

The Sinaitic Covenant

by A.W. Pink

The Sinaitic covenant was a new era in the history of the human race, with the Lord God proposing a condition for Israel to obey His voice and keep His covenant.

Scripture: Exodus 19:5

Topics: "Covenant Theology", "God's Law and Grace"

Description

A.W. Pink explores the Sinaitic Covenant, emphasizing its significance as a pivotal moment in God's dealings with Israel and humanity. He discusses the nature of the covenant, questioning whether it was merely a national agreement or if it also contained spiritual implications for individual salvation. Pink highlights the covenant's requirements for obedience and the consequences of disobedience, contrasting it with the everlasting covenant of grace. He argues that the Sinaitic Covenant was a step in God's progressive revelation, preparing the way for the coming of Christ and the new covenant. Ultimately, Pink asserts that understanding this covenant is crucial for grasping the broader narrative of redemption in Scripture.

Transcript

We have now arrived at a stage of our subject which we fear is not likely to be of much interest to many of our readers; yet we would ask them to kindly bear with us for the sake of those who are anxious to have a systematic exposition thereof. We write, therefore, for those who desire answers to such questions as the following: What was the precise nature of the covenant which God entered into with Israel at Sinai? Did it concern only their temporal welfare as a nation, or did it also set forth God's requirements for the individual's enjoyment of eternal blessings? Was a radical change now made in God's revelation to men and what He demanded of them? Was an entirely different "way of salvation" now introduced? Wherein is the Sinaitic covenant related to the others, particularly to the everlasting covenant of grace and to the Adamic covenant of works? Was it in harmony with the former, or a renewal of the latter? Was the Sinaitic covenant a simple or a mixed one: did it have only a "letter" significance pertaining to earthly things or a "spirit" as well, pertaining to heavenly things? What specific contribution did it make unto the progressive unfolding of the divine plan and purpose?

We deem it of great importance that a clear conception be obtained of the precise nature and meaning of that august transaction which took place at Sinai, when Jehovah proclaimed the Ten Commandments in the hearing of Israel. No one who has given any due attention thereto can fail to perceive that it marked a

memorable epoch in the history of that people. But it was far more than that: it possessed a much deeper and broader significance--it was the beginning of a new era in the history of the human race, being a momentous step in that series of divine dispensations toward fallen mankind. Yet it must be frankly acknowledged that the subject is as difficult as it is important: the great diversity of opinion which prevails among the theologians and divines who have studied the subject is proof thereof. Yet this is no reason why we should despair of obtaining light thereon. Rather should it cause us to cry to God for help, and to prosecute our inquiry cautiously, humbly, and carefully.

What was the precise character of the transaction which Jehovah entered into with Israel at Sinai? That there was a bona fide covenant made on that occasion cannot be gainsaid. The term is actually used in Exodus 19:5: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people." So again we read, "And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold, the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words" (Ex. 24:7, 8). Years after, when rehearsing God's dealings with Israel, Moses said, "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb" (Deut. 5:2). Not only is the word covenant used, but the transactions at Sinai contained all the elements of a covenant: the contracting parties were the Lord God and Israel; the condition was, "If ye will obey my voice indeed"; the promise was, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6); the penalty was the curses of Deuteronomy 28:15, and so forth.

But what was the nature and design of that covenant? Did God mock His fallen creatures by formally renewing the (Adamic) covenant of works, which they had already broken, under the curse of which all by nature lay, and which He knew they could not keep for a single hour? Such a question answers itself. Or did God do with Israel then as He does with His people now: first redeem, and then put under law as a rule of life, a standard of conduct? But if that were the case, why enter into this formal "covenant"? Even Fairbairn virtually cuts the knot here by saying that the form of a covenant is of no consequence at all. But this covenant form at Sinai is the very thing which requires to be accounted for. Christians are not put under the law as a covenant, though they are as a rule. No help is to be obtained by dodging difficulties or by denying their existence; they must be fairly and prayerfully grappled with.

There is no doubt in my mind that many have been led astray when considering the typical teaching of Israel's history and the antitype in the experience of Christians, by failing to duly note the contrasts as well as the comparisons between them. It is true that God's deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt blessedly foreshadowed the redemption of His elect from sin and Satan; yet let it not be forgotten that the majority of those who were emancipated from Pharaoh's slavery perished in the wilderness, not being suffered to enter the promised land. Nor are we left to mere reasoning at this point: it is placed upon inspired record that "behold, the days come saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord" (Heb. 8:8, 9). Thus we have divine authority for saying that God's dealings with Israel at Sinai were not a parallel with His dealings with His people under the gospel, but a contrast!

Herman Witsius took the view that the Sinaitic compact was neither, formally, the covenant of grace nor the covenant of works, but a national covenant which presupposed them both, and that it promised "not only temporal blessings . . . but also spiritual and eternal." So far so good. But when he states (bk. 4, sec.

4, par. 43-45) that the condition of this covenant was "a sincere, though not, in every respect, a perfect obedience of His commands," we certainly cannot agree. Witsius held that the Sinaitic covenant differed from the covenant of works--which made no provision or allowance for the acceptance of a sincere though imperfect obedience; and that it differed from the covenant of grace, since it contained no promises of strength to enable Israel to render that obedience. Though plausible, his position is not only erroneous but highly dangerous. God never promised eternal life to men on the condition of an imperfect but sincere obedience--that would overthrow the whole argument of Romans and Galatians.

