. No error could do greater violence to the essence and spirit of the covenant than this identification. Mosaism is *not* the Old Covenant, nor is the Old Covenant the same as Mosaism. The error of identifying the two, and of making obedience to the law of Mount Sinai the basis of righteousness and justification

in the pre-Christian dispensation, undoubtedly arises from a misconception of Christ's and Paul's attitude toward the law. Their explicit and emphatic rejection of all legal righteousness, and their decided vindication — over against this false principle — of a justification by faith alone, are frequently considered as polemics against the law and its principles as such. In reality, however, both the Saviour and the great apostle, as indeed the whole New Testament, contend for the truth of the new dispensation, not over against an error of the old, but only against an erroneous interpretation of the old. The theology of the schools in Israel in Christ's day, as this was taught by the Pharisees, who can fairly be considered as the representatives of the orthodox and popular beliefs of the times, did certainly teach the doctrines of legal righteousness and holiness. That they had deserted the true basis of righteousness in the kingdom of God, and substituted in its place a self-righteousness through an obedience to the law, is very evident from Christ's scathing condemnation of their doctrines. Their teachings are the leaven of unrighteousness, because they teach a false righteousness. It is true that in his polemics against the popular teachers of the day, Christ does not give a systematic statement of their false views; but we need only to glance at such passages as Matt. xv. 1 sqq.; xvi. 6 sqq., and read the woes which he pronounces over them in Matt. xxiii. 13 sqq., to recognize that they are *ὁδῆγοὶ τυφλοὶ τυφλῶν* (Matt. xv. 14), because they proclaim a legal and self-righteousness. Paul's repeated and emphatic vindication of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, with the avowed and entire exclusion of all righteousness by any self-merit or work of the law, is to be attributed to the fact, that the whole Jewish theology of the times was entirely permeated and leavened by this fatal error. How entirely and thoroughly this was the case is apparent from the doctrines laid down in the official records of the Jewish

faith,—the Talmud, Targums, and Midrashim. Although the codification of these does not reach up to the apostolic age, yet in their fundamentals they are, without doubt, correct representations of the beliefs entertained by Christ's contemporaries. And if any principle is plainly taught in these works it is the doctrine of righteousness before God solely and alone through the works of the law. The public teachers of the day maintained the nomistic principle in all its crudest outgrowths.<sup>1</sup> While they sat on Moses' seat (Matt. xxiii. 2), they did not teach Moses' doctrine. For that their conception and interpretation of the Old Testament was erroneous *in toto* is evident from the steady opposition of the New Testament teachers and teachings. Indeed, the very reason why the theologians of that day so bitterly antagonized the Saviour and his work, and he so terribly denounced them, was because an impassable gulf was fixed between their doctrines; because the basis and fundamental thesis of their whole system, namely, that entrance into the kingdom of God and acceptance before the Lord who had made the covenant with Israel, was dependent upon a righteousness conditioned by an obedience to the Mosaic code and the traditions of the fathers, was totally and fatally false. They were not correct exponents of the teachings of the Old Testament. Christ, who came with the full consciousness of standing in a living connection with the past revelations in the kingdom of God, finds this revelation misinterpreted and falsified by the teach-

<sup>1</sup> The most satisfactory and exhaustive work on this subject is that of the deceased pastor and missionary Ferdinand Weber, edited by Franz Delitzsch and Schnedermann, and entitled *System der altsynagogalen Palästinischen Theologie aus Targum, Midrasch, und Talmud*, 1880, and on the point under discussion the nineteenth chapter, pp. 267-300, is to be compared. Excellent material, though more to show the genesis and historical unfolding of New Testament Judaism, is furnished by Edersheim in the introductory chapter to his grand *Life of Jesus the Messiah*, 1884. A summary of the New Testament facts on this matter is found in Schnedermann's *Judenthum und die Christliche Verkündigung*, 1884, v. pp. 218-48.

ers in Israel. This is why he contends against them. He came not to overthrow the Old Covenant, but to fulfil it; and just in so far as the teachers of the people differed with him, in so far, too, they had departed from the truth of the covenant and set up error.

If, then, the views of Christ's contemporaries are a false expression of the character and spirit of the Old Testament covenant, and if the righteousness which it does demand is not the righteousness of the law, what, then, is its correct principle, and what is the nature of the righteousness it calls for? To learn this the best method will probably be to view the Old Testament in the light of the New. Augustine, whose works abound in terse and epigrammatic statements of great truths, says: "*In Veteri Testamento Novum latet, in Novo Vetus patet.*"<sup>1</sup> The New Testament is the best exposition of the Old; Christ and the apostles are the best exegetes of Moses and the prophets. In its fulness of meaning the Old can be understood only in the light of the New. Biblical hermeneutics certainly teaches this truth. For however much critics may debate over the propriety of admitting the testimony of the New Testament in the discussion of the *literary* problems of the Old, certainly every fair-minded Christian must instantly concede that for the *theological* study of the Bible no better aid can be found than the Bible itself. "Let Scripture interpret Scripture" will always find acceptance among believers.<sup>2</sup> It will be best, then, to begin our investigations from the New Testament.

In regard to the question of the character of the old dispensation and the righteousness and justification it

<sup>1</sup> Quest. in Exod. 73.

