

The Believer's Relationship to the Law

Paul Fahy

Foreword

This paper arose from requests to clarify the Biblical position of law in view of the current controversies circulating in Reformed and Baptist churches.

I have tried to be as clear as possible, even if it means appearing somewhat laboured or pedantic at times. One of the problems in many books is that the word 'law' is used in various senses, even within one sentence, but the difference of meaning is not explained. Thus I have tried to always identify the word 'law' with the correct adjective, such as 'Moral Law' or 'Mosaic Law'; alternatively 'Law' with a capital letter refers to Mosaic Law. Though this might seem laboured, it is necessary for proper understanding and clarity.

After a short introduction I give an exposition of only a few important passages; particularly one chapter of Romans. Some books expound many passages (in some cases covering over 100 pages), but these, while useful in themselves, can obscure the flow of the actual argument; indeed some expositions often contradict earlier theological statements. After my expositions I then group key questions around certain headings. This is where I explore the crucial arguments and exposition of further texts occurs within these discussions. The main thrust of my thesis is developed in the sections on these questions.

Some themes are repeated, of necessity, as they flow through different questions. Thus there are various explanations of the Law of Christ, the unity of Mosaic Law, what it means to be dead to law or not under law, antinomianism etc. These restatements, I believe, help not hinder the explanation. Various formal theological constructs are discussed towards the end of the paper.

I have tried very hard to make the confusion about law clearer by including various tables and flow charts to explain my points. May God use this to edify his people.

Contents

Introduction: A concise Biblical Overview of Law

A fundamental problem

Exposition of Romans 7

Exposition of Romans 8:1-4

Exposition of 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Exposition of Romans 10:4

Exposition of parts of Galatians

God's purpose in the Law and history

Questions

Structure and history

The impact of the New Covenant

The Christian life

The Gospel

Theological Issues

Objective features of the Law of Christ

Some key texts

A few select quotes

Conclusion

The Believer's Relationship to the Law

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This has been a controversial matter for centuries, and yet it ought to be simple. Paul talks about the subject in most of his letters and deals with it early on in Romans, treating it as basic Gospel knowledge, while his earliest letter (Galatians) deals extensively with it. Yet different Christian groups have fought bitter battles to this day in interpreting what Paul meant. One reason for this is that different interpretations of law undergird different formulations of the Covenant, and Biblical Theology. Another is the apparent contradictory apostolic statements that the Law is spiritual and good, but is also abolished and faulty.

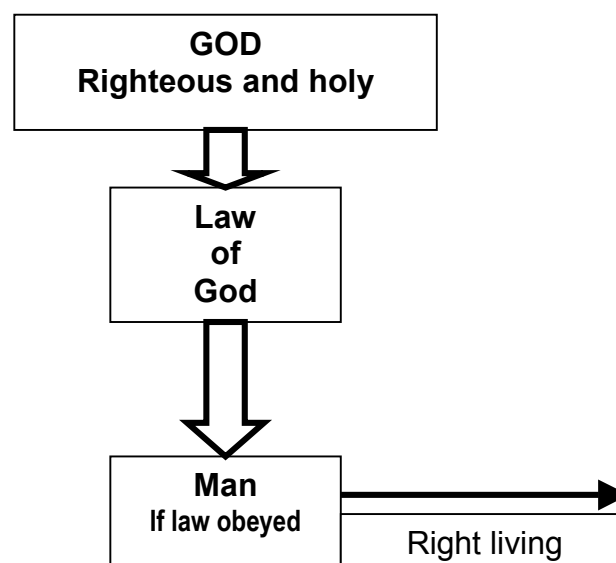
It is with some foreboding that I enter this fray; who am I to argue with former great theologians? Yet we must all find clarity on this; the matter has to be investigated or we cannot progress in the Christian life. Get this wrong and the results can vary between:

- *Antinomianism*: abandoning any law as a means of regulating Christian behaviour. Anything goes, and the result in sin.
- *Legalism*: living in fear by the rules and regulations of an external law. Behaving like a Pharisee and having no assurance. Law-keeping without grace. Self-merit. The morality of the old nature, based on human strength, even if observing God's law in superficial appearance.
- *Ignorance*: Ignoring the problem, having no understanding of the scriptures involved and behaving inconsistently. [Many Christians are in this position.]
- *Godliness*: Get this matter right and the believer will understand how to walk in holiness, but also in assurance as a spiritual man.

It thus behoves me to seek a Biblical understanding of what is meant by law in its various expressions, and what my relationship is towards it. First, we need a statement of what God's law is.

A simple definition

The law of God is the regulation of man's behaviour according to the divine will.



Introduction: A concise Biblical overview of law

At the creation

When God created Adam in his image he instilled in him an understanding of his will through a perfect conscience. In addition there were specific commands given to Adam through fellowship with God ('revealed law', such as what fruit to eat in the garden, substitutionary sacrifices). This is the essential basis of the Moral Law, God's perfect will for man's behaviour. This would also be passed on by oral tradition.

The Fall

When Adam sinned all his faculties were damaged and man became totally depraved. The image of God, perfect in Adam, was ruined so that man became a sinful reflection of Satan, dead in sin. Natural, fallen man is no longer in the image of God. Conscience was damaged and became 'evil' (Heb 10:22). While it retained some vestiges of God's law, conscience is regulated by what teaching it receives. If trained in God's word it becomes sensitive to sin. If trained by habitual sin and lies, it becomes seared and useless (1 Tim 4:2). If trained by the mores of a society, it excuses what is accepted in that society. Thus cannibals in primitive tribes have no compunction about eating their enemies. Conscience is no longer an accurate guide to God's law, but it does affirm some principles of law, depending on its training. When ignored, conscience accuses man of sin. The more conscience is ignored, the weaker its accusations become. No fallen man's conscience is an accurate guide to God's law but it does reveal the principle of law - that behaviour is judged.

The patriarchs

The Gospel was proclaimed to Abraham, including a certain understanding of the Messiah (Jn 8:56), and he was joined in friendship to God by a unilateral covenant relationship. This is the crucial Biblical covenant and it was before the formal introduction of the written Law. However, the essential points of the Moral Law and substitutionary sacrifice were understood by oral transmission.

Moses and Israel

The Mosaic Law was introduced at the creation of the nation of Israel after the Exodus. This was necessary to regulate the nation and it is solely Jewish. It is specifically stated to be a temporary thing, a parenthesis (Rm 5:20), added to the Abrahamic covenant of grace to expose sin and operating until the Messiah comes (Gal 3:19; Heb 9:10). No other nation had this Law. Heathen that embraced Yahweh became proselytes, adopted Jews. This Law brought some changes to the Moral Law; for instance: priests were no longer the head of the household, the firstborn, but from a certain tribe only (Levi). The theological purpose of the Law was to expose transgression - sin (Rm 7:7-8). It is for sinners, not the righteous (1 Tim 1:9). The moral principles which it enshrined are eternal because they pre-existed, but the Mosaic expression of these, along with the civil and ceremonial laws, were faulty and temporary (Gal 3:19; Heb 8:7-8).

After the cross, resurrection and ascension of the Lord

Because the Mosaic Law was 'faulty' it was cancelled and removed (Heb 8:13). Jesus came as the human fulfilment of the Law (Matt 5:17). The Law thus became enshrined and manifested in a perfect man - The Word of God - rather than precepts. The standard of God's will is now a man, not a rulebook. Christ is the standard by which men will be judged. The New Covenant has the Law of Christ (Gal 6:2). This includes all the moral principles of the Mosaic Law and the original Moral Law known to Adam, but takes them further. Christ's Law is internal, the Mosaic Law is external; consequently Christ's law deals with inner thoughts and motivations (2 Cor 10:4-6). It deals with the heart not just

the actions. Lust is condemned as well as fornication (Matt 5:28). Jesus emphasised this change even in his human ministry (Matt 5:20ff). Christ is the end of the OT expression of law (Rm 10:4).

Spiritual power

Believers are under the direction, guidance and shepherding of the Holy Spirit; he is the controlling power behind their sanctification (2 Thess 2:13). He leads believers into truth and brings the things of Christ to them (Jn 16:13-15). Since Christ is the fulfilment of the Law, as believers walk in his Spirit and put on the new nature (created in the likeness of Christ) believers walk in obedience to the divine law and express the image of God, bearing fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22; Eph 5:8-9).

Contrasts between Christ's Law and Mosaic / OT Moral Law

Righteousness is by faith not law (Phil 3:9). The Law is a precursor to Christ but afterwards we live by faith, being in Christ (Gal 3:24-27). The Law was a shadow, Christ is the reality (Col 2:17; Heb 8:5, 10:1). The Law was a letter that killed, in Christ the Spirit makes alive (2 Cor 3:6). Mosaic Law brought slavery, Christ brings freedom (Rm 8:15; Gal 4:1). The Law was closely connected to the entire priestly worship system; when this system was changed the Law changed also (Heb 7:12). The New Covenant has a Melchizedekian priesthood and thus a new expression of law (Heb 7:17-18). [Note that the inheritance of the Gospel is not by law but by promise; both for Abraham and NT saints (Gal 3:18).]

What the OT Law cannot do

It cannot give life or righteousness (Gal 2:21, 3:21). It cannot give the Spirit (Gal 3:2). It cannot justify (Gal 2:16). The Law had 'weaknesses' and was 'useless' (Heb 7:18). The Law cannot reveal faith (Gal 3:23). It cannot make perfect (Heb 7:19).

What the OT Law did do

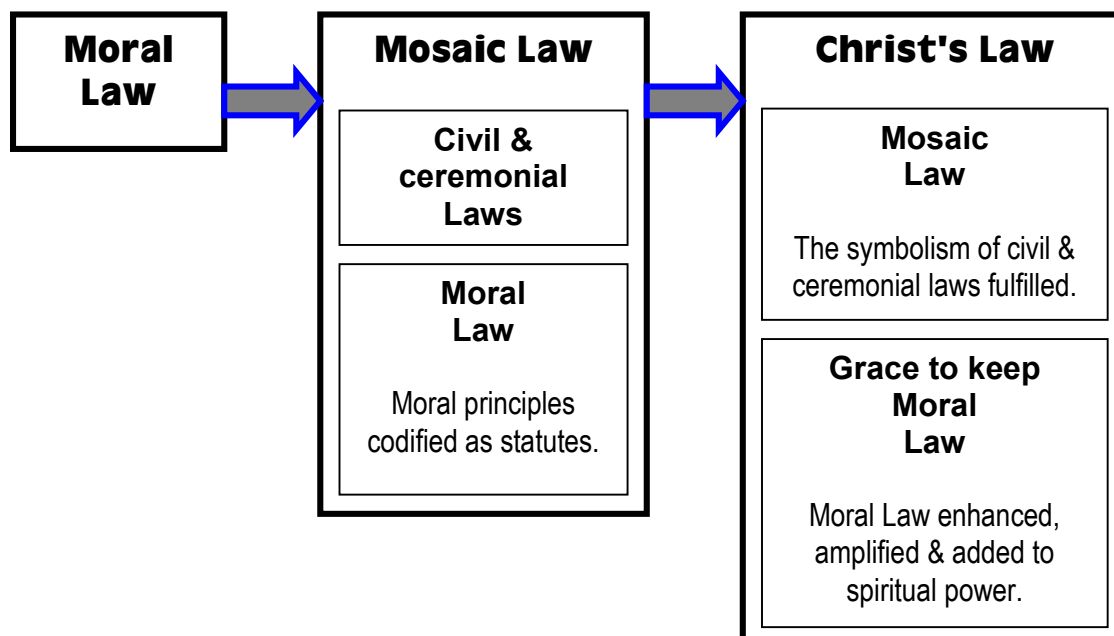
It exposed sin and magnified transgression (Rm 3:20; Gal 3:19). It curses sinners (Gal 3:13). It was a ministry of death (2 Cor 3:7).

The Law is now obsolete in its OT form

Gal 3:24-25; Heb 7:18, 8:13.

Saints are not under an external law

Rm 6:14-15, 7:4, 6; 8:2. It is not for saints but sinners (1 Tim 1:9).



A Fundamental Problem

Different meanings of 'law' in scripture

This makes exposition difficult on occasions; does the writer mean Moral Law, the Mosaic Law or something else? Easton's Bible Dictionary gives the following meanings of the Biblical word 'law':

Law: a rule of action.

1. *The Law of Nature* is the will of God as to human conduct, founded on the moral difference of things, and discoverable by natural light (Ro 1:20 2:14,15) This law binds all men at all times. It is generally designated by the term conscience, or the capacity of being influenced by the moral relations of things. [By this he means the Moral Law as known to the patriarchs.]
2. *The Ceremonial Law* prescribes under the Old Testament the rites and ceremonies of worship. This law was obligatory only till Christ, of whom these rites were typical, had finished his work (Heb 7:9,11 10:1 Eph 2:16) It was fulfilled rather than abrogated by the gospel.
3. *The Judicial Law*, the law which directed the civil polity of the Hebrew nation.
4. *The Moral Law* is the revealed will of God as to human conduct, binding on all men to the end of time. It was promulgated at Sinai. It is perfect (Ps 19:7) perpetual (Matt 5:17,18) holy (Rm 7:12) good, spiritual (Rm 7:14) and exceeding broad (Ps 119:96) Although binding on all, we are not under it as a covenant of works (Gal 3:17)
5. *Positive Laws* are precepts founded only on the will of God. They are right because God commands them.
6. *Moral positive laws* are commanded by God because they are right.

He could also have added *law as the expression of a moral force*, such as 'the law of sin and death' or the 'law of the Spirit of life' (Rm 8:2).

Regarding exposition of Biblical books, 'law' can sometimes just mean the *Torah*, the five books of Moses, but it is also used as shorthand for the whole OT economy and order, thus inclusive of every aspect of OT administration. It is sometimes used to describe the Old Testament as a whole, or by some as the doctrine of the Old Testament. Theologians sometimes use the word abstractedly to mean 'the rule of righteousness'; but also to refer to the Covenant of Works or shorthand for the Mosaic Covenant.

We can simplify the matter as follows:

1. *Moral Law*: God's will for human conduct made known in basic terms in man's conscience since creation.
2. *Mosaic Law* (Old Covenant Law): Incorporates the Moral Law which it amplifies, to which is added the Ceremonial Law (to regulate Israel's worship system) and Civil Law (used to regulate the polity of Israel as a theocracy). This Law is fleshly and external. Though divided into three sections for convenience to expositors, it is always to be viewed as a unity. It is empowered by sanctions and death.
3. *The Law of Christ*: the fulfilment of the Mosaic Law centred in a person - the Messiah, who is the end of the Law. This law is spiritual and internal. It incorporates all God's will as required in the Moral Law and the Mosaic Law, but enhances them to regulate thoughts and motivations. It is empowered by the Spirit of Christ. This is God's perfect standard of righteousness.

Identifying these different aspects of law must be done by examining the context; thus law in the book of Hebrews is the Law of Moses since it constantly refers to the Old Covenant, the priesthood, tabernacle and offerings that constituted the basis of that law. There can

sometimes be difficulties separating natural Moral Law from the Mosaic Law in interpreting texts.

Moral Law	Mosaic Law	Christ's Law
Began at creation.	Began at Sinai.	Began at the cross.
For all men.	For Israel.	For believers.
Subjects are alive (humans).	Subjects are alive (humans).	Subjects are dead in Christ and are now new creatures.
Implanted in heart and soul. [<i>But conscience damaged after the Fall and can be seared.</i>] Some aspects by verbal command (e.g. fruit).	Written down. Applied to the soul (mind, volition, and emotions).	Implanted in heart and spirit. Arises from new nature by the Spirit.
Internal.	External	Internal and spiritual.
Basic principles only; essence of right and wrong & need to worship creator.	Moral Law confirmed in specific statutes, primarily 10 Commandments.	Moral Law subsumed and expanded.
Controls actions, some impact on motivations.	Controls actions, some impact on motivations.	Controls thoughts, motivations <i>and</i> actions.
Underlies Old Covenant.	Comprises essence of Old Covenant.	Comprises essence of New Covenant.
Obedied by works. No power supplied. Source of power = human strength - hence failure.	Obedied by works. No power supplied. Source of power = human strength - hence failure.	Obedied as believer walks in the Spirit, puts on new nature and abides in Christ. Spirit supplies power to obey energising actions.
Salvation by faith in God's grace and provision of blood sacrifice.	Salvation by faith and hope in God's mercy via sacrificial system.	Salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone.
Only patriarchal saints saved.	Only remnant of Israel saved.	Law for all those saved in Christ.
Righteous seen by their testimony and obedience to Moral Law.	Righteous seen by their obedience to the Law and worship system.	Righteous seen by their spiritual fruit and godliness.
Worship by personal devotion, tribal altars, and personal contact with God.	Worship by localised observance of legal Tabernacle system.	Worship in the Spirit.
Family head as priest.	Levitical priestly mediators regulated by law.	Christ the only mediator.

Essential principle

Legal & external

Spiritual & internal

Subsumed in Christ

Made obsolete by cross

Eternal

Embodied in conscience

Embodied in 10 Commandments

Embodied in Christ

Exposition of Romans 7¹

Introduction

Paul has been explaining the benefits of righteousness in Christ in the book of Romans. Justification (c. 4-5) has resulted in tremendous blessing, starting with forgiveness, being counted as righteous in Christ and being lifted out of the old Adamic life by dying with Jesus (c. 6). His death was not only substitutionary (i.e. he died for my sins in my place), but it was also representative (I died with him on the cross). As a result, the power of sin in the old life has been undercut; the root cause of sin in my old nature has been dealt with. I do not have to be dominated by sin anymore, I have a choice as to which life I will express in my body: the resurrection life of Christ (new nature) or the old sinful life of Adam (old nature). Paul continues this teaching by explaining our NEW RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAW AS A RESULT OF HAVING A NEW LIFE THAT IS SPIRITUAL, NOT EARTHLY.

Paul has already mentioned in Rm 6:14-15 that our position to the Law has radically changed as a result of death:

For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

In chapter 7, Paul launches into a full exposition of what this means for believers. His style of argument can be hard to follow, so to aid understanding, I am breaking the chapter down into blocks of thought.

An utter failure to live life right

Paul is anxious that no believer drags themselves around struggling and striving to be godly by human effort. He pictures a person desperate to do good and trying hard to obey God by observing his commandments but finding that there is an evil principle inside (the old nature) which continually drags him down to utter failure. The more he tries, the worse it seems to get:

- The very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me. (v10)
- For sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and by it killed me. (v11)
- I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. (v15)
- For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. (v18)
- For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. (v19)
- So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. (v21)
- For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, (i.e. spirit) but I see in my members (i.e. body) another law at war with the law of my mind (i.e. choice, will) and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am. (v22-24)

Surely this picture is clear? This man is a believer and this chapter is for Christians; it describes the conflict of two natures in the saint.

A short word is necessary here as some dismiss this passage as hard to understand, depressing in content and explain it away by referring it to unbelievers.

- Paul is following a clear pattern that started with unbelievers in chapters 1 & 2 and moved progressively forward, explaining the way of justification and the fruit of

¹ The basis of this section is a chapter in: *Our Glorious Inheritance In Christ; A Comprehensive Summary of Romans 5-9* by Paul Fahy.

salvation in a believer. This is part of his theme to demonstrate the power of the Gospel. It makes no sense for Paul to suddenly switch to thinking of the unbeliever half way through enumerating the blessings of this Gospel in saved people.