Thomas Bell (1814) in his heavy work on *The Covenants* insists that "the covenant of works was delivered from Sinai, yet as subservient to the Covenant of Grace." Such an accurate thinker was bound to feel the pressure of those difficulties which such a postulate involves, yet he took a strange way of getting out of them. Appealing to Deuteronomy 29:1, Bell argued that God made "two distinct covenants with Israel," and that "the one made in Moab was the Covenant of Grace," and that "the two covenants mentioned in Deuteronomy 29:1 are as opposite as the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of faith." We will not here attempt to show the unsatisfactoriness and untenability of such an inference; suffice it to say there is less warrant for it than to conclude that God made two totally distinct covenants with Abraham (in Genesis 15 and 17): the covenant at Moab was a renewal of the Sinaitic, as the ones made with Isaac and Jacob were of the original one with Abraham.

Quite a different idea has been advanced by those known as the Plymouth Brethren. Darby (who had quite a penchant for novelties) advanced the theory that at Sinai Israel made a fatal blunder, deliberately abandoning the ground of receiving all from God on the basis of pure grace, and in their stupidity and self-sufficiency agreeing henceforth to earn His favors. The idea is that when God rehearsed His merciful dealings with them (Ex. 19:4) and then added, "Now therefore if ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people," that Israel was guilty of perverting His words, and evidenced their carnality and pride by saying, "All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do." Those are regarded as most disastrous words, leading to most disastrous results; for it is supposed that, from this time, God entirely changed His attitude toward them.

In his Synopsis, Darby concludes his remarks on Exodus 18 and opens 19 by saying, "But having thus terminated the course of grace the scene changes entirely. They do not keep the feast on the mount, whither God, as He had promised, had led them--had brought them, bearing them as on eagles' wings, to Himself.' He proposes a condition to them: If they obeyed His voice, they should be His people. The people--instead of knowing themselves, and saying, 'We dare not, though bound to obey, place ourselves under such a condition, and risk our blessing, yea, make sure of losing it'--undertake to do all that the Lord has spoken. The blessing now took the form of dependence, like Adam's on the faithfulness of man as well as of God. . . . The people, however, are not permitted to approach God, who hid Himself in the darkness."

C. H. Mackintosh, in his comments on Exodus 19, says, "It [the scene presented at the end of 18] was but a brief moment of sunshine in which a very vivid picture of the kingdom was afforded; but the sunshine was speedily followed by the heavy clouds which gathered around that 'palpable mount,' where Israel, in a spirit of dark and senseless legality, abandoned His covenant of pure grace for man's covenant of works. Disastrous movement! A movement fraught with the most dismal results. Hitherto as we have seen no enemy could stand before Israel--no obstacle was suffered to interrupt their onward and victorious march. Pharaoh's hosts were overthrown, Amalek and his people were discomfited with the edge of the sword; all was victory, because God was acting on behalf of His people in pursuance of His promise to Abraham,

Isaac and Jacob.

"In the opening verses of the chapter now before us, the Lord recapitulates His actions toward Israel in the following touching and beautiful language: see Ex. 29:3-6. Observe, it is 'My voice' and 'My covenant.' What was the utterance of that 'voice'? and what did that 'covenant' involve? Had Jehovah's voice made itself heard for the purpose of laying down the rules and regulations of a severe and unbending lawgiver? By no means. It had spoken to demand freedom for the captive, to provide a refuge from the sword of the destroyer, to make a way for the ransomed to pass over, to bring down bread from heaven, to draw forth water out of the flinty rock; such had been the gracious and intelligible utterance of Jehovah's 'voice' up to the moment at which 'Israel camped before the mount.'

"And as to His 'covenant,' it was one of unmingled grace. It proposed no condition, it made no demands, it put no yoke on the neck, no burden on the shoulder. When 'the God of glory appeared unto Abraham' in Ur of the Chaldees, He certainly did not address him in such words as thou shall do this, and thou shall not do that, ah, no; such language was not according to His heart. It suits Him far better to place 'a fair mitre' upon a sinner's head than to put a 'yoke upon his neck.' His word to Abraham was 'I will give.' The land of Canaan was not to be purchased by man's doings, but to be given by God's grace. Thus it stood; and in the opening of the Book of Exodus we see God coming down in grace to make good His promise to Abraham's seed. . . . However, Israel was not disposed to occupy this blessed position."

As so many have been misled by this teaching, we will digress for a moment and show how utterly un-Scriptural it is. It is a serious mistake to say that in the Abrahamic covenant God "proposed no conditions, and made no demands, it put no yoke on the neck." As we pointed out in our chapters thereon when studying the Abrahamic covenant, attention is not to be confined unto one or two particular passages; but the whole of God's dealings with that patriarch are to be taken into consideration. Did not God say to Abraham: "Walk before me, and be thou upright, and I will make a covenant between me and thee" (Gen. 17:1)? Did He not say: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that [in order that] the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (Gen. 18:19)? Abraham had to "keep the way of the Lord," which is defined as "to do justice and judgment"--that is, to walk obediently, in subjection to God's revealed will--if he was to receive the fulfillment of the divine promises.

Again: did not the Lord expressly confirm His covenant to Abraham by oath in saying: "By myself have I sworn, with the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, That in blessing I will bless thee," and so forth (Gen. 22:16, 17). It is true, blessedly true, that God dealt with Abraham in pure grace; but it is equally true that He dealt with him as a responsible creature, as subject to the divine authority and placed him under law. At a later date, when Jehovah renewed the covenant to Isaac, He said: "I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed [the original covenant promise] because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen. 26:4, 5). That is clear enough; and nothing could be plainer that God introduced no change in His dealings with Abraham's descendants when He said to Israel at Sinai, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people" (Ex. 19:5).

Equally clear is it from Scripture that the nation of Israel was itself under law before they reached Sinai: "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and

will give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon you" (Ex. 15:26). Is it not strange to see men ignoring such plain passages? Lest the quibble be raised that the reference to God's "commandments and statutes" in that passage was prospective--that is, in view of the law which was shortly to be given them--note the following, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no" (Ex. 16:4). The meaning of this is explained in "tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord" (Ex. 16:23). Alas for their response: "There went out some of the people on the seventh day to gather" (v. 27). Now mark carefully God's complaint: "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?" (Ex. 16:28). So the reference in 16:4 was not prospective, but retrospective: Israel was under law long before they reached Sinai!