<sup>2</sup> The process is in no wise a violation of the historico-critical method of biblical research, which correctly claims for a passage only that meaning which it was intended to convey at the time it was revealed, for whatever interpretation revelation gives to earlier revelation must evidently have been within the scope and intent of the latter. Studying the Old with the vision enlightened from the New Testament is not a false *hysteron proteron* exegesis.

taught, the New Testament *sedes doctrinae* are Rom. iv. and Gal. iii. 6-14, where the apostle Paul explicitly and *ex professo* discusses this problem. The burden of Romans is the doctrine of justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law. In the progress of his argument, the logician Paul, in chapter iv., appeals to the earlier revelation and history of God's kingdom on earth, to prove that the true righteousness before the Lord is the righteousness by faith alone. He here produces the scriptural, *i. e.*, the Old Testament, proof for his thesis. To prove his point, he adduces the accounts given by the Old Testament of those two men who were undeniably the best representatives of the spirit and character of the covenant between God and Israel,—namely, Abraham, the father of the faithful, and David, the man after God's own heart; and he shows that, according to these accounts, they were justified before God not on account of any obedience to the laws, but because they had faith in the promises of God. In other words, their righteousness was one of faith, and not one of works. In verse 3 he cites the words of Gen. xv. 6 as conclusive in Abraham's case; and in verse 6 he quotes David's own words in Ps. xxxii. 1, 2, to show that the great singer of the Old Covenant puts his trust and hope in God alone. The rest of the chapter is devoted to an elucidation, on the basis of Old Testament citations, of Abraham's case, and the apostle draws his conclusion in verse 22: "And therefore it [*i. e.*, his faith] was imputed to him for righteousness." Abraham, then, the historical head, and, as acknowledged by revelation and the author of revelation, the most faithful exponent of the Old Testament covenant, was justified because he had faith in the promises of God. He is, argues Paul on scriptural basis, as is also David, a convincing proof, that, also under the old dispensation, acceptance before God, or, what is the same, righteousness and justification, was based not upon merit or worth, but upon faith and grace alone.



The passage in Galatians is even clearer. The object of this Epistle is to vindicate the great doctrine of justification by faith alone, which Paul had been preaching to the Galatian congregations, but which Judaizing teachers had attempted to overthrow by maintaining that the Christians were yet bound to an observance of at least certain portions of the law, and, in consequence, had attacked also the apostolic character and mission of Paul. This gives the apostle an opportunity of explaining the relation between the observance of the law and the nature of justification for those who had lived under it. In the course of his argument he gives in iii. 6-14 the scriptural proof that the Old Testament saints were justified not because of their obedience to the laws of Moses, but on account of their faith. Here, too, citing the instance of Abraham as proof of this position, and basing his argument on Old Testament citations, this conclusion is drawn in verse 11: "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith" (cf. Hab. ii. 14). Of course, as it is Paul, the defender of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, who employs this argument, the faith of Abraham must have been of the same character and had the same object which the faith demanded by the New Covenant has (cf. also John viii. 56).

From both these passages it is evident that the apostle Paul contends that faith in the words and promises of God, or in the work of the promised Redeemer as the real content of these promises, is the *conditio sine qua non* for justification under the Old Covenant as it is under the New; and that, as far as the cardinal principle and fundamental character are concerned, there is no difference of kind between the two dispensations. For, in the nature of the case, it can admit of no doubt that what the apostle here proves from the Old Testament records, as having been true in the cases of Abraham and David, is true, also, of the whole covenant and of all who lived

under it. For these two are true and correct representatives of the life and spirit of that covenant, and are acknowledged as such by both revelation and history. The point proved in their case proves it for the whole old dispensation. Paul, as it were to make assurance doubly sure, continues his argument, and shows how these individual cases are typical and furnish the principles of the whole covenant of which they were such representative examples. For the Abrahamic covenant is the Old Covenant, and is the same covenant under which all the children of Abraham lived and which overshadowed the Israelitish theocracy; and there are no indications of any sort, in the records of later revelation, that God ever changed, abrogated, or recalled the conditions of justification which were in force in the case of Abraham. Paul is careful to prove this, and to show that what is true in Abraham's case must be applicable, also, to the whole pre-Christian dispensation. The promise of grace, once given to the father of the covenant and based upon grace and faith, could not be, and was not, changed. In Gal. iii. 17, 18, this important truth for the understanding of the whole Old Testament religion and history is clearly expressed: "And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise" (*i. e.*, by faith). To paraphrase: The covenant existed before the law; this covenant conditioned, as is proved by Paul's exhaustive argument from the Old Testament citations, justification and an acceptable status before God on the principle of faith: now when the law came, it could not change this cardinal principle of the covenant, as it was not the purpose of the law to supplant the existing covenant by a new one, or to essentially change its character and conditions, but to be of service in making this covenant all the

more effective. Thus then, argues the apostle, even after the coming of the law there were no changes in the covenant relation between God and his people, and all later generations of Abraham's children must be justified before God as was their father Abraham,—namely, by faith in the promises of redemption through Christ.' The Old Testament covenant does not begin at Mount Sinai, but in Ur of the Chaldees, when Abram was called to settle in Palestine (Gen. xii. 1-9). The Noachian covenant (Gen. viii. 15; ix. 17) had proved to be an abortive attempt; and with the emigration of Abraham a new and important step was undertaken in the realization of God's plans for the redemption of mankind. With him the covenant was established which later in history assumed the national form of the theocracy. The importance of Mount Sinai and its laws consists not in the overthrow of the old and the introduction of a new plan of Jehovah, but it was an epoch in the growth of this covenant, externally in its transfer from the individual and family to the national life, and internally, and really resultant from the external change, in the giving of a law by which this national organization of God's people was to be governed and educated for their historical mission in the unfolding and development of the kingdom of God on earth until the fulness of time.