- It's obvious that Paul is speaking from experience here and some find it hard to think that Paul could feel this bad and suffer such defeat. But God trains his servants to learn by experience and to teach from what is real to them, not some theory learned from others.
- When Paul was unregenerate, he considered himself blameless under the law (Phil 3:6). Legalistically he had done what was necessary but he had no inner spiritual reality, no regenerated spirit leading him towards God's perfection. In other words, his standards of good were low enough to achieve. As an unbeliever he did not feel 'captive to the law of sin'. In this chapter Paul is talking as a Christian; after being converted he is now deeply sensitive to sin and anxious for true holiness.
- Therefore, this chapter is written to Christians [not just Jewish Christians], and is an essential part of the argument for the blessings of the Gospel, written to those who desperately want to do good and are aware that there is another power within them that leads them astray. Romans 7 explains what happens when Christians fail to believe and apply the teaching in Romans 6 which should lead to the blessings of life in the Spirit shown in chapter 8. Romans 7 is necessary for all of us who have tried to live up to God's standard **IN THE FLESH, IN THE STRENGTH OF THE OLD NATURE, IN THE POWER OF THE OLD LIFE, AND FAILED. IT LEADS TO DESPAIR.** This chapter explains this situation. Far from it being unnecessary for Christians, it is vital. Every Christian finds themselves in this situation sometimes, but sadly some seem never to escape the defeat.

A legalistic spirit

The picture Paul paints here is that it is possible to live life experiencing continual and total failure, overcome by sin due to striving to be good by keeping the Law in your own strength. This chapter is necessary because we all tend to do this; if it wasn't there we would remain confused. As Christians, we want to do good and easily fall into the trap of trying to live up to God's standard by trying as hard as we can without grace. In God's great plan, and because he cares for us, chapters 6 to 8 are included to explain how to live in the power of God's Gospel.

The tendency to legalism affects all Christians; not satisfied with the Law, many add further regulations. For instance, in some circles Christians do not drink any alcohol or coffee, do not dance, don't watch television, don't play cricket or soccer, don't tell jokes, remain sternly aloof from unbelievers and do not go to the cinema. In other Christian circles you would appear strange if you failed to do these things. Living like this is living under law (legalism). It is looking to rules and regulations to measure holiness by fleshly performance.

Paul is showing us that firstly, this doesn't work; secondly, it depends on the flesh, the strength of our old life; but most importantly, it fails to utterly depend upon the grace of God in Christ for power and guidance to live a righteous life. Looking to the Mosaic Law, or human regulation, is failing to look to Christ and trusting in your own strength. We will look further into this shortly. Let us return to Paul's explanation here.

What is the purpose of the law?

Paul shows clearly that it is to reveal and clarify sin.

- If it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet'. (v7)
- Apart from the law sin lies dead. (v8)

- When the commandment came, sin revived and I died. (v9)
- It was sin, working death in me through what is good (i.e. the law), in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. (v13)
- Through the law comes [full] knowledge of sin. (Rm 3:20)
- Sin indeed was in the world before law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. (Rm 5:13)
- Law came in to increase the trespass. (Rm 5:20)

The Mosaic Law was given by God as a written revelation of his will for mankind before Christ. It is a measuring rod of right behaviour. If you want to be like God then you must not kill, not commit adultery, not covet etc. It is an external code of behaviour expressed in commands to do and not do certain things. It also contains penalties for failing to obey or for disobedience. Those under the Law are committed to keep all of it.

For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. (James 2:11)

Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them. (Gal 3:10 quoting Deut 27:26 in LXX version)

There is no Biblical ground for just picking out certain convenient parts and ignoring others. The Law is a whole and is not just the 10 commandments (the summary of the Moral Law).

It was given as a pointer to the fulness that was to come with God's promised Messiah:

- The very commandment ... promised life. (v10)
- But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it. (Rm 3:21)
- For Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified. (Rm 10:4)

It contained sacrificial offerings that pointed to the great offering of Jesus upon the cross. He fulfilled all that these offerings typified; i.e. Jesus was the ideal burnt offering who gave himself completely to God. Jesus was the sin offering that completely dealt with sin. He was the trespass offering that restored fellowship with God. It contained a worship system in the tabernacle so that Israelites could draw close to God and God could dwell with them. Its structure and functions point to Jesus' life and ministry. The feasts of the Law point to significant events in the life and work of Jesus. All of these have been fulfilled in Christ and there is no longer any place for the continuance of what is external. Paul says, 'we serve not under the old written code' (Rm 7:6, RSV). [See the arguments in the letter to the Hebrews.]

In itself the Law was an administration of death:

The written code kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the dispensation of death ... (2 Cor 3:6-7)

For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by *all* things written in the book of the law, and do them'. (Gal 3:10)

If a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. (Gal 3:21)

For the law made nothing perfect. (Heb 7:19)

The Law cannot impart life! It demands a certain kind of living but does not enable anyone to do it. This is why Christ came. He not only witnessed to the truth of God (the word, law of God), but he also brought grace (the free power of God to achieve that word).

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, *full of grace and truth* ... and from his fulness have we all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus. (John 1:14-17)

The Law condemned, but Jesus justifies. The Law demanded; Jesus empowers. The Law points forward; Jesus fulfils. The Law brings wrath; Jesus saves. The Law curses; Jesus releases.

Do you ever feel bound up in your desire to serve God? Does living the Christian life feel like you're cursed? The more you try, the worse you feel and the less you achieve? This is living under law. It is a bondage which Christ came to free you from.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. (Gal 3:13)

The Christian life is not legalistic; it is power to serve. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and that salvation includes living correctly now. To obtain that power to serve, we must look to Christ for strength, have faith in him and then act in grace; not strive after the Law by trying to follow an objective standard in our own strength. If we look only to the Law, we will not be walking in faith and grace, utterly dependent upon Christ by his Spirit.

A Biblical symbol for the Law is a mirror:

For if any one is a hearer of the word (e.g. the law) and not a doer, he is like a man who observes his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

But he who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer that forgets but a doer that acts, he shall be blessed in his doing. (James 1:23-24)

A mirror shows us what we are like, warts and all. The Law was a means of measuring character and performance. It showed man what he was really like and how far he had fallen from God's standard.

When Bezalel made the items of the Tabernacle following God's instructions, he made the laver out of the bronze mirrors of the ministering women (Ex 38:8). Priests had to wash in this laver before approaching God. Bronze is a type (*tupos* – a foreshadowing symbol) of judgment upon the flesh and mirrors identify blemishes. This was the purpose of the Law. Anyone going into the presence of God had to be scrutinised and judged by the rigours of the law.

We have said enough to show that the key purpose of the Law was to reveal sin by comparing our actions with God's standard. It had no power to help us reach that standard.

Is the law good and spiritual?

This question naturally arises in the light of the above; but Paul makes the position very clear:

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! (v7)

The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good. (v12)

The law is spiritual. (v14)

Do we overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary we uphold the law. (Rm 3:31)

It is a manifestation of the character of God so it cannot be anything else. As an expression of his will for mankind it will also continue forever in the sense that God's character and desire for man will never change. It will always be right to not covet. However, the manner of expression of that will has changed as Hebrews makes plain. The form of the Law of God given in the Old Testament economy has been cancelled.

In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first (inc. the law) as obsolete. (Heb 8:13)

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of these realities, ... He abolishes the first in order to establish the second (the new covenant in Christ). (Heb 10:1-9)

For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. (Heb 7:12)

The argument of Hebrews should be studied to pursue this, which we will examine later.

Christians are dead to the law

This brings us to the crux of Paul's argument. The Law of God is good. It reveals and provokes sin in unbelievers and shows man how he ought to live; but it is not for Christians in the terms of the Old Covenant:

Now we know that the law is good, if any one uses it lawfully, understanding this that the law is not laid down for the just (righteous) but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners... (1 Tim 1:8-9)

The Law is for unbelievers. What could be plainer? Why? Because Christians have died to the Law:

You have died to the law through the body of Christ. (Rm 7:4)

But now we are ... dead to that which held us captive ... the old written code. (Rm 7:6)

For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. (Gal 2:19)

The Law has exacted its full demands upon a believer in Christ. It demands the life of a sinner. We have judicially died with Christ. The Law has put forth its sanctions on us and killed Christ in our place. We are no longer subject to this Law since we have died in Christ. We are now in a whole new ball game of service to God, one that does not depend upon external, formalities but upon internal motivations.

Paul uses the example of marriage to put the point across: (see Rm 7 verses 1-4)

- The Law is binding upon a person only while they are alive.
- Similarly, a married woman is bound to her husband only while he lives.
- If the husband dies, the woman is free from her husband, discharged from the Law concerning her husband.
- Likewise, in Christ, we died to the Law, it no longer has power over us.
- We now are married to Christ; we belong to him.

Since we are now discharged from the Law through death, we are not to serve God in legal striving to obey a written code or any formal rules and regulations any more. We serve God in the new life of the Spirit (Rm 7:6).

Christians are not UNDER Mosaic Law

You are not under law but under grace. (Rm 6:14)

But now we are discharged from the law ... we serve not under the old written code. (Rm 7:6)

You are not under the law. (Gal 5:18)

(Jesus has abolished) in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances. (Eph 2:15)

Christians are under the Law of Christ, life in the Spirit.

If you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. (Gal 5:18)

Fulfil the law of Christ. (Gal 6:2)

For God has done what the law ... could not do: sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Rm 8:3-4)

Not being without law toward God but under law toward Christ. (1 Cor 9:21) [NASB: not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ.]

The life of formal, legal obedience to do good is said by Paul to lead to absolute wretchedness:

Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death. (Rm 7:24)

Note this is what legal obedience (being under law) does to a believer. Before his conversion Paul was under law but felt righteous and satisfied as a good Pharisee (Phil 3:5-6, concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless).

Remember, he is writing to people in Rome who were familiar with the Roman games and gladiatorial fights. Paul has in mind here the situation where a gladiator has killed his opponent, perhaps a friend, and is now forced to drag the body on his back around the amphitheatre for all to see the grisly spectacle. He cannot wait to escape and searches for an exit tunnel, eager to get out as soon as possible. Paul then shouts:

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Jesus is the escape from this awful dragging around of a dead nature. In him we can be free from capitulation to the Law.

Why is this so important?

Obviously it is the difference between a life of struggle, worry, failure and a life of power, assurance and success. This has been made clear. But what is vital is that living in the good of a life motivated by the Holy Spirit and energised by grace is the **ONLY** way to bear spiritual fruit:

You have died to the law through the body of Christ ... in order that we may bear fruit for God. (Rm 7:4)

It is impossible to glorify God by living under law! The result is only dead works. Lots of work, lots of effort, lots of results (even seemingly religious ones), but it's all dead! This verse is either true or it's not (and there are many similar statements).

We can only bear fruit for God if we are abiding in Christ and remaining on the vine (to use Jesus' analogy in John 15). Good works are only of God if they emanate from the life source of Jesus Christ (the new nature) and energised by His Spirit done His way (i.e. in grace: God supplying the strength not our old life).

Living under law is trying to do what seems to be right to you by your own power. It can only result in fleshly enterprises, dead works. Only by dying to the Law and living by grace can we bear fruit for God.

Does this mean there is no struggle at all in the Christian life? Of course not. Paul talks about the fight of faith. The struggle is to continue to walk God's way not ours. This is by no means simple and easy since we have an enemy continually trying to get us to live in our old life and walk by the Law. We also have our flesh trying to dominate us since the flesh loves to walk by law. It goes against the grain of the old nature (flesh) to walk by faith, to live by grace. Consequently, there will be a continual need for determination and striving, not to try to do our best for God (our best work in the flesh is still only flesh), but to put off our old nature and live by God's grace in Christ.

Living under law is patching up the old nature and trying to make it holy or putting the new wine of Christ's life in old wineskins.² Living under grace reckons that the old nature is dead,³ puts it off by faith and puts on the new nature created after the likeness of God⁴ and trusts in the Spirit's guidance and power.⁵

² Matt 9:16-17

³ Rm 6:11, Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

How do we avoid sin? Not by following law but by following the Spirit: **Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh** (Gal 5:16).

Does this make us antinomian?

Antinomian simply means 'against law' (*nomos* = law). Some charge that believing what I have written above makes one antinomian, i.e. lawless, and will result in reckless living. What they fail to understand is that being dead to the Law of the Old Covenant, does not make us without law like Gentiles. We now serve the Law of Christ in the power of the Spirit of God. The demands upon Christians to behave well are much higher than the demands of Jews under the law. Without the grace of God in the power of the Spirit we would be unable to live any of them at all. Even our thoughts must be taken captive.

No, we are not without law, not antinomian; we uphold the Law of God as a representation of the will of God for man; but we do not live by its power, we do not try to live the precepts of the Law in our own strength, in the flesh. We believe that we are dead to that way of life; that we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection and live by the power of his life, enabled to fulfil his law which is higher than the Old Covenant Law and contains all its principles.

The key difference is best illustrated by a medical analogy. Man is a sinner. He is sick. Let us say that it is like a person with a boil on their arm. The Law recognises the sickness, identifies it, tells you what caused it and tells you what the outcome will be. Its diagnosis is accurate but the inner condition is not cured. The New Covenant in Jesus is like antibiotics prescribed, as well as diagnosing the problem. When taken, the boil goes and the inner problem destroyed.

The Law is external. That dispensation has now gone. Life in Christ, [the New Covenant, the Law of Christ] is an internal manifestation of the power of God to change lives. To go back to the external way is exactly that - going backwards. We must move on to life in the Spirit, which is what Paul goes on to in chapter 8.

Exposition of Rm 8:1-4

1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Having shown the danger of trying to live a legal, external and fleshly religious life, Paul explains in chapter 8 the life that is lived in the Spirit. This is how all converts should live, being 'spiritually minded', which is the source of life and peace (v6). The first four verses are a sort of summary of his argument about law and sin, before he moves on expounding

⁴ Eph 4:22-24, that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

⁵ Rm 8:1, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

life in the Spirit.

- Verse 1a: The crux of having peace is the certainty that there is no condemnation for true believers. Why? Because they are IN CHRIST. They do not stand alone, but their life is hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:3).
- Verse 1b: Since they are in Christ, they do not walk according to the flesh but in the Spirit; i.e. in a realm beyond that which the Law is applied to. The Law is for the flesh (Rm 7:5), the human realm, but believers in Christ are in the Spirit, the heavenly realm where there is no earthly law.
- Verse 2: Those in Christ have been 'set free' from the principle of sin and death regulated by external law ('law of sin and death').⁶ This has happened as a result of the authority or the principle of life of being in Christ ['the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus']. Believers, being in Christ, being in a spiritual realm, being in true righteousness, are freed from this law (as the principle of sin leading to death). [If the view is taken that the Mosaic Law is in view here, then the argument that believers in the Spirit are free from it is even stronger.]
- Verse 3: The Mosaic Law is for those in the flesh not the Spirit (1 Tim 1:9). The Law applies to the human life that died with Christ (Rm 7:4). Those who are in Christ are beyond the Mosaic Law and subject to a higher, better law. The Law couldn't make us holy (Gal 3:11) because our flesh is incapable of righteousness, even when the Law's demands are clear. God fulfilled the demands of the Law in us by placing us in Christ. Christ thus took all our sin and unrighteousness and died, fulfilling the Law's demands for our failure. Our sins were condemned in Christ and the death penalty was exacted on Christ.
- Verse 4: So the righteous requirement of the Law was fulfilled because we are in Christ. Now the believer has two natures: the spiritual man, the new man, the new nature, which is created in the likeness of Christ (Eph 4:24); and the old nature, the Adamic life, the flesh, which continues to grow corrupt (Eph 4:22). When we walk in the Spirit, we walk in the new nature, the Law is fulfilled and we fellowship with God in the light (1 Jn 1:7). When we walk in the old nature, we follow Adam and behave unrighteously and are subject to law. The task for the believer is to walk in the new nature always. When the believer is in the Spirit, he is freed from law and fulfils the Law automatically as he obeys the Spirit, bearing the fruit of Christ's righteousness.

Paul then goes on to explain the fight for this walk since the flesh lusts against the Spirit and we are aware of warfare in our own natures.

So, the key to understanding about the place of the law is to understand our place in Christ. Legally we are in Christ seated in heavenly places and are thus justified and righteous, accepted by God. In God's eyes the old nature is dead since sentence has been passed on it. However, in practice, as Paul explains in Rm 6, the old nature is unemployed or rendered idle (the meaning of 'destroyed' or 'done away with' in Rm 6:6). We choose daily whether to live in the good of what God has done, or to sin and make the flesh employed again. This

⁶ No one can be sure here whether Paul intends the Mosaic Law (as many older commentators, the Mosaic Law is called 'the law of sin' in Rm 7:23, 25 since by the law sin is known Rm 3:20) or the principle of sin leading to death (as many modern expositors). Either way it makes no discernible difference to the argument presented here. My belief is that it incorporates both concepts. It follows naturally on from what Paul has just said regarding Mosaic Law where he shows that the Law intensifies and exposes sin and leads to death (Rm 7:5, 9, 10, 13) as a result. The Law is holy, but the result of it exaggerates sin and results in death. It does not mean that the Law is sinful, but that it heightens sin, and thus can be justly called, 'the law of sin and death'. In Rm 7:23, 25, Paul contrasts the Law of God, as it appears to his inward aspirations to good, with the Law of sin, as applied to the deeds of the body since it magnifies and identifies carnality. Law shows what is good (the will of God, thus the 'Law of God') but amplifies the evil men do (thus 'law of sin').

fight is the essence of the battle of sanctification, hence Paul's long argument in Rm 6-8.

When a believer is in the new nature, in the Spirit, he is following the Law of Christ (Gal 5:18), a heavenly law, that is superior to the Mosaic Law and far more demanding (Gal 5:23). It drives us to love our enemies and turn the other cheek and be led like a sheep to the scaffold. Believers walking in the Spirit are thus freed from the Law of Moses.

Walking in the Spirit is a walk of faith and is by definition not under Mosaic Law, **the law is not of faith** (Gal 3:12). When you follow law [either viewed as legalism or following Mosaic Law] you walk by sight and lose the fellowship of the Spirit, walking according to the flesh (even though it might be very religious flesh). Our job is to ensure we walk according to the Spirit, subject to the Law of Christ and not of Moses.

Exposition of 1 Cor 9:19-23

... To the Jews I became as a Jew ... to those under the law [I became] as one under the law
 ... To those who are without law [I became] as without law
 (not being without law toward God but under law toward Christ). (v 20-21)

Paul's context here concerns Gospel preaching, not a theological discussion about law. He is explaining how he deals with proclaiming the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles to be more effective. He doesn't alter the Gospel message, nor does he become lawless, but he draws alongside his hearers, becoming like them to be more effective; making himself a servant to win more. Where necessary, he ignored Jewish legal rituals and stipulations (appeared as without formal law, but not lawless) with Gentiles, but adopted them with Jews in order to gain a better hearing. [Note: if the Law is to be always binding on the believer, Paul could never even appear to be without law (ritual law is not primarily in view here).]

However, in this discussion he describes three relationships to God's law as applied to different people types. Every person fits into one of three different applications of responsibility. This is brought out more clearly in the original Greek words used here.

1 Jews are	under the law	(<i>hupo nomos</i>)
2 Gentiles are	without law	(<i>anomos</i>)
3 Christians are	'In - lawed' to Christ	(<i>ennomos Christou</i>)

Gentiles: without law

As Gentiles before we became Christians we were without the Mosaic Law, which is distinctly Jewish. As Paul explains in Romans 2:14 we were subject to our conscience for moral guidance not having a revealed legal code to follow. We were *without the Mosaic Law*. However, Gentiles are under the Moral Law (Lk 22:37; Acts 2:23; 1 Tim 1:9). His point is that he cannot preach to Gentiles as if they had the revealed Law.