But in further rebuttal of the strange theory mentioned above, we would ask, Was it not the Lord Himself who took the initiative in this so-called abandonment of the Abrahamic covenant? For it was He who sent Moses to the people with the words (Ex. 19:5) which manifestly sought to evoke an affirmative reply! Again, we ask, If their reply proceeded from carnal pride and self-sufficiency, if it displayed an intolerable arrogance and presumption, why did it call forth no formal rebuke? So far from the Lord being displeased with Israel's promise, He said to Moses: "Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee forever" (Ex. 19:9). Again: why, at the rehearsal of this transaction, did Moses say, "The Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee; they have well said all that they have spoken," and then breathed the wish, "O that there were such an heart in them, that would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever" (Deut. 5:28, 29).

How utterly excuseless and untenable is this theory (which has been accepted by many and echoed in the Scofield Bible) in the light of the plain facts of Holy Writ. Had Israel acted so madly and presumptuously, would the Lord have gone through all the formalities of a covenant transaction (Ex. 24:3-8)? Had the words uttered by Him, and responded to by the people, been based on impossible conditions on the one side and palpable lies on the other, a covenant would be unthinkable. Finally, let it be carefully observed that so far from God pronouncing a judgment upon Israel for their promise at Sinai, He declared that, on their performance of the same, they would be peculiarly honored and blessed (Ex. 23:27-29; Deut. 6:28).

II.

In approaching the study of the Sinaitic covenant, several things need attending to. First, it is to be viewed in connection with all that had preceded it (particularly the earlier covenants), rather than regarded as an isolated transaction: only thus can its details be seen in their proper perspective. Second, it is to be pondered in relation to the eternal purpose of God, and the gradual and progressive unfolding thereof which He gave unto His people: there was something more in it than what is merely temporal and evanescent. Third, the full light of the later communications from God must not be read back into it; nevertheless, the direct references to the Mosaic dispensation in the New Testament are to be carefully weighed in connection therewith.

Let us start, then, by considering what had preceded the Sinaitic covenant. Confining ourselves to that which relates the closest to our present inquiry, let us remind ourselves that under the preceding covenant God had made it known that the promised Messiah and Redeemer should spring from the line of Abraham. Now, clearly, that necessitated several things. The existence of Abraham's descendants as a separate people became indispensable, so that Christ's descent could be undeniably traced and the

leading promise of that covenant clearly verified. Moreover, the isolation of Abraham's descendants (Israel) from the heathen was equally essential for the preservation of the knowledge and worship of God in the earth, until the fullness of time should come and a higher dispensation succeed. In pursuance of this, to Israel were committed the living oracles, and amongst them the ordinances of divine worship were authoritatively established.

It was not until the large family of Jacob had developed (seventy-five souls: Acts 7:14) that the Abrahamic covenant, in its natural aspect, began to bud toward fulfillment. There was then a fair prospect of their progressive increase; yet considerable time would be required before they could attain that augmentation in numbers which would justify their political organization as a separate nation and put them into a condition to occupy the promised inheritance. In order for that, the providence of God gave them a temporary settlement in Egypt, which was greatly to their advantage. A season in the midst of the most learned nation of antiquity afforded the Israelites an opportunity of obtaining instruction in many important branches of knowledge, of which they took advantage, as their subsequent history shows; while the fact that "every shepherd was an abomination to the Egyptians" (Gen. 46:34) kept the two nations apart religiously, so that to a considerable extent the Hebrews were preserved from idolatry. Later, the cruel bondage they experienced there made them glad to leave.

In Egypt, the descendants of Abraham had multiplied so extensively that by the time of the great Exodus there were probably at least two million souls. If, then, they were to be organized into a nation, and brought into proper subjection to God, it was necessary that He should make a full revelation of His will for them, giving them laws and precepts for the regulation of all phases of their corporate and individual lives; and, above all, prescribe the nature and requirements of the divine worship. This is what Jehovah graciously did at Sinai. There, God gave Israel a full declaration of His claims upon them and what He required of them, providing a "constitution" which had in view naught but their own good and the glorifying of His great name; the whole being ratified by a solemn covenant. This was a decided advance on all that had gone before, and marked another step forward in the unfolding of the divine plan.

But at this point we are faced with a formidable difficulty, namely, the remarkable diversity in the representation found in later Scripture respecting the tendency and bearing of the law on those who were subject to it. On the one hand, we find a class of passages which represent the law as coming expressly from Israel's redeemer, conveying a benign aspect and aiming at happy results. Moses extolled the condition of Israel as, on this very account, surpassing that of all other people: "For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" (Deut. 4:7, 8). The same sentiment is echoed in various forms in the Psalms. "He showed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them" (Ps. 147:19, 20). "Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them" (Ps. 119:165).

But on the other hand, there is another class of passages which appear to point in the very opposite direction. In these the law is represented as a source of trouble and terror--a bondage from which it is true liberty to escape. "The law worketh wrath" (Rom. 4:15); "the strength of sin is the law" (1 Cor. 15:56). In 2 Corinthians 3:7, 9 the apostle speaks of the law as "the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones," and as "the ministration of condemnation." Again, he declares, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse" (Gal. 3:10). "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be

circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law" (Gal. 5:1-3).

Now it is very obvious that such diverse and antagonistic representations could not have been given of the law in the same respect, or with the same regard, to its direct and primary aim. We are obliged to believe that both these representations are true, being alike found in the volume of inspiration. Thus it is clear that Scripture requires us to contemplate the law from more than one point of view, and with regard to different uses and applications of it. What those different viewpoints are, and what the varied uses and applications of the law, will be pointed out later on. For the present, we confine ourselves to a consideration of the place which the law holds in the Mosaic economy. This is surely the only logical order to follow, for it is the happier class of representation which are found in the Pentateuch, occupying the foreground; while the others come in afterward, and must be noticed by us subsequently.