With this exposition of New Testament revelation to guide us, we shall know where to begin our investigations of the nature and peculiarity of the Old Testament covenant in the Old Testament records themselves,—namely,

<sup>1</sup> The views expressed in these two places can fairly be regarded as the teachings of the whole New Testament, both directly and by implication. On Abraham's faith and justification consult, also, Kurtz' Sacred History, translated by Schaeffer, §24-9. In Heb. xi. the power of faith in the saints and heroes of the Old Testament is itemized *in extenso*. This chapter is not so much of an argumentative character, and its facts are not cited by the author to prove a thesis, but it is rather illustrative, and is to serve a parenthetical purpose, belonging to the practical and exhortative part of the Epistle.

with the history of Abraham. After the deluge the Lord had promised to Noah (Gen. viii. 21, 22) that he would not again destroy mankind from the face of the earth on account of their sins. But the history of the sons of Noah, as far as the knowledge and worship of the true God are concerned, was beginning to prove a repetition of the very same sinful development that had caused the dire destruction of the deluge to come over the descendants of Adam. In order, then, that the divine plans for the redemption and salvation of mankind might become a reality and a fact, God selects from among the children of Shem, who had, comparatively speaking, maintained the purest knowledge of God, one man, and with him begins a new development looking toward the successful realization of the ideals which had before always proved a failure through the sinful course of man. The nature of this new development is that of a covenant between Jehovah and the chosen one Abraham.<sup>1</sup> The germs of the principles of this covenant are contained in the very first words addressed to Abraham by God (Gen. xii. 1-3), although the official establishment of the covenant takes place only some years later. In the case of Abraham, as later in that of Israel, Jehovah does not invite man to enter into a covenant with him before the latter has received from the divine hands sufficient testimonials of God's ability and desire to promote man's welfare. Abraham had been some years in Canaan, and during that time had sufficiently experienced the presence of the Lord's protecting and bountiful hand, before the covenant, as such, was established; just as Israel had witnessed the terrors of the ten plagues in Egypt, had been delivered from the house of bondage, and had passed miraculously

<sup>1</sup> The etymology of the word ברית, and whether it is originally the equivalent of *διαθήκη* or of *συνθήκη*, *i. e.*, whether it originally meant simply a divine ordinance, or an agreement between contracting parties, is a matter of less moment for our purpose. Oehler (*O. T. Theology*, §80) and Gesenius (*Handwörterbuch*), maintain the former; Bredenkamp (*Gesetz und Propheten*, p. 22 f.) the latter.

out of the hands of Pharaoh and through the Red Sea, before at Mount Sinai they were called upon to pledge their allegiance to the new covenant arrangement between their Lord and themselves. The covenant with Abraham is recorded in Gen. xv. The call to Abraham is given in these words: "And the Lord said to Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, into a land that I shall show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great: and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Here Jehovah promises great blessings to Abraham, and to mankind in general, if Abraham will put his trust and confidence in Jehovah alone and follow his guidance.<sup>1</sup> The condition under which Abraham is to be the recipient of the promised blessings is that he renounce all trust in his earthly relations, and allegiance to country, family, and home, —and in absolute and, so to say, blind, adherence to the Lord obey without faltering and hesitation the words of the Lord, and go into a strange country, knowing assuredly that Jehovah would make good his promises and redeem his pledges. The principle involved here is evidently the principle of faith; Abraham will prove acceptable before the Lord in case he has faith in the Lord's promises; or, to use the phraseology of later revelation, he was justified and deemed righteous with God through his trust and faith.

What is here implied finds clear expression in the establishment of the covenant itself. That the events in chapter xv.—whether these are to be regarded as having taken place in a dream or state of ecstasy (cf. "in a vision," vs. 1), or as perceptible to the senses—are to be considered as the formal conclusion of the covenant between God and the patriarch is evident from verse 18:

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Köhler, *Lehrbuch der Bibl. Geschichte Alten Testamentes*, 1875, p. 99 ff.

“In that same day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.” The Lord says, “Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” When the patriarch complains that he is childless, the Lord tells him to go forth, and says, “Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. So shall thy seed be.” Notwithstanding all the difficulties, or almost impossibilities, in the way to an entertainment on the part of Abraham of such a belief, the biblical record continues: “And he believed in the Lord; and he accounted it to him for righteousness.” Abraham’s part of the covenant, then, was faith (האמין ביהוה, *to believe, to trust, in the Lord*<sup>1</sup>). The result of this compliance with the conditions of the covenant was, that God counted it to him for righteousness (צדקה), *i. e.*, agreement of the human will with the will and commands of the Lord as normative for human conduct and life.<sup>2</sup> This feature in Abraham’s conduct was the mark that distinguished him from all his contemporaries. They put their trust in idols and false deities, and therefore opposed their will to that of their Creator. The element of antagonism, then, that existed on the part of the Gentile world toward God is not to be found in Abraham: his will and deeds are in harmony with God and in obedience to the Lord’s plans for man’s redemption. Abraham’s reward, as promised by the Lord of the covenant, is the multiplication of his seed like the sand of

<sup>1</sup> The LXX. throughout translates this word with πιστεύειν. Cf. on this word Schultz in *Jahrbücher f. d. Theol.* 1862, p. 513 f. The connection shows beyond a doubt that the *fiducia* element is prominent in Abraham’s faith.