Jews: under law

Jews are still *under the Law of Moses*, which represented the will of God in formal, inflexible terms that depended upon ability and had sanctions for the disobedient. As we have seen, it was a precursor and shadow of the reality which came in Christ who fully and clearly represents God's mind for human behaviour.

Note the New American Standard Bible on verse 20:

And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law,⁷ that I might win those who are under the Law.

Though not himself under the Mosaic Law, Paul acted as under the law in respect for their consciences.

Christians: in-lawed

The Gospel Jesus brings not only releases believers from a mere formal, external code of behaviour, but having given them a powerful new principle to live by, Christians are now *In-lawed to Christ*. They fulfil the will of God by living their lives in relationship with the resurrection power of the Son of God. They live in the good of the inheritance provided by Christ and, as such, have a much higher requirement: e.g. they must not lust in their mind let alone commit adultery; as well as not killing, they must not be angry. It is a backward step which displeases God to fall into legalistically fulfilling the Old Covenant Law, either morally or ceremonially (e.g. feasts). His purpose for his children is much higher than that; it is to be like Jesus.

Note Robertson’s Word Pictures here:

Not being an outlaw of God, but an inlaw of Christ (Evans, Estius has it exlex, inlex, μη ων ανομος θεου, αλλ’ εννομος Χριστου).

In 1 Cor 9:21 Paul is saying, ‘*Not being without law to God, but in-law in Christ’ or ‘lawful to Christ’*. We follow God’s eternal Moral Law automatically as we walk ‘in Christ’ by His Spirit. There are thus three levels of relationship to the law:

Jews	Pagans	Christians
Under the Mosaic Law	Without law, outside the Mosaic Law	In-lawed to Christ
<i>To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law. (1 Cor 9:20)</i>	<i>Those who are without law. (1 Cor 9:21) When Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves. (Rm 2:14)</i>	<i>Not being without law toward God, but under law [lit. ‘inlaw’ or ‘lawful’] toward Christ. (1 Cor 9:21). Not being without law to God, but within law to Christ. Young’s Literal Trans. You are not under law but under grace. (Rm 6:14) You are not under the law. (Gal 5:18)</i>

These three levels are distinguished in scripture and should not be intermingled. Christians are not without Law; nor are they under Law, but they are lawful in Christ. They are lawful because of a grace relationship held by the Spirit, not because of actions they perform. In Christ, they are lawful.

Though the universally bad translation of *ἐννομος Χριστοῦ* has obscured this understanding, the rigorous Puritans understood it well. See Thomas Taylor (*Regula Vitae*, p31-32); Anthony Burgess (*Vindiciae Legis*, p226). Francis Roberts notes, ‘No Christian believer is said to be *ὑπὸ νόμον* under the Law, nor is he *ἄνομος* without Law to God; but he is *ἐννομος* in the Law, or within the Law to Christ’ (*God’s Covenants*, p729). Thomas Manton states, ‘The Gospel is a law ... so that they that are in Christ are not without a law, not *ἄνομος* but *ἐννομος*’ (*James; Works*, IV, p163).

⁷ The United Bible Society/Nestle-Aland text adds this phrase.

While many great men have failed to consider this important distinction of Greek words (such as Charles Hodge, Matthew Poole, Adam Clarke, Matthew Henry, Albert Barnes, John Gill or Leon Morris), some modern commentators have also discussed it, such as Henry Alford, FF Bruce, RCH Lenski, GD Fee. GG Findlay translates it, 'though I am not out-of-law in respect of God, but in-law in respect of Christ' (*Expositor's Greek Testament*, Ed Nicoll, II, p854). FL Godet has, 'as Christ's possession, I carry the law in me ... Paul distinguishes three moral states: a life *without* law, that of the Gentile; a life *under* the law, that of the Jew; and a life *in* the law, that of the believer. In the first state the will is given up to its natural tendencies; in the second, it is subject to a rule which controls it from without, and which it obeys only by constraint; in the third, the human will is identified by the Spirit of Christ with the Divine law' (*1 Corinthians*, Kregel, p466.)

Exposition of Romans 10:4

For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι.

For centuries there has been controversy over what Paul meant by this. Crucial to the interpretation is the meaning of the words, 'end' and 'law'.

We can deal with the latter first. Although many have sought to avoid the problem by saying that 'law' refers merely to the ceremonial laws which have now ceased in the New Covenant, Paul categorically states that this law concerns righteousness; therefore he cannot be referring to ceremonial laws but to the Moral Law. The immediate context is about Jews seeking to produce righteousness by law, and that Christ is the end of this. So, 'law' here is the Moral Law, specifically as subsumed in Mosaic Law.

The word 'end' is the Greek word τέλος, *telos*, (Strong's number 5066). This has the following range of meanings:

1. *Termination* – the limit at which a thing ceases to be.
2. *Termination* as the end of some state, duration or the last of a succession; the finish, abolition.
3. *Close*, that by which a thing is finished.
4. *Aim* – the end to which all things relate, purpose.
5. It can also mean a custom tax on goods.

The key senses for us here are 'termination' and 'aim'.

Expositors have used these senses in a range of options:

Termination – Christ finishes or abolishes law.

- Christ as the end of the Moral Law (such as the Antinomians).
- Christ as the end of the ceremonial laws (some Puritans e.g. Ezekiel Hopkins, Richard Baxter and many Reformed teachers).
- Christ as the end of the Covenant of Works (some Puritans and Reformed e.g. Thomas Manton, William Strong, John Gill).
- Christ as the end of the Law as a means of salvation or establishing righteousness (A Nygren, HAW Meyer, Sanday & Headlam). [This misunderstands God's use of the Law since salvation was always by means of faith.]

Aim – Christ is the object aimed at, the target, completion or focus of the law.

- ‘Points towards’ - JA Bengel,
- ‘Completion’ - J Calvin,
- ‘Object’ - F Godet, H Alford, JFB⁸.

Fulfilment

A further sense is theologically called for, though not formally included within the lexical meaning of the word ‘end’; that is the sense of fulfilment, accomplishment or realisation. This is a slightly extended meaning of the sense of the end as ‘aim’ but demanded by the theological context of Paul. This is accepted by Anthony Burgess, J A Bengel, CK Barrett; while others agree it is in the general meaning though not specifically stated (e.g. Alford, C Hodge). Paul’s argument about the Law as a pedagogue (Gal 3:24; cf. 1 Tim 1:5) clearly supports this as does the specific statements by the Lord himself (Matt 5:17). In lexical terms, both ‘accomplishment’ and ‘end’ are used in parallel in Luke 22:37.

This is the preferred meaning in my view. Christ is the end of the Law as the fulfilment or accomplishment. He was what the law aimed at. It pointed to a blessed righteous life that no man could achieve and was thus condemned; the moral life of God in human form. The life it pointed to was demonstrated by the fully obedient life of Christ, the perfectly righteous man. Christ fulfilled all the Law and demonstrated what God’s idea of a righteous man is.

Consequently, the purpose of the external Law is complete and finalised. Since the object has come, since the fulness in Christ has appeared, the shadow is no longer required. The measure of righteousness is no longer a written code, but an incorruptible living man. That is why law is now the Law of Christ.

There is also the sense that for those in Christ, living by his Spirit, external law has ended. They do not live according to the shadow of Christ in the Law, but are in Christ himself, living by his strength and grace. Since believers have the mind of Christ they do not need to look to the fingerprint of the Law but live according to Christ’s Spirit. They do not need an external, written code but live according to an inward perception and energy. In living this way they completely fulfil all that the Law commanded, but do not rest upon the Law itself.

Exposition of parts of Galatians

The problem in the Galatian churches, that required such a strong letter from Paul, was turning to the law to supply the needs of salvation. This was occasioned by submitting to the deceitful teaching of Jewish legalists who had preyed upon the young church. These Judaisers had perverted Gospel preaching by insisting that salvation necessitated following parts of the Law of Moses.

The Galatians were believers (3:26) who had abandoned Christ (5:4), abandoned faith (3:2-3), abandoned the Gospel (1:6), abandoned truth (3:1) and abandoned the Spirit (3:3) by turning to, and relying upon, law.

The errors can be itemised as follows:

1. Changing the Gospel message to include following Mosaic Law to receive forgiveness (1:7, 9; 2:21, 5:4) – *using the Law for justification.*

⁸ R Jamieson, AR Fausset and D Brown, *Comm. on the Bible.*

2. Demanding that the Law must be carefully followed to live the Christian life – *using the Law for sanctification* (2:21, 5:4).
3. Insisting that Mosaic ceremonial forms still applied and were necessary for worship, such as: circumcision (5:2-3, 6:12-13), feasts, holy days (4:10)– *using the Law to establish worship*.

All this leads a believer into bondage (4:9, 5:1).

Most people are clear that Paul explicitly denies that justification is established by law-keeping in this letter, but are less aware that he also denies the use of law for sanctification. Paul supplies arguments related to how the justified believer walks (5:16, 25), serves (5:13), is guided (5:18) how those who belong to Christ deal with the flesh (5:24), how believers bear fruit (5:22), how they stand (5:1) and wait for hope (5:5). All these are grounded in the work of the Spirit based upon the cross of Christ, not the Law.

These Galatians were saved and ‘ran well’ when they followed the truth (5:7), but fell when they added law to faith and abandoned the Spirit. Paul teaches that the true believer is led by the Spirit (5:5, 16, 18) and finalises his arguments by saying, ‘if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit’ (5:25).

In chapter 4 Paul argues that the Law is for the period of immaturity (4:1), which is a state of bondage (4:3). Christ ends this period, coming under the Law himself but bringing redemption (4:5) and the end of the Law (Rm 10:4). By fulfilling all the Law’s demands he was the goal and the end of what the Law stood for.

The elect change from being children with no privileges and being as good as slaves (4:1) to being adopted sons legally entitled to the Father’s inheritance (4:5). As sons they receive the Spirit (4:6) and are no longer slaves, but are heirs with authority (4:7).⁹

The Law obtained for the period of servility and bondage. When the adoption comes the believer is under the rule of the Spirit and not the Law.

Paul criticises the Galatians for desiring to be under law (4:21), which prevents them from growing in Christ as sons (4:19). He then proves this again by using a different argument regarding Abraham’s children. The Law brings bondage and is for the heirs of Hagar not the children of promise (4:24). The children of promise through Isaac are free (4:26, 31).

Both arguments comply with what Paul has already taught in 3:23-25, that the Law was for a temporary period of tutelage until Christ brought redemption.

We can illustrate this in the following table:

⁹ We should understand that the Galatians, under Roman control, understood the Roman legal principle that adoption brings all the legal status of heirship. It has less to do with being brought into a foreign family (as English law) than with being brought into a position of being an heir having received legal authority over the inheritance. It was more about a son becoming authorised to rule the house.

Immature children	Adopted sons
Under law (4:3, 21)	In the Spirit (4:6)
As slaves (4:1)	Heirs (4:5, 7)
Under guardians (4:2)	Masters (4:1)
Under bondage (4:3, 9, 24)	Free (4:26, 31)
Observing external laws (4:10)	The Spirit in the heart (4:6)
Of the flesh (4:23)	Of the promise (4:23, 28)
Symbolised by Ishmael, son of Hagar, (4:25)	Symbolised by Isaac (4:28)
Live by works (3:12)	Live by faith (3:11)

The Law is not for adopted sons, legal heirs, who are living in the Spirit. To put oneself under law removes one from spiritual power.

This is not a debate about being under a covenant of works (which is an artificial and unbiblical construct I examine later),¹⁰ nor is the argument merely to do with being justified by works instead of faith. Neither is Paul merely just referring to ceremonial law (which we show later cannot be extracted from the whole law). Paul is talking to converted people who had begun to use the Law (under influence of Judaisers) for sanctification. Their error was abandoning their liberty in Christ and walking in the Spirit, for legal observance of Moses; using external law as a regulation of godly life. Thus Paul concludes this particular argument with a command, 'Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage' (Gal 5:1).

We should also note:

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal 3:26-29)

Christians have been baptised into Christ and have put on Christ. Christ is the end of the Law and as Christians are in Christ, they too are beyond Mosaic Law, living in the Spirit. They have ceased to be slaves in bondage to external laws and are now in the realm of the Spirit whereby they are heirs according to the promise.

Using the Law for sanctification had earlier been denied by Paul:

This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? ... Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does He do it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Gal 3:2-3, 5).

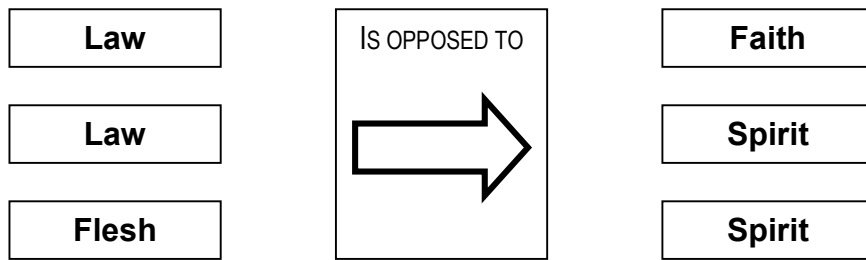
Indeed, Paul makes this clear in many places, stating that the Law is expressly for the lawless: 'the law is not made for a righteous person, but for *the* lawless and insubordinate, for *the* ungodly and for sinners, for *the* unholy and profane' (1 Tim 1:9-10). A clearer statement could not be found; and yet many Reformed teachers categorically affirm that the law *is* for the sanctification of believers, for the regulation of ethics, for the restraint of sin and the direction of good.

¹⁰ In any case the Law is totally identified with the Mosaic Covenant. Law cannot be extracted from the covenant it is part of. (See later.)

The place of the Spirit is often downplayed, but not ignored, when dealing with the systematic theology locus of sanctification, and obedience to law emphasised. But in the locus on the doctrine of God, the work of sanctification is always applied to the Spirit. Thus there is often fudging on this issue. This is wrong; the emphasis in sanctification must be upon the work of the Spirit applied to the believer. It is he who brings the things of Christ to us (Jn 16:14), leads into truth, convicts of sin, leads into righteousness, empowers us to obey, enlightens the mind, enables us to deny our self and bear spiritual fruit. We should never begin with the Spirit and then return to law.

Paul tells us that, 'the law is not of faith' (Gal 3:12), and yet the Christian life is to be lived by faith (Rm 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38). We do not grow in holiness except by faith in conjunction with walking in the Spirit; this is inimical to living by sight, and following law.

Turning from the Spirit back to law is described by Paul as a bewitching (Gal 3:1), a cunning deception often by using occult means. Law is denied as a means of gaining the inheritance (Gal 3:18) or the promise (Gal 3:21-22, 29); thus Paul argues that law is ineffective, both for securing justification and sanctification. It is for an era now passed. Just as the Law did not enable the Galatians to receive salvation or the Spirit, they cannot now turn back to the Law to perfect the flesh, to be sanctified. Throughout it he contrasts law with faith and flesh with Spirit; indeed the Law works in conjunction with the flesh to oppose the Spirit.



He also uses an argument relevant at that time. By the Spirit the Galatian believers had worked miracles. Clearly these were not achieved by law but by the operation of the Spirit amongst them. If the supply of the Spirit could perform miracles, he clearly has the power to enable them to live holy lives. The Law can do none of these things. Yet after being deceived by Judaizing false teachers, they had gone back to law, using it for sanctification and ritual observance, as well as perverting the Gospel message demanding law-works for justification.

The Galatians failure in using the Law for sanctification is the very reason why Paul wrote the letter. The Law is not sinful; it is spiritual – that is it comes from God and is good, but it must be used lawfully (1 Tim 1:8), i.e. used for the purpose it was intended. Its purpose was to reveal God’s will for behaviour to Old Covenant people, to expose and magnify sin in order to demonstrate the utter hopelessness of human righteousness; it was not intended for the believer’s sanctification. Christ is the standard and measuring line of behaviour for New Covenant people.

Note: other passages in Galatians are examined in the context of theological questions later in this paper.

Technical note:

Some expositors try to avoid the theological implications averred to here by claiming that ‘law’ (*nomos*) does not mean the Mosaic Law. There are perhaps three main strands of argument:

1. ‘Law’ here refers to Pharisaic legalism, or the wrong Jewish use, of the Law.
2. Only the ceremonial laws are in view.
3. Another argument is that Paul here is only using ‘works of the law’ to mean meritorious works that add to our justification; or that various law-works are necessary in order to be saved.

It isn’t necessary here to list examples of modern works doing this.¹¹

We examine, in more detail some of these matters later. However, for the present we can say this:

- Unless the context gives sufficient reason otherwise, when Paul uses the word ‘law’ he means the Mosaic Law or the Mosaic Covenant. This is his main use of the word.¹²
- We prove later that the ceremonial laws are not separable from the entire Mosaic corpus of law. Neither did the Jews think in those terms, seeing the Law as a whole.
- While Paul sometimes condemns the misuse of the Law into legalism, he does not use *nomos* to mean ‘legalism’, but explains in the context that it is legalism that is in view. For instance see Rm 4:13-14. The word ‘law’ is never used to denote legalism. An example of legalism is the phrase ‘righteousness which is of law’ (Rm 10:5). Paul means Mosaic Law, by using the word *nomos*, and then explains in context what the corruption is in view - using law to establish legalistic righteousness.
- The use or omission of an article with *nomos* (i.e. ‘the’ law) does not signify something other than the normal use of the word. The semantic meaning of ‘law’ is not determined by the supply or lack of an article.
- From Gal 2:16-4:7 Paul is clearly dealing with the Law as a unity within the purposes of salvation history and in 3:17 pinpoints the Mosaic Law introduced 430 years after the promise to Abraham.
- As we have already noted, the Galatians were using the Law to adulterate the Gospel and establish sanctification. The Galatian error was seeking to, **being made perfect by the flesh** (Gal 3:3) as well preaching a gospel that included following the Law to be justified. When Paul condemned Peter’s behaviour he used the word ‘justified’ four times, but clearly Paul did not believe Peter was unsaved. He condemned Peter’s wrong behaviour since Peter had reverted to law to sanctify himself and had separated from eating with Gentiles.

¹¹ For further information one can see examples of it, with various cited authorities, in the cases made in the book, *Five Views on Law Gospel*. Essentially, Reformed (Covenant) and Theonomist theologians need to make this case. An examination of some theological viewpoints is made at the end of this paper.