"The national covenant with Israel was here (Ex. 19:5) meant; the charter upon which they were incorporated, as a people, under the government of Jehovah. It was an engagement of God, to give Israel possession of Canaan, and to protect them in it: to render the land fruitful, and the nation victorious and prosperous, and to perpetuate His oracles and ordinances among them; so long as they did not, as a people, reject His authority, apostatize to idolatry, and tolerate open wickedness. These things constitute a forfeiture of the covenant; as their national rejection of Christ did afterwards. True believers among them were personally dealt with according to the Covenant of Grace, even as true Christians now are; and unbelievers were under the Covenant of Works, and liable to condemnation by it, as at present: yet, the national covenant was not strictly either the one or the other, but had something in it of the nature of each.

"The national covenant did not refer to the final salvation of individuals: nor was it broken by the disobedience, or even idolatry, of any number of them, provided this was not sanctioned or tolerated by public authority. It was indeed a type of the covenant made with true believers in Christ Jesus, as were all the transactions with Israel; but, like other types, it 'had not the very image,' but only 'a shadow of good things to come.' When, therefore, as a nation, they had broken this covenant, the Lord declared that He would make 'a new covenant with Israel, putting His law,' not only in their hands, but 'in their inward parts'; and 'writing it,' not upon tables of stone, 'but in their hearts; forgiving their iniquity and remembering their sin no more' (Jer. 31:32-34; Heb. 8:7-12; 10:16, 17). The Israelites were under a dispensation of mercy, and had outward privileges and great advantages in various ways for salvation: yet, like professing Christians, the most of them rested in these, and looked no further. The outward covenant was made with the Nation, entitling them to outward advantages, upon the condition of outward national obedience; and the covenant of Grace was ratified personally with true believers, and sealed and secured spiritual blessings to them, by producing a holy disposition of heart, and spiritual obedience to the Divine law. In case Israel kept the covenant, the Lord promised that they should be to Him 'a peculiar treasure.' 'All the earth' (Ex. 19:5) being the Lord's, He might have chosen any other people instead of Israel: and this implied that, as His choice of them was gratuitous, so if they rejected His covenant, He would reject them, and communicate their privileges to others; as indeed He hath done, since the introduction of the Christian dispensation" (Thomas Scott).

The above quotation contains the most lucid, comprehensive, and yet simple analysis of the Sinaitic covenant which we have met with in all our reading. It draws a clear line of distinction between God's dealings with Israel as a nation, and with individuals in it. It shows the correct position of the everlasting covenant of grace and the Adamic covenant of works in relation to the Mosaic dispensation. All were born under the condemnation of their federal head (Adam), and while they continued unregenerate and in

unbelief, were under the wrath of God; whereas God's elect, upon believing, were treated by Him then, as individuals, in precisely the same way as they are now. Scott brings out clearly the character, the scope, the design, and the limitation of the Sinaitic covenant: its character was a supplementary combination of law and mercy; its scope was national; its design was to regulate the temporal affairs of Israel under the divine government; its limitation was determined by Israel's obedience or disobedience. The typical nature of it--the hardest point to elucidate--is also allowed. We advise the interested student to reread the last four paragraphs.

Much confusion will be avoided and much help obtained if the Sinaitic economy be contemplated separately under its two leading aspects, namely, as a system of religion and government designed for the immediate use of the Jews during the continuance of that dispensation; and then as a scheme of preparation for another and better economy, by which it was to be superseded when its temporal purpose had been fulfilled. The first design and the immediate end of what God revealed through Moses was to instruct and order the life of Israel, now formed into a nation. The second and ultimate intention of God was to prepare the people, by a lengthy course of discipline, for the coming of Christ. The character of the Sinaitic covenant was, in itself, neither purely evangelical nor exclusively legal: divine wisdom devised a wondrous and blessed comingling of righteousness and grace, justice and mercy. The requirements of the high and unchanging holiness of God were clearly revealed; while His goodness, kindness, and long-suffering were also as definitely manifested. The moral and the ceremonial law, running together side by side, presented and maintained a perfect balance, which only the corruption of fallen human nature failed to reap the full advantage of.

The covenant which God made with Israel at Sinai required outward obedience to the letter of the law. It contained promises of national blessing if they, as a people, kept the law; and it also announced national calamities if they were disobedient. This is unmistakably clear from such a passage as the following: "Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers: And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. And thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee" (Deut. 7:12-16).

In connection with the above passage notice, first, the definite reference made to God's "mercy," which proves that He did not deal with Israel on the bare ground of exacting and relentless law, as some have erroneously supposed. Second, observe the reference which the Lord here made unto His oath to their fathers, that is Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; which shows that the Sinaitic covenant was based upon, and not divorced from, the Abrahamic--Israel's occupation of Canaan being the "letter" fulfillment of it. Third, if, as a nation, Israel rendered unto their God the obedience to which He was entitled as their King and Governor, then He would love and bless them--under the Christian economy there is no promise that He will love and bless any who live in defiance of His claims upon them! Fourth, the specific blessings here enumerated were all of a temporal and material kind. In other passages God threatened to bring upon them plagues and judgments (Deut. 28:15-65) for disobedience. The whole was a compact promising to Israel certain outward and national blessings on the condition of their rendering to God a general outward

obedience to His law.

The tenor of the covenant made with them was, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine, and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:5, 6). "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries" (Ex. 23:20-22). Nevertheless, a provision of mercy was made where true repentance for failure was evidenced: "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; and that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies: if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham. . . . These are the statutes and judgments and laws which the Lord made between him and the children of Israel in Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses" (Lev. 26:40-42, 46).