<sup>2</sup> Such, according to the masterly *programm* of Kautzsch, on the derivation of the root צדק, is the meaning of this word in the Old Testament. It is characteristic that such is the case, both in the instance of Abraham and later under the law, showing that faith under the Old Covenant is viewed as exhibited more in an obedience and conformity to the expressed will or covenant of the Lord, rather than in a state or condition of the soul.

the seashore and the possession of the land of promise. The kingdom of God on earth was then yet in its incipient stage of development, and the promises are of such things as will form the basis for further growth and final consummation. But the higher and spiritual feature is not lacking, for in Abraham all the families of the earth are to be blessed.

Like all things in God's nature and God's kingdom, the covenant with Abraham was a growth. In chapter xvii., which records events at least fourteen years later than those of chapter xv., the second stage of this covenant is depicted and, beside the re-announcement of the fundamental principles of the covenant, its sign, namely circumcision, is revealed to the patriarch, as also the theocratic line of descent established through Isaac, the promised son of Abraham and Sarah. In this chapter (vs. 1) Abraham's covenant duty is put in these words, "Walk before me and be thou perfect," an injunction which presupposes and embraces in its compliance the confidence of faith which had been counted to Abraham as righteousness, and expresses rather the outward proof of the inward faith. The direct statements of the biblical account of Abraham, as also the conduct of his life by the hands of Providence, especially his willingness to sacrifice even the son of promise at the behest of the Lord, are all of such a character as to leave no doubt that the New Testament interpretation of the patriarch's relation to Jehovah is the correct one, and that he is the father of the faithful, because in his life he was the model exemplar of that faith, trust, and confidence in the promises and providence of God which show that a theocracy (*i. e.*, *θεοῦ-κρατεῖν*, *a rule of God*) had been established in his heart, and thereby a god-pleasing relationship had been established between him and God. This relation was such for no other reason than that he had faith in Jehovah, and that was the basis of this special covenant. Naturally this covenant relation is not developed in Abraham's case as

it is in the time of the prophets, or under the new dispensation; but the cardinal principles and truths are there: it is a covenant of faith. The accounts in Genesis show how, in the cases of both Isaac and Jacob, the same covenant with the same conditions continued, with very little, if any, advance beyond the stage it had already reached, externally and internally, in the person of Abraham. As long as the covenant relation was an individual and a family relation its primitive and embryonic status did not change, nor were the fundamental ideas developed by further revelations. We are not informed by the sacred records that the later patriarchs were further instructed as to the character and nature of this faith in God's providential guidance, nor that any higher theological or ethical truths in this connection were made known to them. The accounts are chiefly of a simple historical character, and furnish us rather the *data* to judge of the life and workings of the Abrahamic covenant in the souls and minds of the chosen family. Nor have we even complete records of this status. It is a matter of considerable dispute among Old Testament students as to how much or how little the people of Israel had retained of the great truths of the covenants when Moses was sent to them with his message of deliverance. Based upon the interpretation or misinterpretation of some passages in the prophets, some have endeavored to prove that Israel had sunk into a state of polytheism, or idolatry of some character, and had lost all but the names of the patriarchs of faith; while others claim for the people considerable knowledge of the truth. Be this as it may, revelation tells us that with Moses came an important change in the outward form of the covenant relations, the change from the family to the national form, and an inner change, the introduction of the law.

In the providence of God, the family of Jacob, under the bondage of aliens and strangers in the land of Egypt, developed into a compact people with strong national



feelings and individuality, probably more pronounced than would have been the case if they had remained in the land of Canaan amid tribes kindred in descent, language, and customs with whom it would have been but natural for the chosen family to associate and form alliances detrimental to their peculiar divine mission. When thus the nation had been born, Jehovah, through his chosen instrument Moses, effected the transfer of the theocracy from the family to the national form. The covenant relation and its fundamental character of faith, as its distinguishing feature on man's part, were to remain, but were to be made the possession of the people,—of the nation as a whole. An epoch of such importance in the unfolding of God's plans for man's redemption necessitated outward and inward steps of considerable magnitude. The outward step was the same that had been taken in the case of Abraham,—namely, a selection and separation from among the other nations of the earth and the establishment of a national life and rule in a peculiar country, where, undisturbed by the examples and temptations of idolatrous neighbors, Israel could, under the guidance and providence of God, work out its historical mission,—both inwardly, as far as the knowledge, worship, and recognition of God and his revelation were concerned, and outwardly, in developing, over against the Gentiles, who “were suffered to walk in their own ways” (Acts xiv. 16), in visible form the kingdom of God on earth. Inwardly the advance was made by the giving of the law. God could no longer, through the direction of the individual actions of each and every one of his children, produce in them that faith and trust which the covenant demanded, as he had done in the times when his dealings were only with individuals and families; but, in order to produce these same convictions and same faith and trust in the nation which his providential guidance had effected in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he resorts to the medium of the law. The changes, then, in the out-

ward form of the theocracy are for the purpose of producing and strengthening the very principles of this covenant. With a mighty arm Jehovah leads his people out of the land of bondage; and when they have been witnesses again and again of his power and merciful protection, he, at Mount Sinai, enters into a covenant relation with them as a people. The motive in this particularism is the same in the cases of both Abraham and Israel,—namely, outwardly to establish them in such surroundings that God could accomplish his inner educational purpose within them. The rule of God, or the theocracy, in the individual now becomes such in a people. For that reason, they are to form one nation separated entirely from all the rest, living in a land chosen for them and their historical mission by God himself, and under his own peculiar rule and government. If the great plans of God are to be realized then such a separation and such a theocracy were a necessity. Otherwise the attractions of sin would have thwarted the divine purposes.