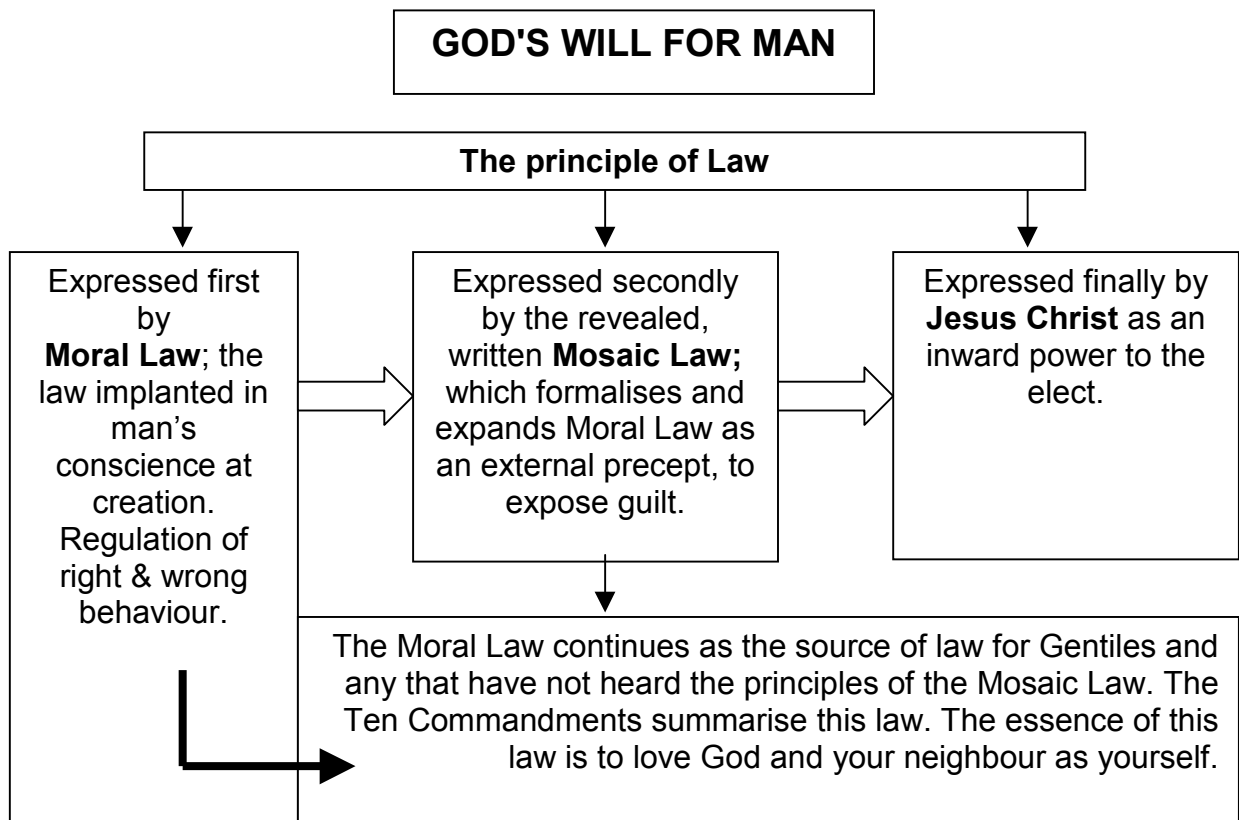
¹² We can summarise that Paul uses the following senses, which are made clear in context: A] The OT scriptures (1 Cor 14:21 quoting Isa 28:11-12 as *nomos*); or the Pentateuch within the OT (Rm 3:21b); B] the Mosaic Covenant or administration (Rm 5:20); C] Mosaic Law (Rm 6:14-15); D] a general principle or a principle of law (Rm 7:21); E] human legislation and courts (1 Cor 6:1); F] the law of Christ (Gal 6:2).

God's Purpose in the Law and History

The Purpose of the Law			
Who is it for?	References	Why it is not for Christians	References
Men (as in Adam)	Rm 7:1 the law has dominion over a man.	Christians are not in Adam but are new creatures in Christ.	2 Cor 5:17 if anyone <i>is</i> in Christ, <i>he is</i> a new creation.
The living	Rm 7:1 the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?	Christians are dead as regards Adamic life.	Rm 6:2 we who died. Rm 6:4 we were buried with Him through baptism into death. Rm 6:5 we have been united together in the likeness of His death. Rm 6:6 our old man was crucified with <i>Him</i> , that the body of sin might be done away with. Rm 7:4 you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ. Rm 8:10 And if Christ <i>is</i> in you, the body <i>is</i> dead.
Those under the letter (external, formal, regulatory law)	2 Cor 3:6 ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter (i.e. old covenant is of the letter). Rm 2:27 And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfils the law, judge you who, <i>even with your written code</i> and circumcision, <i>are</i> a transgressor of the law? Col 2:14 the handwriting of requirements that was against us. Eph 2:15 the law of commandments <i>contained</i> in ordinances.	Christians are in the Spirit and not under the external letter.	Rm 7:6 But now we have been delivered from the law ... so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not <i>in</i> the oldness of the letter. 2 Cor 3:6 ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
Those in the flesh	Rm 7:5 when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members. Rm 8:3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh.	Christians are not in the flesh but in the Spirit of a new life.	Rm 8:6 For to be carnally minded <i>is</i> death, but to be spiritually minded <i>is</i> life and peace. Rm 8:9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.
Those in the body (Adamic)	Rm 7:1 the law has dominion over a man.	The body is legally dead for those in Christ.	Rm 8:10 And if Christ <i>is</i> in you, the body <i>is</i> dead because of sin, but the Spirit <i>is</i> life because of righteousness.

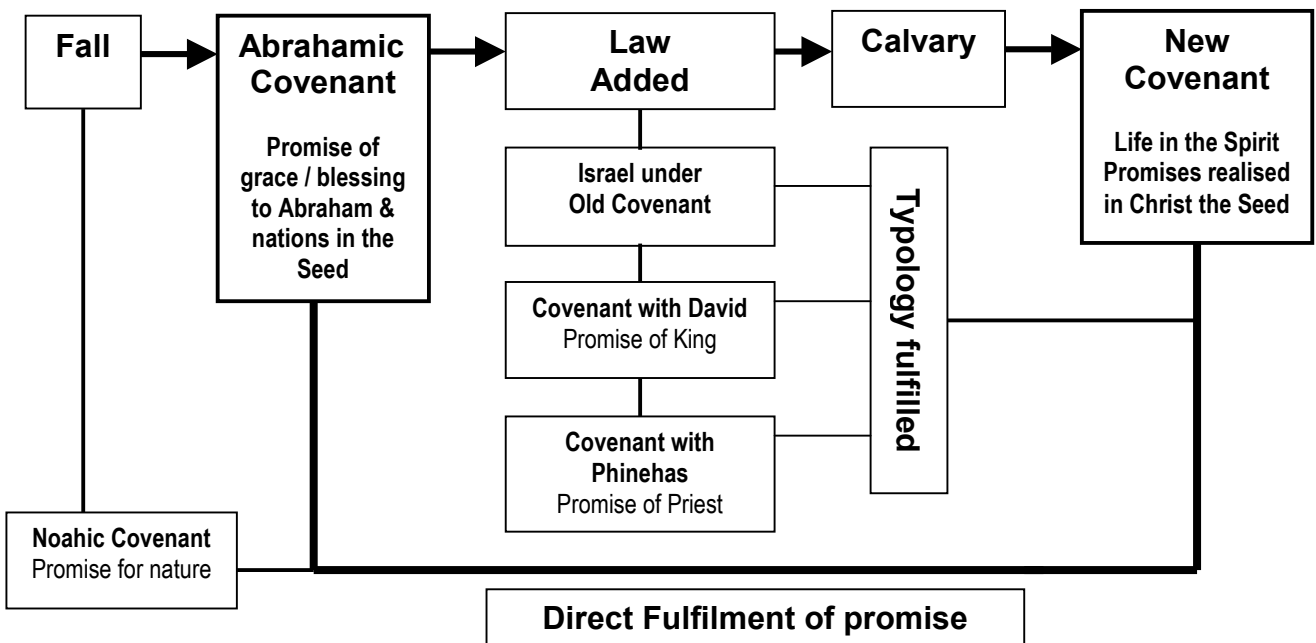
<p>Those not in the Spirit</p>	<p>Gal 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. [Therefore, if you are under law you are not in the Spirit.]</p>	<p>Christians are in the Spirit and therefore not under law.</p>	<p>Rm 7:6 we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit. Gal 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.</p>
<p>Those in bondage</p>	<p>Gal 4:24 For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage Gal 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.</p>	<p>Christians are at liberty in Christ.</p>	<p>Rm 7:6 we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by. Rm 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption.</p>
<p>Servants</p> <p>[NB Israel was God's son corporately as the vessel containing the elect remnant, but individuals were not called God's sons in the OT.]</p>	<p>Jos 1:7 observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you. 2 Kg 21:8 according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded. Dan 9:11 the Law of Moses the servant of God. 2 Chron 6:16 Your servant David.</p>	<p>Christians are sons of God in Christ.</p>	<p>Rm 8:14 as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Gal 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Eph 1:5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ. 1 Jn 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God.</p>
<p>The unrighteous</p>	<p>1 Tim 1:9 the law is not made for a righteous person, but for <i>the</i> lawless and insubordinate, for <i>the</i> ungodly and for sinners, for <i>the</i> unholy and profane.</p>	<p>Christians are righteous in Christ.</p>	<p>1 Cor 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God -- and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. 2 Cor 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin <i>to be</i> sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.</p>
<p>It is for those under it</p>	<p>1 Cor 9:20 to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those <i>who are</i> under the law.</p>	<p>Christians are not under law but are in-law (lawful) in Christ.</p>	<p>Rm 10:4 For Christ <i>is</i> the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Gal 5:18 if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 1 Cor 9:21 not being without law to God, but within law to Christ (Young's Literal).</p>

God's purpose for mankind can be expressed as:



(Gal 5:13-14; 1 Tim 1:8-9; Heb 8:8ff)

God's Gospel purpose can be seen in history as:



Old Covenant	New Covenant
Expressed by Mosaic Law. [The 10 Commandments are called 'the covenant'.] Do it and live , obey for blessing. Fail - die and be cursed. [Only the elect could obey as they had faith in God's provision, they trusted in God's covenant grace behind the external laws of worship (e.g. substitutionary sacrifices) as unto God. Their faith was in the coming redeemer, not their performances.]	Expressed by the new commandment (Law) of Christ. Jesus fulfils law perfectly. Saints fulfil law in Christ by walking in the Spirit and putting on the new man. [This is not a mystical, antinomian 'living by faith', but daily appropriating God's grace and striving to put off the old nature. It is not casual but involves inner warfare.]
External	Jesus internalises the law. For Christians the law is internal.
Outward ordinances ; fleshly, and ritualistic.	Inward power. Done in grace by living in Christ's life by the power of the Spirit.
Focus on sin.	Focus on righteousness of Christ.
Ministry of death.	Ministry of life.
Works / Legalism.	Grace.

Old Covenant Law = Jewish Distinctive.

- The old way of doing God's will (in the flesh) is abolished (Rm 6:14, 7:6; Eph 2:15; Heb 10:9).
- But the essence of the Law (doing God's will, in his Spirit) continues (Mt 5:17-19; Rm 3:31,7:22+).
- The moral value of law remains and is enhanced to include motivations, thoughts and inner dispositions in the Law of Christ.

The Focus Must be Placed on Christ as the Word of God

Under the Old Covenant the Law was God's word, the expression of his mind for man. This was not just moral demands, but it also contained directions for worship and approaching God.

Whilst certain key prophets, who brought God's word direct to the people, were commissioned for periods of national necessity (e.g. Moses, Samuel) primarily the Law was meant to be sufficient for ethical and religious instruction and direction; it was the job of priests to expound this word. So the Law was God's word to his covenant people and following this word brought right living.

Due to Israel's failure and the prevalence of sin and apostasy, God raised up many prophets, in later years, to apply the Law to the people and act as a corrective to spiritual failure. So, prophetic activity was required, but only because the people abandoned the principles contained in the Law. God's word was primarily the Law.

Jesus came as the fulfilment of God's word, the living embodiment of that word. In fact he is called 'The Word of God' (Jn 1:1-2), both as to the content of that word and the prophetic application of it. The offices of Christ are often limited to being prophet, priest and king; but Christ's ministry is too great to be so limited, hence the many descriptions of his

ministry and character as other functions (Saviour, Good Shepherd [i.e. pastor] etc). But the overriding function of Christ is as the Word of God, and this encompasses all else. As God's word he is the very stamp of God's nature, the representation of all that is God, as a man (Heb 1:2).¹³

The fulness of God's word is Christ himself. He is the end of the Law, the fulness and realisation of it. Before Christ came, the Law was the expression of God; now Christ is the exact impression, the very stamp of God himself in living form. With the reality of Christ here we do not rely on the shadow of the written code, which pointed to him (Heb 8:5, 10:1), we look to him directly.

Believers, in Christ, look to the fulness of God's law and not the shadow; they lean on the foundation itself not the scaffolding. The Law is not the focus of the believer – Christ is.

God has set his Son as the centre of the universe, the central pivot of all things. The Law as expressed externally in a written code is a lesser form of God's expression than the Son. It was valid for the time of its use, but it is now superseded by Christ the Son. It behoves believers to look to the source of God's word, Christ, not the external letter of Mosaic Law.

This can also be considered in terms of relationship. In a large aristocratic house there are necessary rules to ensure the affairs of the house run smoothly. A servant in the house (such as the fictional Jane Eyre) must look to the regulations imposed on all staff and comply fully. Without such laws and duties all would be chaos. However, when Jane Eyre married the master of the house she ceased to be a servant and was one flesh with the master, loving him from the heart. She did not overturn the rules of the house, but she did not look to those rules as when she was a servant. As mistress of the house she complied with the organisational affairs in the house but her obedience was not external or legal, but based on a love relationship with the master; she was not *under* those rules anymore. The writer to the Hebrews makes a similar sort of point when he says that Moses was a servant in the house but Christ is the Son of the house owner (Heb 3:1-6).

When believers are told to focus upon the Law to live their lives they are being directed away from Christ. Believers, especially young converts, need to be told to always focus upon Christ himself. The glory of God's revelation is Christ the Son. If we wish to understand God's standard for human behaviour we look to the Son and the NT revelation of him.

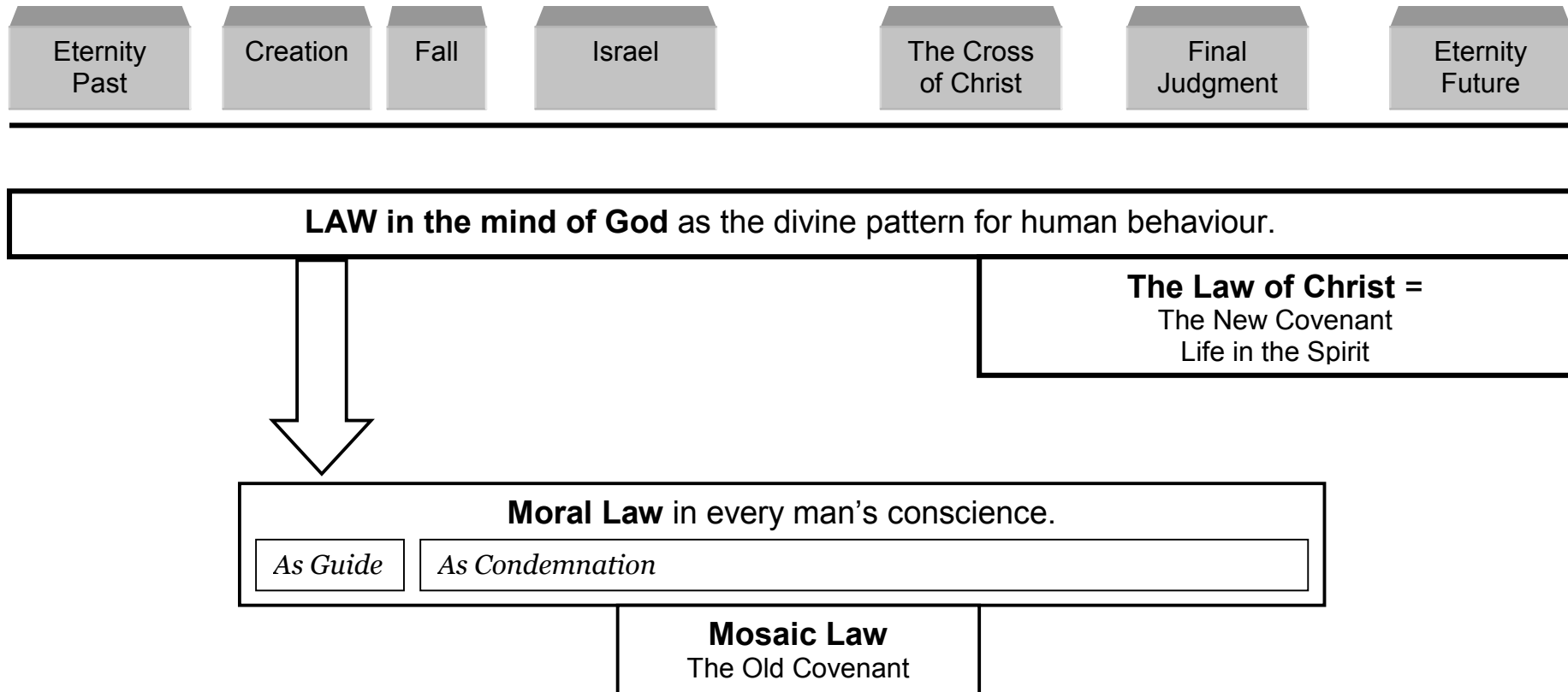
In practical terms we will study all God's written word, including the Law of Moses, but we will be looking to see Christ in this, not simply applying the external commands in an Old Covenant manner. God's word is not a rulebook to be obeyed perfunctorily, but a revelation of Christ. Our reliance is not upon our obedience to a command but faith in the Son. Thus there is no place for self-satisfaction that we have been obedient because we have not killed anyone, that we have obeyed the 6th commandment. Rather there should be a searching of our hearts to see if we have killed anyone in our thoughts, or damaged anyone in our speech, or failed to support someone in our prayers; so that we have the same heart as Christ. This is how law is raised from mere legal obedience to a spiritual transforming power through the New Covenant applied by the Spirit.

We must centre ourselves on Christ.

¹³ 'Express image' means the stamp or character of a die or engraving tool. The exact impression.

The Universal Scope of the Law

The Law: what continues and what is abrogated.



Questions

Structure and history

What are the three types of law?

1. *The Moral Law* is the will of God for man's behaviour instilled in the conscience at creation, binding upon all rational men. The level of understanding of this depends upon the condition of the individual conscience.¹⁴
2. *The Mosaic Law* is the entire system of regulations, statutes, ordinances (moral, ceremonial and civil) which God gave to Moses on Mt Sinai for Israel until the Messiah came.
3. *The Law of Christ* is the Moral Law fulfilled in the perfect obedience of Christ. It is also the Mosaic Law fulfilled in Christ, both in terms of the moral content (summarised in the Ten Commandments) and as the spiritual fulfilment of all the typology contained in the Mosaic system, (e.g. priesthood, sacrificial offering). It is God's Moral Law and spiritual requirements as relating to believers inscribed in the redeemed heart (Jer 31:33; Heb 8:7-13).

ADAM AT CREATION	FALLEN MAN	NEW COVENANT BELIEVERS
Moral Law inscribed on his heart; implanted as knowledge.	Moral Law in conscience; external Mosaic Law to objectively condemn sin.	Law of Christ written on heart; implanted as power.

The Law of God which was 'at first inbred and natural unto man' and subsequently written 'in tables of stone' is 'turned into an internal law again' as God 'implants it on the heart as it was at first'.¹⁵

Adam as created IN-LAW	Fallen Man	Israel	Christ	New Covenant Believers IN-LAW
Communed with God by spiritual intuition.	UNDER LAW Moral Law in conscience. No power to fulfil it.	UNDER-LAW External moral code. Only elect fulfil it by faith in the promise.	FULFILMENT The realisation and personification of law. God's standard in a man.	Revealed, motivated and empowered by the Spirit.