The Sinaitic covenant in no way interfered with the divine administration of either the everlasting covenant of grace (toward the elect) nor the Adamic covenant of works (which all by nature lie under); it being in quite another region. Whether the individual Israelites were heirs of blessing under the former, or under the curse of the latter, in no wise hindered or affected Israel's being as a people under this national regime, which respected not inward and eternal blessings, but only outward and temporal interests. Nor did God in entering into this arrangement with Israel mock their impotency or tantalize them with vain hopes, any more than He does so now, when it still holds good that "righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to nations" (Prov. 14:34). Though it be true that Israel miserably failed to keep their national engagements and brought down upon themselves the penalties which God had threatened, nevertheless, the obedience which He required of them was not obviously and hopelessly impracticable: nay, there were bright periods in their history when it was fairly rendered, and the fruits of it were manifestly enjoyed by them.

III.

Considered as a part of the gradual and progressive unfolding of God's eternal purpose, the Sinaitic transaction marked a decided step forward upon the Abrahamic covenant, while it was also a most suitable scheme of preparation for Christianity; considered separately by itself, the Sinaitic transaction was the giving of a system of government designed for the immediate use of the Jews. These two leading aspects must be kept distinct if hopeless confusion is to be avoided. It is of the second we continue to treat, namely the Sinaitic covenant as it pertained strictly to the nation of Israel. It announced certain outward and temporal blessings on the condition that Israel as a people remained in subjection to their divine King, while it threatened national curses and calamities if they rejected His scepter and flouted His laws. This supplies the key to the entire history of the Jews.

As an example and exemplification of what has just been said, take the following, "Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments; And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land,

concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for a heritage: I am the Lord" (Ex. 6:6-8). Now that passage has presented a formidable difficulty to those who have thoughtfully pondered it, for scarcely any of the adults whom God brought out of Egypt ever entered Canaan! How, then, is this to be explained?

Thus: first, that promise concerned Israel as a people, and did not by any means necessarily imply that all, or even any of that particular generation were to enter Canaan. The divine veracity was not sullied: forty years later the nation did obtain the promised inheritance. Second, other passages must be compared with it. In Exodus 6 no express condition was mentioned in connection with the promise, not even the believing of it. Yet, so far as that generation was concerned, this, as the sequel clearly shows, was implied; for if it had been an absolute, unconditional promise to that generation, it must have been performed, otherwise God had failed to make good His word. That the promise to that generation was suspended upon their faith is plain from Hebrews 3:18, 19. Third, therein we see the contrast: the fulfillment of every condition is secured for us in and by Christ.

The Sinaitic covenant, then, was a compact promising to Israel as a people certain material and national blessings on the condition of their rendering to God a general obedience to His laws. But at this point it may be objected that God, who is infinitely holy and whose prerogative it is to search the heart, could never be satisfied with an outward and general obedience, which in the case of many would be hollow and insincere. The objection is pertinent and presents a real difficulty: how can we meet it? Very simply: this would be true of individuals as such, but not necessarily so where nations are concerned. And why not, it may be asked? For this reason: because nations as such have only a temporary existence; therefore they must be rewarded or punished in this present world, or not at all! This being so, the kind of obedience required from them is lower than from individuals, whose rewards and punishments shall be eternal.

But again it may be objected, Did not the Lord declare, "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God" (Ex. 6:7)? Is there not something far more spiritual implied there than a national covenant, something in its terms which could not be exhausted by merely outward and temporal blessings? Once more we must insist upon drawing a broad line between what pertains to individuals and what is applicable to nations. This objection would be quite valid if that promise described the relation of God to the individual soul, but the case is quite different when we remember the relation in which God stands to a nation as such! To ascertain the exact purport and scope of the divine promises to Israel as a people we must take note of the actual engagements which we find He entered into with them as a nation. This is quite obvious, yet few theologians have followed it out consistently when dealing with what is now before us.

Let it next be pointed out that the view we have propounded above (and in the preceding chapter) of the nature and scope of the Sinaitic covenant, agrees fully with the statements made regarding it in the New Testament, the most important of which is found in Hebrews 8, where it is contrasted from the better and new covenant under which Christians are now living. At first view it may appear that the antithesis drawn between the two covenants in Hebrews 8 is so radical that it must be an opposition between the covenant of works made with Adam and the covenant of grace made with believers under the gospel; in fact, several able commentators so understand it. But this is quite a mistake, and one which carries serious implications, for error on one point affects, more or less, the whole of our theological thinking. A little reflection should quickly determine this matter.

In the first place, the people of God, even before the incarnation of Christ, were not under the broken covenant of works, with its inevitable curse, but enjoyed the blessings of the everlasting covenant which

God had made with their surety before the foundation of the world. In the second place, such a view of the Sinaitic covenant (i.e., making it a repetition of the one entered into with Adam) would be in flat contradiction to what is said in the Epistle to the Galatians, where it is specifically declared that, whatever may have been God's purpose in the giving of the law, it was not meant to and could not annul the promises made to Abraham or supersede the previous method of salvation by faith which was revealed to that patriarch. But if we understand the apostle (and remember he was addressing Jews in the Hebrews Epistle) to be drawing a contrast between the national covenant made with their fathers at Sinai, and the far higher and better covenant into which Jews and Gentiles are brought by faith in Christ, then we get a satisfactory explanation of Hebrews 8 and one that brings it into complete harmony with Galatians 3.

Observe carefully what is said in Hebrews 8 to be the characteristic difference between the new and the old economies: "I will put my laws into their minds and write them in their hearts" (v. 10). No promise in any wise comparable to this was given at Sinai. But the absence of any assurance of the Spirit's internal and effectual operations was quite in keeping with the fact that the Mosaic economy required not so much an inward and spiritual, as an outward and natural obedience to the law, which for them had nothing higher than temporal sanctions. This is a fundamental principle which has not received the consideration to which it is entitled: it is vital to a clear understanding of the radical difference which obtains between Judaism and Christianity. Under the former God dealt with one nation only; now He is manifesting His grace to elect individuals scattered among all nations. Under the former He simply made known His requirements; in the latter He actually produces that which meets His requirements.