The plans of God in Israel are the same as those he had in view in the case of the patriarchs; for the covenant he makes with the people is the same in principle and character, and is, in fact, identical with the one entered upon by Abraham and the other fathers. This identity is throughout the sacred records everywhere felt and expressed. God reveals himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. iii. 6 and *passim*), and as such Jehovah is to be proclaimed to the people, and Moses is to inform them that now the time has come when God will redeem his promises given unto the patriarchs, and will lead his people into the possession of the land flowing with milk and honey. But, as these promises were given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in virtue of the covenant of grace and faith existing between them and their God, this fulfilment of the promises on God's part is in itself alone a sufficient testimony that the same covenant was still abiding in the case of the

people. There is not only not a syllable in all the revelations through Moses, and in all the arrangements of Mosaism, that points to a change or abrogation in the character of the covenant, but there is proof abundant both clearly expressed and implied, that, before as after, the covenant relation depended upon the faith and trust put by men in the promises and words of God.

The objective ground of this covenant, or the reason why God selects just Israel and no other people to be the recipients of his special mercies, is everywhere in the Pentateuch recognized to be the unmerited grace of Jehovah. Nowhere is there any intimation given that Israel was chosen on account of any special merit; but rather the very opposite, the confession that Israel was entirely unworthy of this election, finds repeated expression. Especially is it in Deuteronomy (the book of the people) that this is the case. The Lord chose them because he *loved* them (Deut. vii. 7, 8; viii. 17). The mighty deeds of God in delivering the people from the hands of their oppressors, and of doing so without any merit or virtue on their part to deserve it, is a thought underlying not only all Mosaism, but also all later revelation. He who fails to see this deep undercurrent of a confession of unworthiness of God's grace, and the strong consciousness of sin in the whole Old Testament revelation, will never be able thoroughly to understand and appreciate pre-Christian revelation. Mosaism knows nothing of self-righteousness, but acknowledges itself as the constant recipient of undeserved mercies in God's hands. This idea, which necessarily lies at the bottom of, and is pre-supposed in, a covenant of grace, finds a much clearer expression in the early narratives of Israel than in the accounts of Abraham.<sup>1</sup> It was only on this basis that they hoped to be a "peculiar treasure above all people . . . . a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." For in the disavowal of all merit or righteousness in themselves lay the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ex. xix, 5; xv. 13, 16, 26; Num. xi., xii., xvi., xx.

other element, or the subjective side, of this covenant, namely, faith in God. Although this demand of the covenant finds its clearest and plainest expression not in words, but in the actions of the people, in the following of God's appointed servant, in their willingness to be guided by Jehovah, in their religious ceremonies and ordinances; yet it is also plainly expressed, that Israel as a people, and individually, is acceptable and righteous before the Lord, *i. e.*, is true to the covenant relation with the Lord, if he, like his forefathers, the patriarchs, puts his trust and confidence in God and in God alone.<sup>1</sup> The chief sin of which the Mosaic system, and indeed the whole Old Testament and its covenant, has any knowledge, is that of idolatry, which is nothing but the transfer of a faith and confidence from the true to a false God. In this manner the spirit of the covenant could be, and was, most easily violated; and against this sin the very first of the ten commands which form the cornerstone of the whole Mosaic structure is directed. It recognizes faith, then, as the subjective basis of this covenant. Indeed, the whole spirit of God's revelations to Israel and his deeds in the formative stage of their national life, show clearly enough two things as essential elements in the covenant established between them: *first*, that God chose Israel, and showered his blessings upon it as an act of pure grace and mercy; and, *secondly*, that Israel, if it would be acceptable before the Lord, must in faith and obedience follow the leading of the Lord, as this is laid down in the ordinances and commands he has given to them. An Israelite was then true to the covenant, if his life and actions showed that he had faith and confidence in the Lord of the covenant.

But how about the law? Does not the existence and object of the Mosaic law prove false the view of the Old

<sup>1</sup> Cf. such passages as Ex. iii. 11 ff.; iv. 1, 8 f., 31; xxiv. 3, 7; xix. 8. Cf., also, Schultz, A. T. Theologie, 2d ed., p. 301 ff.