¹⁴ There is much disagreement amongst theologians as to exactly how to define moral law. The historic Protestant position is that the Moral Law is, in substance, the Decalogue (including the basic principle of a Sabbath rest). This goes back to Philip Melancthon (Luther's colleague) and John Calvin. Modern suggestions for a definition include: a) the obedience of believers (John MacArthur, *Commentary on Matthew 1-7*); b) the 10 Commandments; c) it doesn't exist (Wayne Strickland, *Five Views of Law and Gospel*); d) something eternal throughout every dispensation; e) something that ends in the cross; f) laws reaffirmed by the NT only (New Covenant Theology); g) 9 of the 10 commandments (not the Sabbath - Douglas Moo, *Five Views*); h) the unchanging moral character of God that we never fully grasp (Tom Wells, *New Covenant Theology*); i) to love God and our neighbour (originally posited by John Calvin as the summary of the Decalogue); j) the Sermon on the Mount (Thiessen). Scripture does not actually use the term or define it, hence the difficulty. However, like the concept of the Trinity, we have to evaluate the truth by systematic analysis and use the best form of expression available. Several of these definitions compliment each other and perhaps we could define it as: *the eternal attitude of God towards right human behaviour summarised in love to God and men* (Paul Fahy). For a detailed argument that Adam was under, or rather 'in law', at creation, see Patrick Fairbairn, *The Revelation of Law in Scripture*.

¹⁵ E F Kevan, *The Grace of Law*, p226; quoting John Owen, 'Indwelling Sin'; *Works*, Vol 6, p165-166.

What are the three responses to Moral Law?

1. *Legalism*: sinners try to become righteous by obeying the law in the flesh.
2. *Regulation*: law as a rule of life for believers.
3. *Antinomianism*: law has nothing to do with believers.

Clearly, only the second is true. Saints are ruled by law in the sense that they obey the Law of Christ (the fulness of Moral Law) from the heart empowered by the Spirit. It does not mean focusing on the objective Mosaic Law. Paul's experience summed this up: he could be 'as under law' to Jews, 'as without law' to unbelievers and yet was in-law to Christ (1 Cor 9:20-21). He was not under law (not in bondage to Mosaic Law, nor legalistic Gal 3:10, 4:21ff)¹⁶ but served God's law in Christ.

What was the purpose of the Mosaic Law?

1. *It was a revelation subsequent to the promise of eternal life in the Abrahamic covenant.*
2. *It regulated and preserved the life of Israel.* (Gal 4:1-7) The Law established Israel as the special people of God, distinct from other nations. They worshipped in a particular way and lived in a particular way – enforced by God's law. The Law regulated religious, personal and civic life, from what could be eaten to what could be worn; from how to give thanks to annual atoning sacrifices.
3. *It revealed the character and holy demands of God.*
4. *It showed what a righteous life should be if fully obeyed.* But no one had the power to do this perfectly as a result of sin. There was a promise of life but this could not be attained and the Law was not designed to give eternal life but to demonstrate inability. [Lev 18:5, 'You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them'. Reformed commentators have seen this verse applied by Paul in Rm 10:5, as promising eternal life to the righteous doer of the Law – which only Christ could attain. See Calvin,¹⁷ Hodge,¹⁸ and others. There are various other interpretations of Rm 10:5.]
5. *It revealed the fulness of sin in man.* Through the Law people had full knowledge of sin, 'for by the law is the knowledge of sin' (Rm 3:20, *epignosis*, 'thorough knowledge'). That is, they had intimate, personal knowledge of sin; they realised how deep was their own corruption.
6. *It exacerbated sin and brought bondage.* (Rm 5:20, 7:13). This emphasised the need of a deliverer.
7. *It governed the period before the Messiah came to fulfil all the Law.* (Gal 3:24-25).

What was the power of the Mosaic Law?

What could the Law do?¹⁹

- It commanded the will of God for behaviour.
- It regulated ethics.
- It approved godliness.
- It pronounced condemnation on the slightest error. To break one law was to fail the entire law.

¹⁶ 'The law, therefore, instead of relieving or relaxing our bondage to sin, intensifies and confirms that bondage. The more the light of the law shines upon and in our depraved hearts, the more the enmity of our minds is roused to opposition.' John Murray, *Principles of Conduct*, Eerdmans, p185.

¹⁷ 'Leviticus 18:5, where the Lord promises eternal life to those who would keep his law; for in this sense, as you see, Paul has taken the passage, and not only of temporal life, as some think.' John Calvin, *On Romans* 10:5.

¹⁸ 'The legal system, then, which defended obedience, required perfect obedience. Those, and those only, who were thus free from sin, should *live*, i.e. shall enjoy that life which belongs to him as a rational and immortal being.' Charles Hodge, on *Romans* 10:5.

¹⁹ See John Murray, *Principles of Conduct*, Eerdmans, p184-5.

- It exposed and confirmed sin.
- It excited, incited and exaggerated sin.

What can't the Law do?

- It cannot justify or provide righteousness.
- It can't relieve the bondage of sin.
- It cannot give grace.
- It cannot enable fulfilment.

Reformed theologians correctly maintain that the Law could not save or justify, but then erroneously teach that it does sanctify, or at least is the prime means of our sanctification, and is the instrument of regulating the believer's life. It does this by warning, convicting, restraining and condemning us of unrighteousness. 'It reveals God's will and tells us how we must grow in our love for him and for our neighbour ... Through the law we may learn obedience, freedom, perfect righteousness, and order.'²⁰ However, this is not the teaching of the New Testament. The guide of the believer is the Holy Spirit who teaches us, reveals God's will, leads us into truth, restrains us, corrects us, empowers us and bears the fruit of Christ in us. Perfect righteousness is only found in Christ, and the task of the Holy Spirit is to bring the things of Christ to us. The Law cannot do this.

Is there faith and grace in the Law?

The Law was given within the context of grace and God's deliverance from Egypt, typical of redemption (Ex 20:2); it also is set within the confines of the existing promise to Abraham based upon grace and faith (Ex 2:24, 3:6, 4:5, 6:2-8). Moreover, there are repeated instructions to believe in every book of the Law except Leviticus (Gen 15:6; Ex 4:5; Num 20:12; Deut 1:32, 9:23) while the prophets repeatedly condemned Israel for lack of faith in God much later on.

That which we call 'the legal system' is shot through with strands of gospel and grace and faith. Especially the ritual law is rich in them.²¹

Was the Law operative before Sinai?

The essential principles of moral law, including all the Ten Commandments were known from creation; though not in the full form as revealed in Mosaic Law.

- Moral Law was written on men's hearts: 'for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves. Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness.' (Rm 2:14-15)
- 'And the LORD said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." So the people rested on the seventh day.' (Ex 16:27-30) This was before the Ten Commandments at Sinai.

Adam heard as much in the garden, as Israel did at Sinai, but only in fewer words and without thunder.²²

Many theologians (and even secular moralists and philosophers) explain this as *Natural Law*, a sense of right and wrong that is determined in creation, a clearly perceived moral

²⁰ Willem A VanGemeren, *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, Zondervan, p53-54.

²¹ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology*, Banner of Truth (1975), p129.

²² John Lightfoote, *Miscellanies*, (1629) p182-183, quoted in EF Kevan, *The Grace of Law*, Guardian Press (1976) p60. He then enumerates Adam's ten-fold breach of the Law.

order of things.²³ Despite man's sin, this order is still discernible in the created order, but it is also that which was instilled in man's nature by God at creation. This understanding of God's will in the conscience was to enable man to live in harmony with other men and the natural order, as well as in submission to God's will. The later written law in the Mosaic Covenant explains and amplifies the existent Moral Law. Both are in agreement as they are both expressions of God's will, but the form differs.

An example of a man living in conformity to moral law before Sinai, amongst many, is Abraham. Abraham obeyed God's will as known through the Moral Law and God accepted him as faithful in obedience:

Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. (Gen 26:5)

Note:

- obeyed my voice
- kept my charge (obligation)
- kept my commandments
- kept my statutes
- kept my laws

Thus Abraham was said to be 'blameless' (Gen 17:1, 18:19). These words are the same as those used in the Mosaic Law. Abraham kept the Law. He was a man of faith who trusted in God and walked in faith. He looked to a future, heavenly, inheritance and believed in God's redemption. However, he demonstrated this faith by living blamelessly under God's law, which he carried in his heart.

The Mosaic Covenant did not annul the prior promise and covenant to Abraham, rather it was a renewal and confirmation of the promises to the patriarchs with an amplification of what moral law consisted of, plus instructions to govern the theocratic nation God formed from the tribes of Jacob at that time.

What is the *torah*?

Torah is the Hebrew word translated as 'law' regarding the Law of Moses (there are other words for 'law' as a more generic term). This law is also called the 'law of God' and the 'law of the Lord'. The word is תּוֹרָה *towrah* or תִּקְוָה *torah* (Strong's No. 8451) meaning: a body of prophetic teaching, a body of priestly direction or instruction, a body of legal directives; law or a special law; codes of law; custom, manner; Mosaic Law. The word literally means 'finger-points'.

The word shows that by the Law God points the way he wants man to go [behave]. But this way is too high and too hard for man. It points upward to the character of God but man cannot attain it. Under the New Covenant, Christians can obey the Law of Christ in the power of the Spirit and can soar upward on eagle's wings and look down below to the signpost of the Law directing man to the mountain top. The eagle sees the multitudes struggling below under legalism trying to follow the signpost, but they cannot climb and so they faint (Isa 40:31). The surface route is impenetrable. However, those with eagle's wings

²³ The principle of 'Natural Law' is variously described and defined by philosophers and theologians. For my part I would explain Natural Law as the will of God clearly evidenced in the creation order. For instance, it is clear that a man must work in order to survive; thus there is a law of labour. Monogamous marriage for life is also common sense, despite being denied by some extreme groups; thus most societies have subscribed to a correct law of marriage. That parents should provide, care for and train up their children is also clearly evidenced in nature; even the majority of animals do this. Moral Law falls within this sphere as the essential will of God for human behaviour inscribed within man's conscience, a sense of right and wrong.

(power from on high) soar to the top by grace. They follow the same direction as pointed by law but do not operate under human power.

To what degree was the Mosaic Law identified with the Moral Law and confirmed for obedience as such under the New Covenant?

A case can be made (and is by the Reformed) that all the principles of the Ten Commandments²⁴ were known, at least in principle, to the Genesis patriarchs and comprise a summary of the eternal Moral Law of God:

1. No false gods before Yahweh. (Implied in Yahweh worship.)
2. No idolatry. (Implied in Yahweh worship.)
3. Don't take the Lord's name in vain. (Implied in Yahweh worship.)
4. Sabbath. However, this is highly debatable –
 - Though the word 'Sabbath' is not mentioned, what we see is a seven day week with the seventh day being blessed since God rested on it (Gen 2:3). Yet there is no divine command about Sabbath obedience until Moses (Ex 16:23, 20:11).
 - It is dissimilar to the other nine moral commands.
 - It is the only command not restated in the NT.
 - When Paul mentions Sabbath observance he never prescribes obedience to this law, or to any day. In fact he appears to speak against the idea of it (Rm 14:5; Gal 4:10-11; Col 2:16-17 – though, at least the first two may be references to feast days).
 - The establishment of the first day of the week for church gatherings and breaking bread is not presented in terms of a replacement of the Sabbath (which is spiritually fulfilled in Christ) but of a day set apart to honour the Lord. Indeed, meetings were either very early or very late on a normal working day.
5. Honour parents. Gen 37:10.
6. Murder. Gen 4:3-15.
7. Adultery. Gen 12:17.
8. Stealing. Gen 31:30, 44:8.
9. False witness. Gen 27:12.
10. Coveting. Gen 6:2, 13:10,11.

This is to be expected as the Mosaic Law contained a fuller restatement of the will of God known in men's hearts and taught to children by oral tradition. God's moral will doesn't change. What was right for Adam was right for Moses. Jesus himself affirmed that the Moral Law was summarised by the concept of love taught in Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18.

However, the Sabbath was not formally practised before Sinai in the way the Mosaic Law describes with many sanctions (except Ex 16:23 just prior to Sinai). In fact the Mosaic Sabbath laws contain much more than just the seventh day (e.g. the jubilee year). Furthermore, after the cross the Sabbath principle was changed to Sunday (see later discussion) and this cannot be reconciled with Mosaic Law. We have also established that the Mosaic Law was a unified whole and must be accepted in fulness; including the civil

²⁴ The Ten Commandments were first given to Israel; as a newly constituted nation at Sinai about 50 days after the Exodus (Ex 19:10-25, see also: 34:28; Deut 10:4). In the OT they are known as the 'Ten Words', being called 'commandments' in the NT. They are called, 'The Covenant' (Deut 4:13) and 'the tables of the covenant' (De 9:9,11 Heb 9:4) and 'the testimony.' Different methods of listing them have been adopted. Jews make the Preface one of the commandments, and then combine the first and second. Roman Catholics and Lutherans combine the first and second and divide the tenth into two. Josephus first listed them as many Church Fathers, Protestants and the Greek churches do today. There are also various ways of dividing them. Jews after Philo divide them into two groups of five (but note that the first five are more than four times as long as the second set!). Augustine put three in the first set and seven in the second. Lutherans and Roman Catholics follow Augustine. The Greek Church, Calvin and Reformed Churches place four on the first tablet and six on the second.

and ceremonial aspects. If the Mosaic Law was 'binding upon all mankind' as many Reformed teachers claim, then the patriarchs and New Covenant believers are transgressors.

In conclusion, God's Moral Law was known from Adam onwards, but the full statutes of the Mosaic Law were not. Some principles of Moral Law were even changed.

- The Sabbath was not a formal law before Sinai, being merely a day of rest (but even this is unclear).
- Priesthood was part of the law given to Adam; indeed possibly the first spiritual law Adam understood was that a priest needed to offer sacrifices to God to atone for sin (after God provided skins for covering). However, priesthood rested with the head of the household, the firstborn, until the golden calf rebellion. After this the priesthood became Levitical, resting in one tribe only, until this was changed with Christ's Melchizedekian priesthood.

The essential principles of moral law, as contained in the Mosaic framework, were understood, but not the detail. Neither was the Sabbath law formally stated.

The Lord Jesus perfected every aspect of moral law (and fulfilled all the types of ceremonial and civil law) by living a perfectly righteous life. The power of this life is shared by Christ with his body, the church, which fulfils moral law by walking in his Spirit. The believer will implicitly obey all the Moral Law, every commandment, as he lives obediently in Christ by the power of the Spirit. [Note the Sabbath is fulfilled by more than keeping a day special, i.e. by entering the rest of Christ, new life – Heb 4.] Thus although Jesus stated that he would not abolish the Law (Matt 5:17-18), he himself rescinded certain laws during his earthly ministry – such as declaring all foods to be clean (Mk 7:15-23). This abrogated a considerable portion of Mosaic Law alone. Thus the need to carefully interpret what Jesus meant. The answer is that the types were fulfilled and completed in him and the Moral Law subsumed into his law.

The NT restates nine of the ten commands of the Decalogue and makes these binding on believers as part of Christ's Law. Their authority stems from being apostolic restatement of God's eternal Moral law, not from being included in the 10 Commandments. The source of the believer's authority for ethics is Christ, and the heavenly words of Christ given by inspiration to the apostles, not Mosaic Law.

Paul refers to this in 1 Cor 7:19, '**circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God *is what matters***'; careful exegesis shows that 'commandments' here is not the Decalogue. Indeed, in dealing with the Corinthian problems Paul does not refer to Mosaic Law but to the command of Christ (Christ's Law), which is either a matter ignored by Mosaic Law or Paul develops beyond it. Thus in dealing with believers suing other believers to court, Paul relates the matter to a heavenly principle for precedent (1 Cor 6:1-10). In dealing with immorality, he refers it to the body of Christ, draws out a principle and issues an apostolic command (1 Cor 6:15-20). Regarding marriage he offers counsel based on his own apostolic authority and Christ's command, not that of Moses (1 Cor 7:10-16). The case in 1 Cor 7:12-17 has no precedent in Mosaic Law and Paul gives his own command. Regarding the believer's existing situation, (1 Cor 7:18-24) his reference to commandments (v19) thus seems to follow in the line of Christ's and apostolic commands, not Mosaic. In any case, in this very verse Paul rescinds the command of Moses regarding circumcision.²⁵

²⁵ Douglas J Moo is typical of several eminent commentators who also maintain this: 'The context demands that the commandments of the Lord and Paul are in view rather than the Mosaic law.' *Five Views on Law and Gospel*; Zondervan, p79.

Thus it is clear that the Law of Christ, applied and empowered by the Spirit, is the source of regulating the believer's life.

Does not the OT speak in terms of the Mosaic Law being bound in the heart?

Yes it does, for instance:

- The law of his God *is* in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. (Ps 37:31)
- I delight to do your will, O my God, and your law *is* within my heart. (Ps 40:8)
- Listen to me, you who know righteousness, you people in whose heart *is* my law. (Isa 51:7)

This is speaking of the Law being laid up in the heart as commanded by God (Ps 119:15, 48). In other words, memorised and meditated upon. But with the giving of the New Covenant there is a mighty change. This was even prophesied under the Law:

But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. (Jer 31:33-34)

God promised that his law would be internalised and known directly from God by his Spirit. This is very different from keeping the Law in your heart by memorising it.

The apostles make much of this in drawing a contrast with the Old Covenant Law which was actually written on stone tablets, while Christ's Law is operative and understood by spiritual generation and contained in a person's spirit.

- *You are* an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart. (2 Cor 3:3)
- 'This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days,' says the LORD: 'I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them.' (Heb 10:16)

To what degree was the Mosaic Law universal?

It was not universal, it was applicable for Israel alone (Acts 15; Rm 2:12).

For what great nation *is there* that has God *so* near to it, as the LORD our God *is* to us, for whatever *reason* we may call upon Him? And what great nation *is there* that has *such* statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day? (Deut 4:7-8)

However, the Moral Law, which is contained in the Mosaic Law, was universal. The words were given specifically to the nation God had just delivered from Egypt and led into the wilderness in order to teach them his laws. Note for instance the promise attached to the 5th commandment which can only apply to Israel.²⁶ Also note that the 4th commandment refers to Egypt.²⁷

The Mosaic Law contained seven commands that were previously accepted by other nations:

- Murder,
- Adultery,
- Stealing,
- Bearing false witness (these four were sanctioned in Babylonian and Egyptian laws),
- Dishonouring God by improper use of His name,

²⁶ Ex 20:12: Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

²⁷ Deut 5:15: And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

- Dishonouring parents,
- Coveting.

[There is also some evidence that the Babylonians rested on one weekday called 'Sabattu'.]

The Mosaic Law was not for Gentiles. However, Gentiles that allied themselves with Israel became Jewish proselytes, effectively formalised Jews, though born elsewhere. There was a difference between foreigners who dwelt in Israel for some reason (e.g. trade) and foreigners who became proselytes (adopted Jews). The former were not in the covenant and did not fear God but had to obey Israel's laws since they were living there; the latter became part of the covenant. The law only applied in terms of religious promises to Jews: 'those *things which are revealed belong to us and to our children* forever, that *we* may do all the words of this law.' (Deut 29:29).

However, Israel was commanded to take this Law, and the knowledge of God, to the nations²⁸ but completely failed; indeed they prided themselves that the law was only for themselves.

Is the Mosaic Law binding upon all mankind?

No. Paul explains that the heathen are judged by their conscience and their failure to improve the testimony of God in nature (Rm 1:18ff). Paul actually contrasts the rest of the world with the Jews who have the Law, 'For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law *are* just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.' (Rm 2:12-16).

The basics of the Moral Law (not Mosaic Law, although this amplifies the Moral Law) are placed in man's conscience; but this is often lost through habitual sin. However, God's judgment is based upon Christ as the standard of perfect human righteousness. Men that do not have this righteousness will be condemned, hence the need for the Gospel.