Galatians 3 shows plainly that the Sinaitic covenant was subsidiary to the promises given to Abraham concerning his Seed: "Wherefore then serveth the law [i.e., the entire legal economy]? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made" (v. 19). Thus it is clear that from the first the Mosaic economy was designed to be but temporary, to last only from the time of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness till Christ. It was needed because of their "transgressions." The children of Israel were so intractable and perverse, so prone to depart from God, that without such a divinely provided hedge, they would have lost their national identity, mixing themselves with the surrounding nations and becoming sunk in their idolatrous ways. The Holy Spirit was not then so largely given that, by the potent influences of His grace, such a disastrous issue would have been prevented. Therefore a temporary arrangement, such as Judaism provided, was essential to preserve a pure stock from which the promised Messiah should issue; and this end the Sinaitic covenant, with its promises and penalties, did effect!

But there was another and deeper reason for the legal economy. Though the Sinaitic compact was not identical with the covenant of works made with Adam, yet, in some respects, it closely resembled it: it was analogous to it, only on a lower plane. During the fifteen hundred years which elapsed between Sinai and Bethlehem, God carried out a practical demonstration with the two great divisions of the human race. The Gentiles were left to the light of nature: they were "suffered to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16; cf. 17:26-30), and this in order to supply an answer (for men) to the question, "Can fallen man, in the exercise of his own unaided reason and conscience find out God, and raise himself to a higher and better life?" One has only to consult the history of the great nations of that period--the Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans--to see the hopelessness of such an attempt. Romans 1:21-31 gives the inspired comment thereon.

Running parallel with God's suffering all nations (the Gentiles) to walk in their own ways, was another experiment (speaking from the human side of things, for from the divine side "Known unto God are all his

works from the beginning of the world": Acts 15:18), conducted on a smaller scale, yet quite as decisive in its outcome. The Jews were placed under a covenant of law to supply an answer to this further question, "Can fallen man, when placed in most favorable circumstances, win eternal life by any doings of his own? Can he, even when separated from the heathen, taken into outward covenant with God, supplied with a complete divine code for the regulation of his conduct, conquer indwelling sin and act so as to secure his acceptance with the thrice holy God?" The answer furnished by the history of Israel is an emphatic negative. The lesson supplied thereby for all succeeding generations of the human race is written in unmistakable language: If Israel failed under the national covenant of outward and general obedience, how impossible it is for any member of Adam's depraved offspring to render spiritual and perfect obedience!

In the spirit of it, the Sinaitic covenant contained the same moral law as the law of nature under which Adam was created and placed in Eden--the tenth commandment giving warning that something more than outward things were required by God. Yet only those who were divinely illumined could perceive this--it was not until the Holy Spirit applied that tenth commandment in power to the conscience of Saul of Tarsus that he first realized that he was an inward transgressor of the law (Rom. 7:7, etc.). The great bulk of the nation, blinded by their self-sufficiency and self-righteousness, turned the Sinaitic compact into the covenant of works, elevating the handmaid into the position of the married wife--as Abraham did with Hagar. Galatians 4 reveals that, while the Sinaitic covenant was regarded as subservient to the covenant of grace, it served important practical ends; but when Israel perversely elevated it to the place which the better covenant was designed to hold, it became a hindrance and the fruitful mother of bondage.

The grievous error into which so many of the Jews fell concerning the design of God in giving them His law has been perpetuated, though in a modified form, by some of our own theologians. This is due to their failure to properly recognize the condition of Israel at Sinai. But once we see what they already possessed, it rules out of court the idea of the law being intended to convey the same to them. When was it that they received from God His law? Not while they were still in the land of Pharaoh, nor while they were on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea, but after they had been completely delivered from their taskmasters. It is clear then beyond contradiction, from the very time of its introduction, that the law was not given to Israel in order to deliver them from evil or as a procurer of blessing. It could not have for its design the delivering of them from death or the obtaining of God's favor, for such blessings were already theirs.

It is of great importance to keep distinctly in view what the law was never designed to effect. If we exalt it to a position which it was never meant to occupy, or expect benefits from it which it was never fitted to yield, then we shall not only err in our own reckonings, but deprive ourselves of any clear knowledge of the dispensation to which it belonged. It was in order to define the negative side of the law--what it was not intended to procure--that the apostle declared: "And this I say, the covenant, that was confirmed before of God concerning 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" (Gal. 3:17, 18). This is decisive, yet perhaps a few words of explanation will enable the reader to more easily grasp its purport.

It was because the Jews had, for the most part, come to regard their obedience to the law as constituting their title to the inheritance, and because certain of the Judaizers were beginning to corrupt the Galatian converts with the leaven of their self-righteousness, that the apostle was here moved by the Spirit to check this evil, and to expose the basic error from which it proceeded. He presses upon them the Scriptural facts of the nature and design of Jehovah's covenant with Abraham, which he declares was "confirmed before

of God concerning Christ." The covenant promise made to Abraham is said to be "concerning Christ," first, because it had preeminent regard to Him; and second, because it had in view the covenant of redemption which He was to establish. The particular point which the apostle now emphasized was, that the Abrahamic covenant expressly conferred on his posterity, as God's free gift, the inheritance of the land of Canaan--which entailed their deliverance from the land of bondage and their safe passage through the wilderness, which were necessary in order for them to enter and take possession thereof.