Testament religion here expressed? By no means; but, if rightly understood, it only confirms what has been said. It cannot be repeated too often, that to identify the Old Covenant with the Mosaic dispensation, or to make Mount Sinai annul the Abrahamic covenant, and establish in its place a new covenant with the principle of legal righteousness, is totally false. Mosaism nowhere claims this for itself, and there is no scriptural warrant for such a view. The law finds its mission in and within the covenant, and represents one stage in the growth and unfolding of this covenant. Its object was not to supplant the covenant of grace and faith, but rather to be subservient in making this effectual in Israel's spiritual life and in the history of God's kingdom. Paul, who so clearly states that the Old Testament saints were justified by faith alone, has not forgotten to inform us of the important work of the law in the unfolding of God's plans. He says (Gal. iii. 19): "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made"; and in verses 21-24: "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid; for if there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore, the law was a schoolmaster [R. V. tutor] to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." *Παιδαγωγός εις Χριστόν* tells the secret. The law was an educational means to bring the people to a realization of the requirements, and to a full and real acceptance of the covenant. Its aim was a propaedeutic and preparatory one, both for Israel and for the history of God's kingdom. If the ideal attitude of the souls of the covenant adherents toward the covenant Lord, as this is expressed in the official covenant estab-

lished at Mount Sinai, was ever to become a life and a truth in the hearts of the people, and not a mere outward formality, then the people would have to be educated up to an understanding of its principles, and the acceptance of all that it involved. That they had not attained to this standard when the covenant was established, nor indeed ever afterwards, is one of the most evident teachings of their history. A righteousness accounted through faith implies recognition of a want of righteousness in one's self, and a dependence for righteousness and salvation upon somebody else. In the covenant of the Old, as well as in that of the New, Testament, the anthropological principles of an absolute inability to render one's self acceptable or just before God, as also the soteriological principle that such a salvation or re-establishment of that true relationship between God and man, which existed before the break caused by sin, must come from the grace and mercy of the Lord, are implied and presupposed. The covenant required faith and absolute allegiance to God; but faith and absolute allegiance to God would be possible only when it was apparent that such faith and allegiance were the only means of righteousness; and this brought with it the further truth that any departure from such a life of faith, *i. e.*, any sin of whatever nature and character, was also a violation of the covenant relation, and hence a forfeiture of the blessings it brought; for which sin some restoration and atonement would have to be made, if the broken covenant relation was to be re-established. That all these principles are embraced in the covenant in its Mosaic form is apparent from the sacrificial and atonement system, where they are recognized by word and deed.

In order that these great truths in God's plans of redemption should work out their way into the consciousness and convictions of the chosen people, and in order that these should become the people of the covenant in truth, God established them as a politico-religious state,

under his own special government, and gave them the whole complex system of moral and ceremonial law known as Mosaism, and contained in the Pentateuch. This body formed the limits in which the covenant as a soul should have its being and undergo its development. The whole legal system, as established by Moses, in its religious, political, and social features, was the outward wall that protected the inner growth of the covenant principle, and at the same time promoted the latter. The commandments of the Lord, from the highest of the ten commandments to the lowest and least behest for the conduct of private affairs, represented to those under the covenant the just demands which the Lord of the covenant had a right to make upon those who would possess the blessings of the covenant; it represented to those who, of their own free will and choice, had sworn allegiance to this covenant at Mount Sinai the duties which they owed to Jehovah. It brought vividly and strongly before their eyes the knowledge of what the faithful performance of their covenant relation involved and demanded of them, and at the same time would necessarily awaken in them a consciousness of their inability to comply with these demands, and to be faithful to their promises. Indeed, this latter fact of inability, and of a sinful state, is recognized by the law itself as a necessary feature in the life of those subject to it. For the same law that commands and condemns, also provides for means of pardon and atonement for the violation of its mandates, primarily indeed only typically and hopefully, but this in view of the real atonement and pardon to come in Christ. The sacrificial portion of the Mosaic system can be understood only on the premises that an honest child of the covenant would recognize his sinful state and deserved condemnation and rejection, and that the life under the law would necessarily be a life of constant contrition and confession of transgressions, and a constant resort to the throne of grace for pardon and a renewed acceptance.

This feature of the legal code shows that at the bottom of the covenant, of which it was the outward frame-work, lay the ideas of repentance for sins and faith in Jehovah to forgive these sins. As Christ says (Matt. xxiii. 23) the weightier matters of the law were "judgment, mercy, and faith." To promote these in the hearts of the Israelites was the purpose of the Sinaitic code. Its complex character and minute ramifications covered the whole public and private existence of the Israelite, and constantly reminded him of what he owed his Divine King, whose rule he had chosen for himself by agreeing to accept his covenant. Hence, too, for the Israelite there was no difference between a moral and a ceremonial law; both were equally an expression of the will of Jehovah under the covenant relation; a violation of either was a rejection of the principle of faith and obedience, and hence equally punishable. Later, when the kingdom of God had passed beyond the circumscribed limits of a single state and nation, and had become more spiritual, and particularity had developed into universality, then those features of the law which were conditioned by the preparatory stage, and were not based upon the fundamental truths of the covenant could fall away, as they did when Christ came and established the congregations of saints, not only in Israel, but over the whole world. But as long as the covenant was circumscribed by locality and nationality for the education of a peculiar people, so long, too, all those laws established by God for effecting his purpose were equally binding upon the adherents of the covenant. Under such circumstances, a transgression of a ceremonial law was punishable equally with one of the moral command.

These facts explain why it is that in the establishment of the covenant, as this is recorded in Ex. xix sqq., so much stress is laid upon the obedience of the people to the commands of the Lord. This obedience is the obedience of faith, and the faith of those living under the legal



rule finds its expression in the obedience to this law of the covenant. An Israelite is *צדק*, or *just*, in so far as he complies with the norm of the law; because a transgression of these laws given by Jehovah for the guidance of his life and worship is a rejection of the authority of God and a refusal to trust him. A rebellion against God's ordinances is a rebellion against the very covenant itself. An Israelite who truly believed in Jehovah would necessarily feel himself in duty bound to obey these laws. He could not do otherwise, or his life and his confession would antagonize each other. But never do we read that such an obedience is to be regarded in itself as a meritorious act, or a means of righteousness. The Mosaic system knows of no legal or work righteousness.