The conscience of unbelievers, though weak and evil, points to this standard in some measure. Christ is the perfectly honest man, so stealing is wrong. Christ is the perfectly faithful man, therefore, adultery is wrong. Christ is the truth, therefore, lying is wrong etc. Jews under Mosaic Law will be judged by it as it points more carefully to Christ than the Moral Law.

- He who rejects me, and does not receive my words, has that which judges him -- the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. (Jn 12:48)
- He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has ordained. (Acts 17:31)

The Mosaic Law had a temporary purpose leading towards the Messiah; it was a parenthesis.

Romans 5

V13-14 For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

²⁸ Gen 17:4-6; Deut 4:5-8; Ps 22:27-28, 46:10, 67:2-7, 72:11, 17; Isa 2:2, 24:5, 51:5, 52:15, 55:5, 56:7; Jer 1:5.

Note the timescale:

- Sin is in the world after the Fall.
- Death, as the result of sin, reigns from Adam to Moses.
- Sin is not formally accounted (imputed) as transgression of specific divine laws (lawlessness) until the Law came over 2,500 years after the Fall. [Before that guilt was associated with the federal sin of Adam and disobedience to conscience. Gentiles continue to sin without the Law – Rm 2:12 – and are guilty.]
- There was no formal, objective, law before Moses.

V20 Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.

Formal and public accountability enters to increase the offence and this starts with the Mosaic Law. This Law is a parenthesis after the Gospel promise of grace to Abraham and his descendants. 'Entered' is παρεισέρχομαι *pareiserchomai* meaning: to come in secretly or by stealth, or creep or steal in; to enter in addition, come in besides. We get our word 'parenthesis' from this word.

[Some, faced with this clear statement about the Mosaic Law entering late in history as a temporary thing, refer 'law' here to the moral law coming straight after the Fall – such as the normally excellent John Brown on *Romans* (p82, Tentmaker, 2001). No evidence is given for this interpretation, indeed it is introduced by *'It seems then, more natural...'*. Since Paul has actually stated earlier that he is referring to Moses and the Mosaic Law (accepted by Brown, p75), the burden of proof remains on commentators to prove it is not Mosaic Law here. Neither is there a clear statement in the historical narratives that formal law entered after Adam's sin.]

Galatians 3:19

What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

Note this carefully:

- *The purpose of the law is to highlight transgression – to make man formally accountable*. Moral Law was subjective and varied according to each man's trained or untrained conscience. The hard facts of the revealed written Mosaic Law showed sins as transgressions, or breaches, of the Law. There was no argument, this or that was sin.
- *The Mosaic Law was added*. That is, was added, or joined, to the existing promise of the Gospel and blessing contained in the Abrahamic Covenant. The Mosaic Law is not a constituent part of the pre-existing Abrahamic Covenant.
- *The Mosaic Law was temporary*. It lasted UNTIL the Seed (Messiah) came.
- *The Mosaic Law was appointed or spoken through angels (Heb 2:2; Acts 7:38, 53) and via a mediator (Moses)*. The Abrahamic Covenant was a direct promise from God to Abraham.

Note also:

- From Creation to Abraham, redemption had a universal emphasis.
- From Abraham, and particularly through the Mosaic Covenant, redemption was singled-out through one family (Abraham/Isaac/Jacob) and one nation (Israel).
- With Christ this singling-out comes to an end and redemption is again universal.
- Thus there is a clear parenthesis regarding Israel, during which she is governed by Mosaic Law. As Herman Bavinck says, 'There is indeed a divine parenthesis in history, but it is not the church, it is Israel. From the beginning, for many centuries, until

Abraham, redemption had a universal aspect. With him, and still more with the Sinaitic Covenant, under Moses, a parenthesis set in, which came to an end in Christ.²⁹

- Note also Martyn Lloyd-Jones,

The very word 'added alongside', that Paul uses here, tells us that the Law, in and of itself, is not something that is of fundamental importance to us. It is something additional, it is something that has come in for the time being, for a particular function. It is not fundamental in the sense that sin and salvation are fundamental; it is something that enters, an addition, something that 'comes in alongside of'.³⁰

Note also:

In order for the mind of God for man's behaviour to be fully understood, even in the time of the Old Covenant, it was necessary for a fuller revelation of God's heart and purposes to be manifested by prophets, and particularly the Psalmists. There is no doubt that there is a progressive revelation of God's will expounded throughout the scriptures, and the message of the Psalmists and writing prophets adds to the understanding given in the Law by Moses.

Now some claim that this later revelation is at odds with the Law and proposes a new order, but this is false. What the prophets do is to explain and bring out the spiritual depth that is implicit in the Law and apply it to the retrograde state of the nation. The Psalmists also add a greater depth to the devotional life of the covenant believer.

For example: both Psalmists and prophets emphasise the divine demand for love rather than offerings (which is implicit in all the Law); this is expressed in various ways.³¹ Offerings were not the end but a means to an end. Two Israelites could perform exactly the same repeated vows, attend the same feasts and offer the same sacrifices, but one would live righteously and the other would be wicked. The Psalmists, proverb writers and prophets continually point this out. God's objective was for loving actions, but the offerings merely secured typical forgiveness and external covenant membership. A false heart could offer a correct sacrifice.

[The Psalms] by their didactic and devotional character ... made a fresh advance in the Divine administration toward men, and so far tended to modify the operation of law.³²

The point is that the revelation of Mosaic Law was insufficient to secure righteous living and loving actions amongst Israelites. Repeated prophetic explanations, exhortations and admonitions were required even in the later years of the Old Covenant period. A new dispensation was required that would impart grace and not just demand the bare minimum of righteousness.

How can the law be eternal but also obsolete?

There is no Biblical verse that contains the word *law* with *eternal* or *everlasting* in the NKJV. In the KJV the only verses are Ps 105:9-10 and 1 Chron 16:17. The only verses that apply to this matter are:³³

²⁹ Quoted in OT Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, P&R (1947), p298, note 75.

³⁰ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans Chapter 5, Assurance*, Banner of Truth, (1971), p284-5.

³¹ 1 Sam 15:22; Ps 50:8-14; Prov 21:3; Isa 1:11, 58:6; Jer 7:22-23; Hos 6:6; Amos 5:21; Micah 6:6-8.

³² Patrick Fairbairn, *The Revelation of Law in Scripture*, p190. Fairbairn also says that the prophetic message differed from Moses in that it was a different mode of expression and a fuller revelation of law. (p201). In the main, the prophets brought people back to law and admonished failure, but God added a fresh revelation to their message.

³³ There are other claimed verses (such as Lev 24:8) which are said to apply, but these are indirect.

- *The covenant* which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac, and confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel *as* an everlasting covenant. (Ps 105:9-10; 1 Chron 16:17)
- The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. (Isa 24:5)
- For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. (Matt 5:18)
- And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment, which he wrote for you, ye shall observe to do for evermore. (2 Kg 17:37)

None of these imply that the Mosaic Law is eternal. This is because it was added to the existing covenant promise to Abraham to heighten sin, and was only operative until the Messiah came.

Ps 105 states that it is the Abrahamic Covenant that is eternal, as it is fulfilled in the New Covenant.

Isa 24 is a possible stronger support, but here the reference is to Moral Law. However, as the word is part of a future prophecy, the application is to the time of that prophecy. John Gill takes it to be a reference to the transgressions of Romanism, which changed the sacraments (ordinance), and a reference to the lawless one, the man of sin. The breaking of the covenant is thus the New Covenant, whereby Rome dishonours God's word and establishes new institutions. If an obscure prophecy is the best support for this claim then the proposition is indeed on faulty ground.

Matt 5 states that the law will remain in force until it is fulfilled in Christ. The Mosaic Law was perfectly obeyed by the Lord and now ceases to function as the objective rule of faith. Christ is God's standard for mankind.

2 Kg 17 is merely the command for Israel to continue to obey the laws. The word 'evermore' is actually the Hebrew word for 'day'. It is not a reference to eternity.

Furthermore, the Hebrew word *olam* does not mean 'everlasting' in the modern sense. It means 'pertaining to an age' or 'a long unknown period of time'. Thus many aspects of the Israelite worship system were said to be *olam* and translated as 'everlasting', but are rescinded in the NT, such as the priesthood (Ex 40:15), feasts (Ex 12:14) or the sacrificial system (Lev 16:34).

What law applies to unbelievers?

The vestiges of the Moral Law remain working in a reprobate's conscience (Rm 2:15). When a person gains knowledge of the Mosaic Law, he has a more defined understanding. When a person hears the Gospel he is confronted with the righteousness of Christ. The Moral Law is subsumed in Christ and the Mosaic Law is fulfilled in Christ. Thus the standard for all men is now Christ, not an external form of regulations.

Believers fulfil the Moral Law (formalised in the Mosaic Law) as they live in the life of Christ, walking in his Spirit, putting on the new man. They look to Christ, not an external law, and thus live lawful, righteous lives. Unbelievers vary in their understanding of law depending on what revelation they have received. At the very least they have the judgment of a fleshly conscience.

The Law applied to sinners has the result of amplifying and provoking sin; it exposes the sinfulness of sin and shines a light on sins that were not before noticed. It enrages and

increases sin in sinners. The Puritans noted this aspect that the Law, by accident due to the sinfulness of the flesh, made sin abound:

The Law gives ... a being unto sin; and therefore is called the strength of sin.³⁴

The Law entering upon sin makes the fault thereof so greatly to abound, Rm 5:20, that sin is made out of measure sinful by the Commandment.³⁵

The use of the Law in unregenerate persons is ... accidentally to effect and augment sin, by reason of the flesh.³⁶

Such is our bondage to the Law, that instead of mortifying any of our sins, it rather stirs them up ... (though accidentally) and makes our sin out of measure sinful.³⁷

The Law is holy as well when it does by accident enrage sin.³⁸

Paul, as a believer, experienced this same enraging of sin which he described in Romans chapter 7. Since the Law exposes, enrages and amplifies sin, and since believers have an old nature that grows corrupt (Eph 4:22-24) and is full of sin, why does anyone think that focusing on the Law to regulate our conduct will bring freedom, victory, holiness and peace? It will bring frustration, despair, and defeat.

Only Christ, by his Spirit, brings power to live, as well as forgiveness. Looking to the Law heightens my sense of failure and uselessness, 'For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice .. find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good ... O wretched man that I am!' (Rm 7:19, 21, 24). The Christian focus is Christ, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me' (Phil 4:13). 'Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me' (Jn 15:4). 'Our sufficiency *is* from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life' (2 Cor 3:5-6).

Does Paul speak of the full Moral Law of God in Romans 2:12-14?

Most Reformed teachers claim that the law in unbelievers, spoken of by Paul here, is the law of God. By this they mean the Moral Law as evidenced in the Mosaic Law; i.e. the 10 Commandments explicitly implanted into the conscience of men at birth. For example:

The same law that was first written in the heart of man continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the Fall, and was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai in the ten commandments, and written in two tables, the first four containing our duty towards God, and the other six, our duty to man.

1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, 19:2.

Thus the claim is that:

- Man's conscience is a perfect rule of righteousness.
- This law in the conscience was exactly the same as the 10 Commandments.

Now I have explained that this vestige of law is indeed the essence of God's Moral Law, but it is not the fulness of it, neither is it an explicit understanding of the 10 Commandments.

Most Reformed teachers base this claim upon a false understanding of the image of God in man, claiming that reason [rationality] and morality or are the chief evidences of it. While there have been variations throughout history as to what the image consists of, modern evangelicals are often not only out of sync with scripture on this, but also at odds with their

³⁴ Vavator Powell, *Christ and Moses Excellency*, (1650) p188.

³⁵ John Eaton, *Honey-combe of Free Justification by Christ Alone*, (1642) p9.

³⁶ William Perkins, 'Golden Chaine', *Works*, (1603) p72.

³⁷ Jeremiah Burroughs, *Saints Treasury*, (1654) p95.

³⁸ William Strong, *A Discourse of the Two Covenants*, (1678) p39.

own Reformed confessions. The Reformers, such as Luther, did not see that any of man's natural characteristics formed part of the image, the image being lost at the Fall. Calvin did not believe that rationality belonged to the image and the original Reformed standards complied with Luther's view.³⁹ However, later Reformed theology claims that in a wider sense the image consists in rationality, the soul (will, emotions, intellect), morality and immortality.

On this basis, many Reformed teachers feel comfortable stating that the human conscience contains the perfect law of God as an arbiter, since man is still in the image of God and retains vestiges of godly characteristics. This is a false assumption.

Scripture shows us that man is not in God's image since the Fall. As early as Gen 5:3 it states that children were born after the image of their father not of God, while Paul tells us that we bear the image of Adam, not God (1 Cor 15:49) and that sinners are 'sons of disobedience' (Col 3:6). Jesus told religious Jews that their father was Satan not God (Jn 8:44), while John said that men are the children of the devil (1 Jn 3:10). This is why man is dead in sin, totally corrupt and reflects the image of Satan rather than than God, walking according to the course of the world and this evil spirit (Eph 2:1-3). Only Jesus Christ is the image of God (Heb 1:2-3).

Returning to the claim that Paul means God's perfect law here, there are many other reasons why this claim cannot be true:

- If conscience were a *perfect rule* then there would have been no need for a revealed law to expose sin more carefully.
- There is no clarity of understanding about the law of the Sabbath in conscience and no knowledge of God's gracious name (though the concept of a 'god' is understood).
- Gentile laws codified only seven of the Ten Commandments (or perhaps a partial eighth with the Babylonians). There was not clarity about three of them sufficient to codify them in law.
- Conscience is moulded by family training, sin, education, social mores and so on. It can be seared and ruined. It can be badly taught from birth.
- Many societies have acceptable mores that are repugnant, debased and brutal. Thus people raised in these settings can have a clear conscience and yet eat human flesh, fornicate with fertility priestesses, steal cows from tribal enemies, torture prisoners and have several wives etc.
- We need to understand the depth of the Fall of Adam. The law in Adam's perfect mind was completely different to the understanding of right and wrong in a modern person. Man has not only degenerated in sin but has also suffered considerable damage to his genes. Man does not function today as Adam and the patriarchs did, even at a physiological level. The pre-flood climate and food quality, added to man's enhanced condition, meant that nerve responses were much faster and efficient. Adam thought quickly, effectively and was extremely intelligent. His conscience was much more highly developed than modern men.
- Even in believers conscience is an imperfect reflection of the Law. Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 8 that weak believers were afraid of eating cheap meat bought in the market in case it had been previously offered in a pagan ceremony to a false god. Believers with a stronger, better taught, conscience had no fear of eating cheaper meat since, even if it had been offered up in a pagan ceremony, an idol is nothing. Eating

³⁹ Such as The Three Forms of unity: Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 3; Belgic Confession, Article 14; Canons of Dort, III, IV, I. Calvin taught that the image was corrupted and in ruins. Neither did he teach that man's rationality or his body was part of the image, despite this being claimed in certain Systematic Theologies, such as L Berkhof. See H Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, p206-207.

meat does not create evil or disrupt fellowship with God (v8). Thus Paul says later, 'Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience's sake' (1 Cor 10:25). The point here is that the conscience of some Christians forbade eating meat offered to idols, while the conscience of others allowed it. Which represents God's law? Eating this meat of refusing it? If the conscience of believers can vary about God's law, how weak is the conscience of unbelievers?

Human conscience is not a perfect rule of righteousness by any means.

What Paul refers to here is not equivalent to the perfect, revealed, Moral Law of God. Paul's point is that all men have a sense of justice and some understanding of the essentials of right and wrong behaviour. As such, their conscience excuses or condemns their behaviour within their own legal system. Transgressions to their code will entail sanctions and punishment. For some, a transgression may be failing to steal cows from a neighbouring tribe. The obedience of men to their system may actually be a violation of God's true Moral Law. The law of God may have informed a society's legal code in millennia past, but children today are reared in a debased form of that code ruined by generations of sin and human weakness.

Paul's key point is that man is accountable to God and knows it. He knows that he needs salvation and forgiveness. Let us examine this.

12 For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law

13 (for not the hearers of the law *are* just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified;

14 for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves,

15 who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*)

16 in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

Paul is showing the condemnation of all men, Jews and Gentiles. Jews fail to obey the revealed Law of God, though privileged with this Law, they still fail and are condemned. Sin causes men to perish whether they have the Law or not.

Gentiles sometimes do things that are commanded in God's law (such as honouring parents) and show that there is a fundamental basis of universal, essential laws in man's conscience. This moral code is written in the hearts (conscience) of all men. In any given situation, this conscience may excuse an action or condemn it. In some cases this will comply with God's judgment when all a man's actions are weighed and accounted for. In other cases (the majority) the man's conscience (and God's judgment) condemns such and such an action. Only doers of the Law are justified and all men know that they are not doers of the Law.

Robertson's Word Pictures says here:

When their conduct corresponds on any point with the Mosaic law they practise the unwritten law in their hearts. ... All men have this faculty of passing judgment on their actions. It can be over-scrupulous (1Co 10:25) or "seared" by abuse (1Ti 4:12). It acts according to the light it has. ... now accusing, now excusing. Paul does not say that a heathen's conscience always commends everything that he thinks, says, or does. In order for one to be set right with God by his own life he must always act in accord with his conscience and never have its disapproval. That, of course, is

impossible else Christ died for naught (Ga 2:21). Jesus alone lived a sinless life. For one to be saved without Christ he must also live a sinless life.

Also notice that it is the *work* of the law written in men's hearts, i.e. the basic requirements, not the law itself.⁴⁰ The perfect Moral Law of God has an impact on all men and does some work in establishing a sense of right and wrong, but it is not a perfect revelation of God's righteousness because conscience is weak. The Law is good but man is corrupt. The only perfect revelation of the Law is Christ.

The law in men's hearts is not the perfect Law of God.

⁴⁰ 'Work' stands here synecdochically for the requirements of the law. See Alford, Godet, Beet, Sanday & Headlam, Hodge. Puritan John Eaton says, '*they display the effect of the law inscribed on their hearts*'. (*The Honey-combe of Free Justification by Christ Alone*, 1642, p114.)

The impact of the New Covenant

What is the key command of God under the New Covenant?

It is to hear Jesus, to observe his teaching, to listen to what he says.

'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him! ' (Matt 17:5)
' I say to you ' (Matt 5:18, 20, 22, 26, 28, 32, 34, 44, etc.).
'Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. ' (Matt 28:20)
'Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be <i>that</i> every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' (Acts 3:22-23)

It is what Jesus says that is binding for all believers, not what Moses says.

Moses pointed forward to Christ as the eschatological fulfilment of God's will. Just as the Law is fulfilled in Christ, he is established as the prime model for the believer; he is the exact representation of God to man (Heb 1:1-2). As the apostles modelled Christ, so they commanded disciples to imitate them also ('imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ,' 1 Cor 11:1).

We are never directed to look to the Law as our means of guidance for conduct, but are always told to look to Christ, to follow Christ, to hear Christ, to obey Christ, to honour Christ, to glorify Christ and to imitate Christ. He is the standard for human behaviour now. The Law showed the basic principles of what a man should do, but the Lord Jesus demonstrated them in a living way, and not only realised all those principles, but enhanced them.

Furthermore he inspired his apostles, after his ascension to heaven, to complete the Gospel revelation so that their testimony is the final word of Christ to men. Their letters explain and amplify Christ's teaching in a post-Pentecost setting where believers now have the abiding presence of the Spirit within. The teaching and example of Christ, plus the apostolic teaching and the continuing illumination of the Spirit in our spirits enables us to 'hear him' in every situation.