Thus the apostle made it unmistakably clear that Israel's title to Canaan could not possibly need to be reacquired by a law righteousness performed by them personally, for in such a case the law would revoke the covenant of promise, and thereby the latter revelation which God made at Sinai would overthrow the foundation of what He had laid in His promises to Abraham. That the Lord never meant for the law to interfere with the gifts and promises of the Abrahamic covenant is abundantly clear from what He said to Israel immediately before the law was formally announced from Sinai: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:4-6).

From the above quotation it will be seen that God addressed Israel as already standing in such a blessed relation to Him as evidenced for them an interest in His love and faithfulness. He appealed to the proofs which He had given of this, as being not only sufficient to set their hearts at rest, but also to encourage them to expect whatever might still be needed to complete their felicity. "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice": not because ye have obeyed it have I wrought so mightily for you: but these things have been done that ye might render me loving and loyal subjection. So too He prefaced the Ten Commandments with "I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex. 20:2). He rests His claims to their obedience on the grace that He had already bestowed upon them.

(For much in the early paragraphs of this chapter we are indebted to an able discussion of the character of the Sinaitic covenant by Robert Balfour, which appeared in the British and Foreign Evangelical Review of July 1877.)

IV.

When God established His covenant with Abraham He said to him, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation, whom they shall serve will I judge; and afterwards shall they come out with great substance" (Gen. 15:13, 14). Accordingly, when the time approached for the execution of judgment on their oppressors, the servitude of Israel had reached its extreme point, and the bitterness of their bondage had awakened in their minds an earnest desire for deliverance. Their discipline was an essential part of their preparation for the benefits which God designed to bestow upon them. Contemporaneously with those events, Moses was raised up as the instrument of their deliverance, and was divinely qualified for the work assigned him.

Moses, acting under divine directions and by a series of remarkable judgments upon Egypt, extorted from Pharaoh a reluctant permission for their departure from his land, with all their possessions. Those judgments were designed not only to afford a practical confutation of the idolatry of the Egyptians and a retribution for their cruel oppression of God's people, but more particularly an open vindication of the

supremacy of Jehovah in the sight of the surrounding nations, and at the same time to influence the hearts of the people themselves so as to induce a heartfelt acknowledgment of God, and a prompt and cheerful obedience to Him. Assuredly, no course could have been more fitted to accomplish those ends. The manifestations of divine power Israel had witnessed, the marked separation between them and the Egyptians--being preserved from the plagues which smote their oppressors and their miraculous escape from the judgment which overwhelmed the Egyptians at the Red Sea--were well suited to create deep and lasting effects upon them.

Those impressive events all indicated God's interposition for their deliverance in a manner to which it was impossible that even the blindest among them could have been insensible. They were well calculated to awaken a deep conviction of the divine presence in their midst in a special manner. Such manifestations of God's power, faithfulness, and grace on their behalf ought to have produced in them a ready compliance with every intimation of His holy will. He had dealt with them as He had dealt with no other people. How much they needed those object lessons, and how little they really benefited from them, their future conduct shows.

Their moral conditions the Lord well knew--their faintheartedness, their perversity, their unbelief. In order to more effectually prepare them for the immediate future, as well as of formally establishing that covenant by which He indicated the relation which He was graciously pleased to sustain toward them and the principles by which His future dealings with them would be regulated, He led them through the wilderness and brought them to Sinai. There the Lord granted a fresh manifestation of His glory: amidst thunderings and lightnings, flames and smoke, He delivered to them the Ten Words. The object of God in that solemn transaction was clearly intimated in the language He addressed to them immediately before (see Ex. 19:5, 6). But although the law of the Ten Commandments constituted the leading feature of the Sinaitic covenant and gave to the entire transaction its distinctive character, yet we must conclude that it was limited thereto.

It is true that God added no more to the Ten Commandments at that time, not because there was nothing more to be revealed, but because the people in terror entreated that Moses might be the medium of all further communications (Deut. 5:24-27). Accordingly we find the law itself was followed by a number of statutes (Ex. 21-23), which were in part explanatory of the great principles of the law and in part enjoining the ordinances for the regulation of their worship--which later received much enlargement. Both the basic law and the subsidiary statutes were immediately put on permanent record, and the whole sealed by "the book of the covenant" being read in the audience of the people and blood being sprinkled on them (Ex. 24:4-8). It was to that solemn ratification of this covenant which the apostle makes reference in Hebrews 9:18-20--it was substantially a repetition of the same significant ceremony which attended the establishment of the earlier covenants.

Thus it is clear that while the Ten Commandments was the most prominent and distinctive feature of the Sinaitic covenant, yet it embraced the entire body of the statutes and judgments which God gave Moses for the government of Israel, as well in their civil as in their religious capacity. They formed one code, in which the moral law and the ceremonial law were blended in a way peculiar to the special constitution under which the nation of Israel was placed. Speaking generally, the civil had a religious and the religious a civil aspect, in a sense found nowhere else. All the particulars of that code were not equally important: some things were vital to it, the violation of which involved the practical renunciation of the covenant; others were subordinate, enjoined because necessary as means of attaining the grand end in view. Yet were they all parts of the one covenant, demanding a prompt and sincere obedience.

In the above paragraphs we have purposely gone back to the beginnings of God's dealings with Israel as a nation, in order to show once more how unique was the Mosaic economy, that there was much connected with it which, in the very nature of the case, has no parallel under the present gospel order of things. The Sinaitic covenant was the foundation of that political constitution which the people of Israel enjoyed: in consequence thereof Jehovah sustained a special relation to them. He was not only the God of all the earth (Ex. 19:5), but, in a peculiar sense, the King and Legislator of Israel. Any attempt on their part to change the divinely instituted system of law, given for their government, was expressly forbidden: "Ye shall not add unto the words which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God" (Deut. 4:2). That code was complete in itself--that is, as considered in relation to the particular condition of that people for whose government it was intended.