While recognizing, then, their duty to obey in all their *minutiae* the commands of the law, and learning by that how sinful they were, those under the law put their trust for righteousness and deliverance in the mercy of the Lord. Just to what extent the object of their faith was the mercy of God in general, or the merits of the promised seed, might be a debatable question. In truth, the real objective ground ever was the latter, and was undoubtedly recognized to be such by at least the most advanced among the covenant children. (Cf. John viii. 56; Gal. iii. 10-18.) Their life under the law certainly pointed out to them the necessity of looking solely to the grace of Jehovah; but whether, and to what extent, they were conscious of the fact that the objective grounds of this grace were the life and death of the promised Messiah may not be easily decided. Certain it is, though, that from the time of the protevangelium in Gen. iii. to the evangelistic flights in the second part of Isaiah (chiefly in chapter liii.) there is a golden chain of prophecies running through the whole Old Testament life and revelation, that a Redeemer and a Messiah should come. And that in the Mosaic system this personal Saviour is the object of faith seems evident from the typical and

symbolical actions in the sacrifices and atonements, as their true significance and meaning are explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews. There, and in other places in the New Testament, the typical character of the tabernacle, of the cultus in its different kinds, of the festivals, etc., is recognized, and the relation between the type and thing typified shown,<sup>1</sup> and there Mosaism repeatedly recognizes the coming of a personal Messiah and Deliverer, and has before it all the grand prophecies to this effect given to the patriarchs centuries before.

Such then, according to the New Testament, and also according to the Old, was the historical mission of the law in its relation to, and bearing on, the Old Covenant. Far from standing in an antagonism to a covenant of grace and faith, its aim was to develop and make such a covenant the soul and life of a nation, so that its principles might become in the growth of this people some of the great truths of history, that, in the fulness of time, Christianity might base its work of victory on such results of an earlier development.

Hand in hand with the Mosaic dispensation, and closely allied to it, was prophecy in Israel. It is a fatal error of the new critical school to place the law and the prophets in antagonism to each other. Those passages in the prophets that seem to speak slightly of the law, can be interpreted as in opposition to the proper mission and functions of the law, *only* by a misinterpretation of the legal features in the religious development of Israel; not the use, but the abuse of the law, by reducing it to an *opus operatum* formalism, or to a means of pharisaic self-righteousness, is condemned by the prophets.<sup>2</sup> The law and the prophets are not only contemporaneous in the

<sup>1</sup> The best authorities on this interesting subject are Bähr's *Symbolik des Mosaischen Cultus*, Keil's *Archäologie*, and Kurtz' *Sacrificial System*.

<sup>2</sup> The relation between the law and the prophets has recently been made the subject of an excellent work by Bredenkamp, entitled *Gesetz und Propheten*: Erlangen 1881; cf. also, Oehler, l. c. § 201.

point of time, but are also closely related in the covenant work and mutually complementary. The fact that the earlier prophets were men of action chiefly, and the latter engaged also in literary work, should not mislead us into separating, as far as time is concerned, what is actually found at the same time. Moses himself, the law-giver, was also a prophet; and both Mosaism and Prophecy, in their divine purposes and actual workings, conspired together toward the development of the great truths of the covenant between God and the chosen people. Instead of being contradictory and antagonistic, they rather work together to make God's plans facts and truths. While the law points out to man the duties he is to perform as a child of the covenant, and thus instructs him in the great truths of sin and the constant need of divine pardon and mercy; and while this law is to make these truths the teachings of Israel's history in them and for others, the prophets, as the speakers and seers of God, accompany this historical development with their revelations of knowledge, reproof, guidance, and consolation. The prophets are the instructors of the people, sent by the Lord of the covenant, so that the people would be taught to walk and live aright under the conditions of this covenant, toward the fulfilment of their historical mission. Prophecy had thus, like the law, a work to perform in the unfolding of God's kingdom, and this work was for the same ultimate end. It must not be forgotten that the chief work of the prophets was not, as it is sometimes supposed to be, the prediction of future events. The prophets were decidedly men of words and actions for the immediate present, for the demands of the hour. They preached to Israel, and not only or principally to later generations; and what they did and said was intended to have its effect in moulding the religious destiny of the people they addressed. All prophecy, both those specially so called, as also the books written in a prophetic spirit, as also the Psalms and the other Hagiographa, must be