Are all the prohibitions of the Mosaic Law still in force under the New Covenant?

Examples of prohibitions include not planting different crops together, not mating different animals (e.g. to create a mule from a mare and a donkey) or not weaving cloth from two different materials (Lev 19:19). Clearly, these are not sins to modern believers, but were to Israelites in the wilderness.

There are many statutes that were strictly applicable to the nation of Israel under the Old Covenant. These do not form a part of the Moral Law, even the Moral Law as subsumed in the Mosaic Law. They are thus not eternal principles but are restricted in their use. The examples above were civil laws intended only for Israel at a certain time. There are very good practical reasons why God gave these. For instance, in the case of the prohibition of pork, in those days there was a much greater likelihood of pork spoiling due to lack of refrigeration. As pigs scavenge and eat almost anything, without proper cooking of very fresh pork, there was a great danger of sickness or tapeworm. It made sense to prohibit eating pork. This situation does not apply today. These are not moral commands and disappear with the covenant they are enshrined in. However, Theonomists (see later) must teach obedience to these if Mosaic civil law is re-enacted.

What is made obsolete by the New Covenant?

Reformed teachers usually sub-divide the Mosaic Law into three sections⁴¹ and then insist that two components of Mosaic Law (civil and ceremonial) have been cancelled but the Moral Law (as represented in the Ten Commandments) remains. This is then said to be the basis of regulating the Christian's walk. While the three forms of law can be discerned in the Pentateuch, and while there is definite priority given to the Decalogue ('ten words') – the civil and ceremonial being dependent upon the moral – this division is not formally recognised in the NT, neither is there mention of a partial abolition of two thirds of it.

Summary of problems with this theory

- There is not a single verse of scripture that supports this contention.
- The Mosaic Law is to be taken as a whole; obedience is required of *all* laws. Anyone guilty of one part is guilty of all (Deut 12:28; Matt 5:19; Gal 5:3; Jm 2:10).
- The Law is always referred to in its wholeness (Matt 5:17; Rm 7:6, 14). '**All His precepts are sure**' (Ps 111:7); '**every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever**' (Ps 119:160); '**observe and obey all these words which I command you**' (Deut 12:28). For instance, Jesus never said that he had come to fulfil the ceremonial laws, but the moral (or moral and civil for Theonomists) remain effective. But that is what Reformed theology demands.
- Reformed interpreters usually state that the Moral Law should be distinguished and take priority in the Mosaic Law since it alone manifests God's nature and character. However, properly interpreted, all the forms of Mosaic Law reveal God's attributes; but the civil laws in particular demonstrate his justice, mercy and faithfulness.
- When Jesus died on the cross he did not just fulfil the ceremonial, ritual law (as many claim) but fulfilled all the Mosaic Law (Matt 5:17). It 'ended' in him (Rm 10:4, *telos*); i.e. it reached its goal and terminated in Christ. That Jesus saw distinctions of weightier and lighter matters in law (Matt 23:23) does not allow for formal division of the Law into three and the abrogation of some parts but not others.
- There are many portions of the OT where the civil, ceremonial and Moral Laws are mingled together within the same verse or passage. It is impossible to segregate these so that one aspect stands and the others are rendered obsolete.⁴²
- The Jews understood the law to have 613 commandments that permeated the whole law.⁴³ They did not isolate the Ten Commandments as the only moral statutes to be obeyed; indeed much of the substance of civil law is actually moral. If the Mosaic Law is a whole and eternal, then the Reformed view has no support for the cancelling of the civil and ceremonial aspects.
- The Ten Commandments are called '**The Covenant**' (Deut 4:13) and '**the tablets of the covenant**' (De 9:9, 11 Heb 9:4), thus are totally identifiable with the Old Covenant - but this is specifically stated to be cancelled and obsolete. In fact, the 10 Commandments are never isolated in scripture as the Moral Law, but form the essential bedrock of the Old Covenant (Ex 34:28; Deut 4:13), thus they were placed in the Ark as the symbol of the Old Covenant. If the Old Covenant is abolished and replaced by the New, then the

⁴¹ Moral (i.e. the 10 commandments plus some other passages, such as the 'Holiness Code' of Lev 18-19); Ceremonial (laws pertaining to the sacrificial offerings, the worship system and feasts) and Civil or judicial (laws pertaining to the government of Israel, e.g. the cities of refuge and penalties for sin). Theologically, the civil and ceremonial laws illustrate and apply moral law. Note that the structure of Deuteronomy from chapter 5 to 26 shadows the Decalogue in order; as does the civil laws of Exodus 21-23.

⁴² See, for instance, Lev 19: moral v1; moral/religious v2; religious v4-8; civil v9-10; moral v11; religious v12; moral v13-14; civil v15; moral v16-18; civil v19; moral v20; religious v21-22; civil v23-25; religious v26; civil v27-28; moral v29; religious v30; moral v31; civil v32-36 Another example is Ex 22:19-29.

⁴³ 365 prohibitions for each day of the year and 248 positive commands (one for each member of the body) thus comprising 613 statutes. They were further sectioned into two sets - twelve positive and twelve negative.

10 Commandments are included in this abrogation and are replaced by the Law of Christ (Gal 3:23-24; Heb 8:7,13, 9:10, 10:9; 2 Cor 3:11-13). Therefore, the 10 Commandments cannot be the rule of life for believers as a mere external regulation; the Law of Christ applied by his Spirit is. This is why to live to God means dying to the Law (Gal 2:19; Rm 7:6), not being under Law (Gal 5:18).

- Penalties were ascribed to moral laws which no Reformed theologian would support today. But why not? This shows a further arbitrary division.
- The fifth commandment contains a promise that cannot be universalised – to remain long in the land God gave to Israel (Ex 20:12).

What is the answer?

The whole Mosaic Law / Old Covenant is made obsolete, as is clearly stated in Romans, Hebrews and Galatians. All the moral aspects of this Law have been reaffirmed and amplified in the Law of Christ. All that the ceremonial and civic laws typified have been fulfilled in Christ as Messiah/Deliverer and his kingdom. The whole external Law has been subsumed and regenerated in Christ. He is the standard for man's behaviour. This fulfilment of the Law is eternal. What has been cancelled is the temporary, parenthetical Mosaic Law (Rm 5:20; Gal 3:19).

The expression of law at any historical moment is based upon the covenant then in force. Under the Abrahamic Covenant there was moral law in men's hearts; under the Old Covenant the Mosaic Law was in force. Now believers are under the New Covenant and the old has been cancelled. The law that operates in this system is the Law of Christ. Moses was the head of Israel and mediator of the Mosaic Law, but Christ is now the head of the New Covenant church, God's household, and the operative law is his (Heb 3:1-6). The legal basis of the New Covenant is not the Law of Moses. When Jesus began to explain the amplification and internalisation of his law on the Sermon on the Mount, he constantly said, 'But I say to you' in development of what Moses had said (Matt 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 44).

Note on the unity of the law

If keeping any law, you must keep all (Jm 2:10, Gal 5:3). Why?

The law is a whole; it is not absolutely distinguishable into moral, judicial, civic and ceremonial statutes and scripture does not teach this subjective division. No Jew would have ever conceived that this could be the case. The Hebrew word *Torah* ('law') and the Greek *Nomos* ('law') are singular. So, the Law as a whole has been superseded. The rabbis identify 613 commandments, if you intend to obey some, you must obey all e.g. don't eat pork. Punishments were enforced for breaking specific ceremonial and civic laws, just as much as for transgressing the Decalogue; for instance for wrongly treating a slave (Ex 21:26-27)⁴⁴ or wrongly mixing ritual holy spices (Ex 30:38). What Moses says stands, 'cursed *is* the one who does not confirm all the words of this law' (Deut 27:26; Gal 3:10).

Is the principle of law cancelled altogether?

No! Since true law is a reflection of the will of God for man, there will always be law to be obeyed by men. What has been abrogated is the Mosaic Law as an external means of regulating the believer's life or as a hypothetical means of establishing justification. The Old Covenant has passed away and the New Covenant in Christ's blood has come; all things are new. As new creatures we are called to obey the laws of the New Covenant, the Law of Christ. This law entails all the moral precepts of the Moral Law and the Mosaic Law, but adds further regulation to the motivations of the heart. Thoughts are to be judged.

⁴⁴ Losing a slave was of much greater cost than losing a tooth; which would be the cost in the case of another knocking out the tooth of a free Israelite.

As this law is internal, written on the heart and working in the spirit of the believer, it must be spiritually revealed and empowered. The Holy Spirit guides believers into all truth and this law is performed as the believer walks in the Spirit and obeys his leading. This is why the believer is to live by faith. He learns, not just by reading regulations but by having his mind renewed in the Spirit.

To seek to live according to the Law of Christ under the New Covenant is not to abandon any form of law, even less to abandon the content of the 10 Commandments, but to seek to live in obedience to the law God as now made manifest through the Gospel. This law always focuses people onto Christ; to seek merely to obey the objective moral principles of the Mosaic Law leads folk to trust in their own objective understanding.

If every evangelical believes that under the New Covenant the Law of God is written upon redeemed human hearts, why do some assert that we need to focus upon an external law? This is to say nothing of this external law being specifically stated to be directed at sinners, bringing only condemnation and was for as temporary period only.

Surely the Ten Commandments continue since they are ratified in the NT?

Individual commandments are repeatedly quoted and enforced in apostolic writings on godly behaviour, such as Rm 13:9 and Eph 6:2. The moral principle of the commandments are eternal since they reflect the will of God; as such they are included in, enhanced and expanded in the Law of Christ - lying is always wrong. But the external form by focusing upon an external, written statute and trying to obey it has been cancelled. Believers focus upon Christ first and foremost and do his will empowered by the Spirit. As they do this they always obey the Ten Commandments. The Law has been replaced by a righteous man as God's standard - Christ. We look to him. The Sabbath command is not literally ratified but fulfilled in Christ (see elsewhere in this paper).

But surely Jesus himself drew support from the Decalogue in the Sermon on the Mount?

- This must be interpreted in the light of all NT teaching on law.
- Apostolic doctrine (the last words of Christ) tells us that the Mosaic Law is abolished (Eph 2:14-16) and obsolete (Heb 8:13).
- In Matthew 5 Jesus repeatedly points to his teaching and tells us to follow his words.
- Jesus explains that he is the fulfilment of what the Mosaic Law (*torah*) pointed towards. Now that the goal is here, the signpost to it is not required.
- The Sermon on the Mount is the setting forth of Christ's better, internalised law and is the beginning of the New Covenant, a heavenly kingdom. It was what Moses [from another mountain, Sinai] pointed towards and typified under the Old Covenant. Mosaic Law must now be understood in the light of Christ's new revelation and not implemented literally and externally without grace.
- The righteousness which the Mosaic Law pointed to is now achieved through Christ.
- Even when looking at Mosaic Law, the Lord Jesus focused upon the essential principles and not the Decalogue (Matt 22:36-40). These are love to God (Deut 6:5) and to one's neighbour (Lev 19:18) since these underlie the Law of Christ. However, this love can only be maintained by the Spirit in the new nature, not by external observance.
- People under Mosaic Law did not attain righteousness, except by faith in Christ as redeemer. The Law only exacerbated sin. What worsens sin cannot be the means of attaining holiness. The Decalogue is not the foundation of the believer's sanctification.
- The beginning of sanctification is a death, dying with Christ (Rm 6) and becoming a new creature (2 Cor 5:17). This death means release from Mosaic Law which only

applies to Adamic people. As a new creature, the believer is empowered by the Spirit and enabled to grow in grace. Sanctification rests upon the Spirit, not the Law.

What part of the Law was fulfilled in Christ?

Jesus fulfilled and internalised the whole law. Jesus clearly stated that he did not come to destroy the law but to fulfil it. This is the key: the Law has been taken into Christ and elevated. Not destroyed but spiritualised and fulfilled in Christ so that it now operates on an infinitely higher level, which is called in the New Testament 'The Law of Christ'.

The civil and ceremonial laws are fulfilled in Christ as the antitype of what they represented symbolically. There were many laws governing the High Priesthood, but all these are cancelled because Christ is the only High Priest of the new order of Melchizedek. All that belongs to priesthood is fulfilled in Christ. There were many civil laws, but all these typified something of Christ and his kingdom, and all these are fulfilled in Him. For instance, the laws regarding the cities of refuge speak of the refuge of the believer in Christ.

The Moral Law (as manifested in the Old Testament as an external written code) is now inoperative to a Christian. It has been fulfilled in Christ. The Law has ended (Rm 10:4); Christ fulfilled it all and he is now our standard. The Law was the external manifestation of God's will for human behaviour. No man could keep it thus it condemned him. Jesus fulfilled all the Law, becoming the perfect representation of God's will for manhood (Rm 10:4). We must now keep the Law of Christ. This is worked inwardly in us by the Holy Spirit.

The Law of Christ, or the law of the Spirit of life (Rm 8:2), incorporates the Moral Law of the OT but is much more because it is Christ's life: hate is as evil as murder for instance. We must not go back to legalistic, formal obedience of something that has no grace but ends in death (2 Cor 3:2-11). The written code was external and could not change the inner disposition of the worshipper. The New Covenant, containing the Law of Christ, is internal and is operated within the believer by the power of God so that the Christian can obey it (Phil 1:12). Not only are external actions demanded (the limit of the Old Covenant Law), but there is power in the Gospel to deal with inner dispositions; in fact the Christian must achieve victory through Christ over his thought life (2 Cor 10:4-5) since this is the origin of external actions. The Law of Christ thus contains power for Christians submitted to the Holy Spirit to deal with the root as well as the fruit.

What are the differences between the Mosaic Law / Old Covenant and the New Covenant / Law of Christ?

- The Mosaic Law was temporary; there is a new and living way, which is eternal (Rm 5:20; Gal 3:19, 25; Col 2:14; Heb 7:18, 9:10, 10:9, 10:18-19).
- The Mosaic Law had faults - i.e. it could not change men's hearts, the New Covenant is perfect (Heb 8:7, Heb 9:9-10).
- The Mosaic Law is contrasted with the Abrahamic Covenant, which leads to the Gospel in the one seed - Christ (Gal 3:18).
- The Mosaic Law was added as a parenthesis to the existing covenant of grace with Abraham and the elect seed. Note Rm 5:20 '**Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more**'. The word 'entered' is *παρεισέρχομαι* *pareiserchomai* [Strong's 3922] meaning: to come in secretly or by stealth, or creep or steal in; to enter in addition, come in besides. We get our word 'parenthesis' from this word. Gal 3:19 confirms this: '**What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come**'. The New Covenant is eternal, everlasting.

- The Mosaic Law was the shadow to the reality in Christ (Col 2:16-17; Heb 8:4-5, Heb 10:1).
- The New Covenant has a better sacrifice (Heb 9:22-23).
- The New Covenant has a better hope (Heb 7:19).
- The Mosaic Law / Old Covenant passed away and was cancelled (2 Cor 3:11-13 Eph 2:14-15; Col 2:13-14; Heb 7:18, 8:13) to make way for the New Covenant.
- The priesthood of the Mosaic Law was Levitical; the priesthood of the New Covenant is of the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4; Heb 5:6, 10, 6:20, 7:11, 15, 17, 21). [Notice that there are eight references to this. Eight is the Biblical number of resurrection, new beginnings.]
- The power of the New Covenant is eternal life, the strength of the Mosaic Law was the fleshly command (Heb 7:16).
- The Mosaic Law could not cleanse the conscience, could make nothing perfect, only the blood of Christ in the New Covenant can (Heb 7:19, 10:1).
- The Mosaic Law exposes sin, brings wrath and cannot make alive (Rm 3:20, 4:15, 7:7; Gal 3:19; 1 Tim 1:9). The New Covenant brings life (Gal 3:21, 5:18).
- The Mosaic Law brought servitude but Christ brings liberty (Rm 8:15; Gal 4:1; Col 2:20).
- The Mosaic Law was for a particular national people, the New Covenant is universal in national scope and people types (Jn 4:21; Acts 10:35, 14:16; Eph 2:14, 3:6). [NB only the elect in both are saved.]
- The Mosaic Law is primarily external (though it seeks to improve motivations), the New Covenant is internal (Heb 8:10, 10:16) and amends behaviour by spiritual power and grace (Jn 1:17; Rm 7:6, 8:2; Gal 5:18). Examples: the Mosaic Law condemns killing, but Christ's Law judges hateful hearts and anger (Matt 5:21-22); the Mosaic Law condemns adultery but the Law of Christ deals with lust (Matt 5:27-28). The New Covenant deals with thoughts as well as actions (2 Cor 10:5).
- In the New Covenant love is extended; believers must love their enemies (Matt 5:44) and overcome evil with good (Rm 12:21). Under the Mosaic Law enemies were to be hated (Ps 139:21-22) and killed (Deut 32:41).
- God now speaks through his Son, not the Law (Heb 1:1-2).

The Mosaic Law was a burden upon men; Peter said it was a, 'yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear' (Acts 15:10). But Jesus never commanded his disciples to take that particular yoke, but to bear his yoke: 'Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.' (Matt 11:29-30). Believers are to focus upon Christ and not Moses, to obey the new commandment (loving as Christ loves) and not the old, to follow the Law of Christ.

In summing up the debate on believers and the Law James said, 'some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You *must* be circumcised and keep the law" -- to whom we gave no *such* commandment ... For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things' (Acts 15:24-28); whereupon some necessities were requested for the better fellowship of Jews and Gentiles at that period of time e.g. (abstention from certain foods). Note that he specifically says that the apostles gave no instruction that new believers should keep the Mosaic Law and they desired not to lay burdens upon them.

What is the Law of Christ?

It is the law by which believers regulate their lives. It is the new commandment, the essential command to love (Jn 13:34). It is called by James, *the perfect law of liberty* (Jm 1:25, 2:12) and *the royal law* (Jm 2:8). This law is contrasted and set in opposition to the

Mosaic Law by Paul (Gal 5:18). Christ's Law is internal and empowered by the Spirit, manifesting love (Rm 13:10); while the Law of Moses is external and powerless, merely heightening sin and condemnation. Mosaic Law pointed towards this love as righteousness (in fact *Torah* means 'a finger point') hence the summary of Mosaic Law is love to God and one's neighbour; but it can only be fulfilled in the Spirit (Rm 8:4). In the church Christ's Law is best seen in the bearing of one another's burdens (Gal 6:2). It is also seen in those who manifest the gifts of the Spirit, against such there is no applicable external law (Gal 5:22-23).

Is the New Covenant opposed to the Mosaic Law?

No. The revelation of law and covenant in Christ is not antagonistic to the former expressions of God's law. Jesus fulfilled and fully obeyed the Mosaic Law (including the Moral Law). Grace in Christ is not opposed to law, but meets all the requirements of law and fulfils them in Christ our surety.

Neither are the Old and New Testaments opposed to each other. There is grace in the Old and law in the New. The Old is the seed and shadow of the New in Christ. The New is the Old fulfilled in Christ. Both are worthy of deep study to see the revelation of Christ therein.

What are we dead to when we are said to be dead to the law?