"It is of great importance to the right interpretation of many passages in the O.T., that this particular be well understood and kept in view. Jehovah is very frequently represented as the Lord and God of all the ancient Israelites; even where it is manifest that the generality of them were considered as destitute of internal piety, and many of them as enormously wicked. How, then, could He be called their Lord and their God, in distinction from His relation to Gentiles (whose Creator, Benefactor, and Sovereign He was), except on the ground of the Sinai covenant? He was their Lord as being their Sovereign, whom, by a federal transaction they were bound to obey, in opposition to every political monarch who should at any time presume to govern them by laws of his own. He was their God, as the only Object of holy worship; and whom, by the same National covenant, they had solemnly engaged to serve according to His own rule, in opposition to every Pagan idol.

"But that National relation between Jehovah and Israel being long since dissolved, and the Jew having no prerogative above the Gentile; the nature of the Gospel economy and of the Messiah's kingdom absolutely forbids our supposing that either Jews or Gentiles are warranted to call the Universal Sovereign their Lord or their God, if they do not yield willing obedience to Him and perform spiritual worship. It is, therefore, either for want of understanding, or of considering the nature, aspect, and influence of the Sinai Constitution, that many persons dream of the New Covenant in great numbers of places where Moses and the Prophets had no thought of it, but had the Convention at Horeb directly in view. It is owing to the same ignorance, or inadvertency, that others argue from various passages in the O.T. for justification before God by their own obedience, and against the final perseverance of real saints.

"Again, as none but real Christians are the subjects of our Lord's kingdom, neither adults nor infants can be members of the Gospel Church in virtue of an external covenant or a relative holiness. A striking disparity this, between the Jewish and the Christian Church. A barely relative sanctity [that is, a sanctity accruing from belonging to the nation of God's choice, A.W.P.] supposes its possessors to be the people of God in a merely external sense; such an external people supposes an external covenant, or one that relates to exterior conduct and temporal blessings; and an external covenant supposes an external king. Now an external king is a political sovereign, but such is not our Lord Jesus Christ, nor yet the Divine Father.

"Under the Gospel Dispensation, these peculiarities have no existence. For Christ has not made an external covenant with any people. He is not the king of any particular nation. He dwells not in a temple made with hands. His throne is in the heavenly sanctuary, nor does He afford His visible presence in any place upon earth. The partition--wall between Jews and Gentiles has long been demolished: and, consequently, our divine Sovereign does not stand related to any people or to any person so as to confer a relative sanctity, or to produce an external holiness.

"The covenant made at Sinai having long been obsolete, all its peculiarities are vanished away: among which, relative sanctity [that is, being accounted externally holy, because belonging to the nation separated unto God, A.W.P.] made a conspicuous figure. That National Constitution being abolished, Jehovah's political sovereignty is at an end. The Covenant which is now in force, and the royal relation of our Lord to the Church, are entirely spiritual. All that external holiness of persons, of places, and of things, which existed under the old economy, is gone for ever; so that if the professors of Christianity do not possess a real, internal sanctity, they have none at all. The National confederation at Sinai is expressly contrasted in Holy Scripture with the new covenant (see Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:7-13), and though the latter manifestly provides for internal holiness, respecting all the covenantees, yet it says not a word about relative sanctity" (Abraham Booth, 1796).

Jehovah, then, was King in Israel: His authority was supreme. He gave them the land in which they dwelt; settled the conditions on which they held it; made known the laws they were required to obey; and raised up from time to time, as they were demanded, leaders and judges, who for a season exercised, under God, authority over them. This is what is signified by the term theocracy--a government administered, under certain limitations, directly by God Himself. Such a relation as Jehovah sustained toward Israel, condemning all idolatry and demanding their separation from other nations, largely regulated the legislation under which they were placed. So far as righteousness between man and man was concerned, there was of course much which admitted of a universal application, resting on common and unalterable principles of equity; but there were also many enactments which derived their peculiar complexion from the special circumstances of the nation. The most cursory examination of the Pentateuch suffices to show this.

The Books of Moses reveal the singular provisions made for a self-sustaining nation, carefully fenced around and protected from moral danger from without, so far as civil arrangements could effect this end. Encouragement was indeed given to such strangers as might, on the renunciation of idolatry, become converts to the faith of Israel and settle amongst them, though they were not permitted to have any share in the earthly inheritance; but all connection and ensnaring alliances with any people beyond their own confines were rigorously guarded against. The law of jubilee, which secured to each family a perpetual interest in the property belonging to it; the restrictions on marriage; the practical discouragement of commerce; the hindrances placed in the way of aggressive warfare--in the prohibition of cavalry, then the chief strength of armies: these were all of a restricted character and illustrated that special exclusiveness of Judaism.

The nature of God's immediate government of Israel involved a special providence as essential to its administration. It is true that eternal rewards and punishments were not employed for this purpose, because nations, as such, have no hereafter. In the judgment men will be dealt with not according to their corporate but in their individual capacity. Yet it must not be inferred that Israel had no knowledge of a future state, for they had; but that knowledge could not be formally employed to enforce their civil obedience. Social relations are an affair of this world, and the laws which regulate them must find their sanctions in considerations bearing on the mere interests of this present life. Accordingly, God, as the political head of Israel, by special and extraordinary providences, intimated His approval or displeasure as their conduct called for. Prosperity, peace, and an abundance of material things were the rewards of national obedience; wars, famines, and pestilences were the punishment of their sin. The whole history of the nation shows with what uniformity the course of this intimation was pursued toward them.

Such, then, was the nature and design of the constitution conferred upon Israel; yet it must be remembered that the great benefits it involved were not the fruit of the Sinaitic covenant. True, their continued enjoyment of them depended on their obedience to that covenant; but their original bestowment was the effect of the Abrahamic covenant. Of this fact they were definitely reminded by Moses: "The Lord did not set his heart upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people: for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-pink/the-sinaitic-covenant/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net