looked upon and interpreted as reflecting the character, spirit, and life of the old covenant. They represent one phase in the development of this covenant, and hence can fairly be called upon for instruction as to what the nature of this covenant really was. The lives and teachings of the prophets and psalmists, as well as of all those under the Old Covenant who proved acceptable before the Lord, can be fairly regarded as expressive of its genius and soul. Yet, nowhere do we find among the Old Testament believers a single one who considers himself just because of his obedience to the law, and who bases the correctness of his attitude to the covenant, and consequently his hope of justification, upon the fulfilment of the Mosaic code. The experience and faith of the men of God under the old dispensation, as this finds utterance in the records of the sacred volume, those correct exponents and indices of the religious life and hope under the covenant, leave no room for doubt or debate that they knew nothing of a legal or selfrighteousness. So strongly does the confidence of faith find expression in the Psalms, for instance, that later revelation and Christian gratitude have found no higher and deeper utterance for it. One thing is sure, that the saints of the Old Testament felt and rejoiced in their acceptance before the Lord; for them full righteousness and membership in the kingdom of God was not regarded simply as a possibility of the future, but as a present reality and a fact. That the prophets and psalmists, and all the true representatives of the Old Testament covenant life, feel this in their heart of hearts, and that peace with God was to their souls existence and life, is as historically certain as any thing in the sacred records can be, and that they did not base this happiness upon the righteousness of the law is equally certain. The total absence of any hint or word in this direction is alone a sufficient testimony. But the evidence for the opposite is found in abundance. Every page of the prophetic books and the Hagiographa furnishes this. The prophets,

as a rule, start out with the lesson of the law, namely, the recognition and confession of sin. They recite how merciful the Lord has been to his people, how undeserving of this grace they have been, and how unfaithful they have been in their covenant relation. On the basis of this knowledge they exhort the people to repentance and faith, assuring them in the name of the Lord of the covenant, whose spokesmen they are, that if the sinners will return in repentance the Lord will pardon them their transgressions, and again receive them as his own peculiar people, and that they should put their confidence in him, and in him alone. It is this line of thought that we everywhere find in the prophetic words and the prophetic deeds. They upbraid sin, call to repentance, and then offer to the repentant and trusting sinner the fulness of God's mercy. In the prophetic features, of the Old Testament development, these are the cardinal and leading thoughts, and show with clearness that for them, too, it was a covenant of grace.<sup>1</sup> In one prominent point the prophets advance beyond Mosaism, namely, in the clear announcement of the objective ground of grace which God promises to the penitent sinner. The Messianic feature of the prophecies constantly grows in clearness and emphasis, until in such visions as Isaah liii. we seem to hear not prophecy, but the record of history. The evangelical clearness in prophecy is ever unfolding itself more and more. In their hands the law becomes more and more a school-master unto Christ, because they can interpret the law. They teach not only that the law cannot justify, and that in his mercy God will do so, but also that he will do so for the sake of the future Redeemer. They believed not only in a salvation to come, but also in a Saviour to come, and it was thus only that the circuit of saving truth was completed.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. in this connection, especially Oehler, l. c. § 202; and Schultz in *Jahrbücher f. d. Theol.* 1862, p. 541 ff., where this subject is fully and exhaustively treated. v. Orelli's late work on Prophecy is also most excellent.

This, then, in general outlines, is the character of the Old Testament covenant. It is, like the New, a covenant of grace; the fundamental ideas of both are the same. The chief difference lies in this: that in the Old is found the preparatory stage, where, within the bounds of a nation and the hedge of a law, the consciousness of sin and the need of a Saviour were developed; the New starts out with this knowledge, and proclaims the Saviour from these sins. The sins demanded a sacrifice; Christ did, by his life and his deeds, become a sacrifice and atonement; and with these words the greatest difference between the Old and the New Testament covenant has been stated. The Old teaches the knowledge of sin, and looks forward to the coming sacrifice as a hope and a promise; the New starts out with this conviction, and has the complete sacrifice already performed. But the basis of hope, the object of faith, is in both the same, namely, Christ Jesus our Lord.

In view of these facts, it may be called a piece of doubtful wisdom to speak of two covenants, as now understood, at all. In reality there is but one covenant, namely, that of grace and faith, but in two historical stages of development, the preparatory and the completed. Between the two there is a difference, not of kind, but merely of degree. The biblical and traditional theological terminology, concerning a new and an old covenant, as these are generally understood, tends rather to separate and keep apart as distinct, or even antagonistic, two things that are really but the two sides of one and the same thing. The covenant idea is the connecting link between the two testaments, as it is declared to be by the preaching of John the Baptist, and of Christ. They announce that the kingdom of God, which has hitherto been in preparation and a promise, has now arrived and is at hand; and they, consciously, thus place their mission and work in direct connection as complementary to that which has preceded. They build upon the foundation of Moses and the prophets.

Many questions of Old Testament religion and Isa-gogics naturally suggest themselves in connection with this outline of what is the central thought of the Old Testament development, especially the bearing which the correct and biblical view of this development must have in deciding the vexed problems proposed by the Well-hausen-Smith school. But the discussion of these points would go entirely beyond the scope of this article and its general character, and besides would not materially affect the result of this investigation. Suffice it, that our examination has shown how intimately, in their roots and essence, the two testaments are connected, and how correct is the terse *dictum* of St. Augustine, that the New Testament lies concealed in the Old, and the Old lies revealed in the New. Both proclaim the sin of man, but both announce also the mercy of God, ready to pardon man if he repents. They record for us how God, who did not desire the dire work of sin to succeed, made a covenant for the purpose of thwarting the destruction of mankind; how this covenant, in which God asked that man should have faith and confidence in him alone, grew and developed under the politico-religious kingdom of Israel, until in the fulness of time this development had taught, beyond a doubt, its great lesson, the need of a Saviour; the Saviour really came and performed what had been predicted, prefigured, and typified before, namely, the work of redemption and salvation. The New and the Old are one undivided revelation, because they are the record of one kingdom of God on earth.