Reformed teachers usually teach that the Law merely *as a means of justification* is rendered dead and cancelled. Man cannot attain righteousness by following law, but attains acceptance with God by believing into Christ. The Law is dead as a means of acceptance with God. For instance, a quote from the normally excellent A W Pink:

"Ye are not under the Law but under grace". The contrast is not between the Law of Moses and the gospel of Christ, as two economies or dispensations, rather is it a contrast between Law and grace as the *principles of two methods of justification*, the one false, the other true; the one of human devising, the other of Divine provision. "Under Law" means, ruled by Law as a covenant of *works*" (Dr. Griffith-Thomas). "Law" and "grace" here are parallel with "the Law of *works*" and "*the Law of faith*" in 3:27! Romans 6:14 was just as true of the Old Testament saints as of New Testament believers. Caleb, Joshua, David, Elijah, Daniel were no more "under Law" in the sense that these words bear in Romans 6:14, than Christians are today. Instead, they were "under grace" in the matter of their justification, just as truly as we are. "Not under the Law" does not mean, Not under obligation to obey the precepts of the moral Law; but signifies, Not keeping the Law in order to be saved. The apostle asserts in this verse that Christians are not under the Law, as an actual, effectual adequate means of justification or sanctification ... It is, then, from the Law viewed in this light, and this only, namely, as inadequate to effect the justification and secure the obedience of sinners, that the apostle declares us to be free.⁴⁵

The force of Pink's argument is to dispel the antinomian idea that Paul's statement absolves a believer from following any law, becoming lawless. With this we entirely agree. Being delivered from Mosaic Law does not mean we follow no law at all. The problem is that many Reformed teachers fail to see that the law we follow is Christ's Law, not an external code written for Jews. We are not under that Law, but the true perfected Moral Law of God in Christ. We walk by the Spirit not by sight of written laws.

⁴⁵ AW Pink, *The Law and the Saint*, Evangelical Press, p16-17.

Calvin emphasises that it is only the curse of the law that is removed. Agreed. But how is this curse removed? It is removed by our death. Having died with Christ we are no longer under the curse of the law, because we are no longer servants of the law, which is for sinners.

Problems with this theory that justification is in view

- This is not spelled out as such in Rm 6:14 and 7:4; we are simply told that saints are dead to the Law. [Though the premise that legal works cannot justify is correct and certain texts affirm it.⁴⁶] Reformed teachers have to add to the verses, such as: 'We are no longer under a schoolmaster! i.e. for discipline, for penalty. It does not mean for precept. It does not mean that the Ten Commandments are abolished. It simply says, You are not saved by keeping the commandments.'⁴⁷ It does not simply say that at all. It doesn't mention justification, salvation or acceptance with God, but our walk. Rm 7:4 is in context of bearing fruit while 6:14 is about living righteously, with our bodies as instruments for God. Indeed, Heb 7:18-19, 8:7-13⁴⁸ says that the Ten Commandments *are abolished* in the form of external law since they were the fundamentals of the Old Covenant, which is cancelled and replaced.
- If the Mosaic Law remains in full force for believers (only the civil/ceremonial aspects being cancelled) then this argument is made null and void. If the Mosaic Law is dead as a means of justification, then why is it still in force as a means of regulating the justified? How can it be considered dead for one thing and alive for another?
- Justification is never stated to be by Law so the argument doesn't apply anyway; the Law does not save. Mosaic Law was always conditional and could not be achieved, so by the Law can no flesh be justified (Rm 3:20; Gal 2:16). The Law itself stated that **'the just shall live by his faith'**, not by legal works (Hab 2:4).
- The key verse in view (Rm 6:14) is not about justification but sanctification, the way a believer is to live righteously. Paul insists that this is by faith, considering our old nature dead and putting off the old man (Rm 6:11), not by struggling to have strength to obey an external law. The Reformed position turns this passage upside down. Paul clearly associates victory over sin with being dead in Christ (Rm 6:7);⁴⁹ he then amplifies this to show that being dead is also the reason why we are not under Law (Rm 7:1, 4).
- Another example is Gal 2:19, **'For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God'**. Many Reformed expositors usually affirm here that Paul's argument is merely about the impossibility of being justified by law, not righteous living under the Gospel. They say this confidently since Paul mentions justification in v16, **'knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ'**. Thus Paul's supposed argument here is, 'man cannot be justified by works of the Law and has died to meritorious works, receiving eternal life as a gift'. But the context is not about salvation at all, the context is about Christian behaviour. Paul has been condemning the behaviour of Peter when he returned to law-keeping, abandoned his liberty in the Gospel, and began only eating with Jews; thus avoiding ritually unclean foods and unclean people (Greeks). This argument begins in v11, and continues the thrust of his theme that returning to Law

⁴⁶ Acts 13:39; Rm 3:20, 28; Gal 2:16, 3:11.

⁴⁷ Dr. George Bishop, quoted by Pink, op. cit. p21.

⁴⁸ For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. (Heb 7:18-19). For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second ... In that He says, "A new *covenant*," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. (Heb 8:7-13)

⁴⁹ Interestingly, Pink admits this and uses a similar argument on p18 but then declares that the death is merely judicial in Christ and not subjective in reality now. He fails to see the connection with Rm 6 and Eph 4 where death to the old nature in Christ is the ground of righteous living as alive in Christ and is not merely judicial.

after being saved is to be condemned. This theme began at the opening of the letter (after salutations) in 1:6. His argument is that returning to law after receiving the Gospel is a perversion (1:7), the fruit of a false Gospel (1:6), and cursed preaching (1:9). Such preaching brings bondage, *'this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage)'* (2:4). To illustrate his argument, he explains that he was a zealous legalist, but abandoned this after receiving revelation of the Gospel; and also by showing that Peter sinned when he abandoned his freedom and submitted to law-keeping under peer-pressure. The whole argument up to 2:19 concerns Christian behaviour: the error of the Galatians changing their behaviour to follow law; the example of Paul who abandoned legalism to follow Christ and the mistake of Peter who also changed his behaviour and sinned in adopting legal requirements in fellowship. The immediate context is Paul's censure of Peter; indeed his quote continues from v14-21. The statement about justification is an aside in his quoted censure about Peter's wrong, legalistic behaviour. He does this to emphasise that having been justified by faith and not works we should not then live by law-works, having now received eternal life and liberty in Christ. We destroyed law-works to receive the Gospel, trusting only in Christ for righteousness, and to take them up again make one a transgressor (v18). This then leads immediately into his great statement, *'For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God'*. How did this death to Law occur, by dying with Christ (v20). The argument is about 'living to God' (v19). We do this by 'Christ living in me', not by focusing on Law.

What we are dead to is the hold that the Mosaic Law had over us - to obey every statute perfectly or die. By being dead to the Mosaic Law we are dead to the Old Covenant; not only as a possible means of justification, but also as a means of living. Since we are not living under the Old Covenant, we are not living under the law that permeated and substantiated that covenant. The Law was the covenant; we are now in a new and different covenant. The old Law and covenant are dead to us. When we died with Christ on the cross (Gal 2:20) we died to all the principles and strength of the Old Covenant, including the Law. Since we are now living a new life as new creatures in Christ, the old Law cannot apply, being fleshly. It does not regulate spiritual, righteous people. We live under the Law of Christ.

Christians live under the Spirit and it is the Spirit who applies God's law and directs believers to behave righteously, but also empowers them to obey it by supplying grace (Gal 5:18). We now serve God, not by obeying an external law, but by living in the Spirit: *'But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter'*. (Rm 7:6) *'For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.'* (Rm 8:2)

We died with Christ on the cross, not only to our sinful lives but also to the Law. Since we are legally dead in God's eyes as far as the flesh is concerned, the Law has no hold on us since it only applies to flesh - saints are new creatures. We have been freed from marriage to the Law by death, so that in our new life we are married to Christ and function through grace by his Spirit under a New Covenant (Rm 7:1-4).

In summary, it is not justification that is in view. We are 'dead to the Law', full-stop. Paul is explaining sanctification not justification and establishing that we walk by faith in the finished work of the cross, not by fleshly striving to obey external regulations.

What is the guiding principle to understand what moral laws are applicable under the New Covenant?

There are two key antithetical propositions depending upon one's school of thought.

1. Reformed (Covenant) Theology affirms that unless the NT cancels a specific moral law, all the moral laws of Moses continue and are binding on believers in that form.
2. Dispensationalism, as well as the more modern New Covenant Theology, teaches that only what is repeated in the NT is binding. This is also the so-called Modified Lutheran position of Douglas J Moo: 'I argue that we are bound only to that which is clearly repeated within New Testament teaching'.⁵⁰

We have discussed the problem with the first principle. It rests upon a false division of Law into three sections whereby two are rescinded and the moral content remains. If this is so, then the statements that we are not under law are inexplicable. If we are not under Mosaic Law at all and it is a unity, then we cannot affirm that the moral content remains authoritative, (which all believers wish to affirm). Furthermore many civil laws are moral in content (which Theonomists and Puritans insist continue also – see later) and while some ritual laws also appear to have a ring of moral quality about them which moderns would not wish to apply (such as eating pork or mixing cloth). The result is a hopeless confusion as to what is binding and what is not.

The second principle is also fallacious. Critics of this essentially Dispensational idea⁵¹ aver that certain obvious moral commands that are described in the Law are not clearly repeated in the New Covenant and under this principle would be allowed. For instance, Mosaic Law condemns bestiality on penalty of death (Ex 22:19; Lev 18:23, 20:16). Another example is that cursing a deaf person or causing a blind person to stumble is prohibited (Lev 19:14). Other matters would be the marriage of close relatives (Lev 18), occult involvement (Lev 19) or abortion (Ex 21:22-25).⁵² The Dispensational principle seems to suggest that these actions could be allowed since they are not specifically condemned in the NT; to condemn them would be to bind oneself to all aspects of Mosaic Law, since it is all or nothing.⁵³

Now this actually leads to another problem. Reformed scholars would support this criticism but would never advocate the death penalty for sexual sins. So, fudging exists. However, Theonomists would go as far as accepting the death penalty for such sins, (and encouraging the government to legislate for this) a position criticised by Dispensationalists and other moderate Reformed.

Dispensationalists and New Covenant theologians would defend themselves by saying that

⁵⁰ *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, p376.

⁵¹ Dispensationalists sharply separate their various dispensations of salvation history; thus law actually opposes Gospel. However there is a sound discipline of study called the 'salvation-historical' model or a 'redemption-historical paradigm', which evaluates the progressive unfolding of salvation from Adam to Christ. Moo uses this approach, and indeed this approach is important in understanding the New Covenant changes. It is the same approach as Biblical Theology, understanding the Bible by analysing doctrine that emerges from progressive historical revelation. This is most popularly found in Geerhardus Vos' *Biblical Theology*, though it is a structure often found in history, such as *Biblical Theology* by John Owen. In these the progress of revelation is analysed starting at Genesis and working through to the New Testament showing a deepening understanding of truth. Dispensationalists use a their scheme to posit a sharp dichotomy between many different ages; thus the elect church is different to the elect in Israel, the kingdom of heaven is different to the kingdom of God and NT Gospel is opposed to OT Law. However, the Reformed school is correct that there is a unity of truth in the Bible though expressed through a progressive unfolding (e.g. Van Gemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*); thus grace is found in the time of law and law is found in the New Covenant, there is only one people of God and one kingdom.

⁵² Kaiser avers that it was an exclusively NT ethic led directly to the adoption of abortion laws in the US in 1973. Legal right to abortion would be condemned only by seeing this verse as a wider principle since the situation in view in Exodus is accidental death. Such a view would be a New Covenant perspective not a Mosaic one, according to my interpretation. This would be substantiated by the prohibition of murder.

⁵³ This is Bahnsen's argument in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, p386.

the general NT principles of love and condemnation of all fornication would cover this matter and condemn such sins. But this also is fudging, since the NT does not categorically mention them. In any case it would also mean that NT principles of love and condemnation of fornication are then defined by Mosaic Law, thus affirming its continuing validity. But the principle adopted refers to what is 'clearly repeated' not what is generally implied.

Yet another problem is the statement of Jesus himself in Matthew 5:18-19:

For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

We cannot enter into a discussion of the various ways of interpreting this passage, we can just make some simple observations. The first is that if the Law is a whole, then this passage teaches that all the Law continues, not just the moral code. Since the NT itself states that, at least, the ceremonial and dietary is cancelled we must carefully understand what the Lord meant here.

The focus is upon Jesus' teaching, not his personal obedient fulfilment. However, it is not just about correcting the Pharisaic corruption of Mosaic Law that is in view; Jesus is talking about the fundamental laws of his kingdom and a development of God's purposes established with the coming of the Messiah. With Christ there is a new expression of God that totally overshadows the revelation at Sinai. Jesus fulfils, accomplishes and realises all that was in the Mosaic Law. The shadows were turned into actuality in Christ, the symbolic was made real, the typological was fulfilled. But the moral was also fulfilled in that it was intensified and internalised. As Jeremiah promised God's Law would now be a spiritual matter written on the heart. Moral Law is now not only interpreted by Christ's teaching, but is applied by communion with his Spirit. It is no longer about what is written (2 Cor 3), whether on stone or papyrus, it is about what the Holy Spirit directly applies to us. Various practical details of this and that situation are outlined in the NT, but this does not limit our ethical obligations (as the Dispensational/NCT principle would teach).

Jesus fulfils all the Law of Moses – ALL THE LAW. He did not just fulfil the moral in his person but also the typological symbolism of the civil and ritual laws. All of the Law is subsumed into Christ as the God-Man. Thus none of the moral laws are ignored and all the ceremonial/civic regulations find a symbolic fulfilment. God's moral principles are eternal and always existed in God's mind. At Sinai some details of these were outlined in a formal way for the theocratic nation of Israel; under the New Covenant administration yet more was made clear (such as loving enemies instead of just one's own people, Lev 19:18⁵⁴).

This means that there is much to learn from the Mosaic expression of law that should be adopted and qualified by a New Covenant filter. All of it is profitable as a means of leading us to see more of Christ manifested symbolically. The details of the Tabernacle worship system, for instance, repay careful study. One writer has examined all the aspects of Mosaic Law and applied them to Christ.⁵⁵ But it also means that the Law contains much guidance for moral duties and civil relationships, enhanced and intensified by the revelation of Christ. What was temporary (such as dietary laws) are rescinded by apostolic teaching but Jesus' reference to, '**one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled**' also indicates that clear moral imperatives (such as prohibition of bestiality), that are not reaffirmed by the NT, are binding upon believers.

⁵⁴ The Psalmist also condones hatred of the wicked: Ps 119:113, 139:21-22.

⁵⁵ Vern Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*, P& R Pub – warmly commended.

Thus the key principle is the guidance of the Holy Spirit in determining behaviour; it is he who will lead us into all truth, not some abstract theological principle. But this is not left to subjectivity since the Spirit uses the gifts of teachers in the local church who apply apostolic arguments. However, the Reformed principle does have much to commend it.

The continuity of the Law has to do with the fulfilment in Christ and the interpretation of this is guided by the Spirit in each believer. However, guidelines are clearly identified by apostolic teaching and some complex matters (such as marriage, divorce and remarriage or food offered to idols) spelled out in ample discussion. The apostolic guidelines are vital since believers take time to learn how to distinguish good from evil, and some (due to poor teaching) remain babes in knowledge (Heb 5:12:14); thus the proliferation of ethical commands in the letters. Christian conduct is not difficult to ascertain.

The Christian life

Isn't the Mosaic/Moral Law a fixed standard of righteousness? Are not the Ten Commandments a permanent road sign, God's holy standard for believers?

We have already covered this above. This statement betrays a basic lack of understanding about the Gospel. If it were right, then we should now be stoning people for gathering sticks on a Saturday since the Law is a unified whole; indeed we should also be sacrificing sheep and bulls.

The New Covenant teaches us that Christ is now God's eternal standard of righteousness. The measure for man is Christ not Moses (Rm 2:16; Acts 17:31). The word of Christ is man's judge at the last day, not the Law of Moses (Jn 5:22, 12:48; Acts 10:42, 17:31; 2 Tim 4:1).

Furthermore, scripture tells us that the justified shall live by faith. If, as Reformed theology correctly affirms, justification cannot be by law, how can it then be right to state that sanctification is by law?

We are also told to look to our father Abraham (Isa 51:2). We should note that Abraham was a Mesopotamian, not a Jew; he was uncircumcised and a heathen when justified by faith; he was saved by faith with no revealed law; and he lived by faith in the Gospel promise as God's friend confirmed by a covenant. To go from the fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant in Christ to the Law to establish sanctification is a retrogressive step.

Does the law restrain us from lawbreaking?

No, it cannot control the flesh, just expose it. The idea is mere fleshly legalism. The Holy Spirit supervises our growth in holiness, not the Law. Sin resides in the old nature, and Christians are called to live in the new nature, created after the likeness of God (Eph 4:22-24). The old nature is never restored or patched up but is dead (Rm 6:6). Believers are to consider themselves dead to it and put on the new man in Christ (Rm 6:11; Col 3:9). The Law is only applicable to the old nature in condemning it. The Law kills, it does not build. The spur to duty is given by the Holy Spirit working in us (Phil 2:13). Sanctification is the whole Trinity working for us, not Law (Isa 26:12; Heb 13:20-21; 2 Cor 3:5; 2 Thess 1:11, 2:13).

Many Reformed theologians (especially the Puritans) have averred that the Law restrains sin, both in terms of Christian morality and in the structure of society; but is this true? The idea of societal restraint arises from a false idea about common grace, a doctrine that is not found in scripture, did not appear in a structured way until very late in history (1800s) and contradicts true grace which only arises from the cross and is only for the elect.⁵⁶ Paul emphasises that Law exacerbates sin by exposing it and amplifying it:

- The law entered that the offence might abound. (Rm 5:20)
- The sinful passions which were aroused by the law. (Rm 7:5)
- Sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin *was* dead. (Rm 7:8)
- When the commandment came, sin revived. (Rm 7:9)

Law gives no excuse for transgression. It codifies objectively what is subjectively written on man's conscience. Just as conscience is no restraint to sin since it can be ignored, Law is

⁵⁶ God's providence and patience is exercised towards the world in sending the sun and rain to provide nourishment and in holding back judgment at this time; but this is not grace. Grace only comes from the cross and terminates upon those in Christ.

not a guaranteed restraint to sin since it is universally broken. Legal government should be a restraint to sin when it supports God's law (Rm 13:4-4), but even that is frequently sinful, for instance when governing powers introduce laws that themselves break God's law.

The law does not restrain sin, but causes it to awaken; it does not reduce sin but rather makes it to increase.⁵⁷

The problem with making the Law the binding rule of Christian living is that it focuses on all the wrong things and this leads to a legalistic approach instead of walking in the Spirit. This can be illustrated in the following table.

Legalism	Walking in the Spirit
Affirms my ability to perform.	Begins with my inability and reliance upon the Spirit.
Mere moral obligation.	A determination to serve the Father.
Focus in external law.	Focus on Christ.
Supports the strength of the flesh.	Is founded on dying to the flesh.
The old nature is active.	The old nature is crucified.
'Do this and live.'	'Eternal life does this.'

The life that relies on Christ by an intimate relationship begins with an acknowledgement of weakness and personal failure; being 'poor in spirit'. It recognises that I cannot do the right thing and depends upon the grace of Christ to help in time of need, and the Spirit of Christ to motivate and strengthen my ability to act righteously (Phil 2:13). Looking to the Law is founded on my ability to do the right thing, to obey (even if the Law had an applicable text for my current situation, which is often not the case). Clearly this is not New Covenant living and fails to understand the complete sinfulness of the old nature, which must be understood as crucified and then denied.

Walking by the Spirit clearly complies with the principle of Law, the fruit of the Spirit in a believer will be obedience to Christ's Law, but it is founded upon my weakness and utter reliance upon grace, my need of God and his provision.

The Christian life also emphasises the principle of 'newness':

- Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Rm 6:4)
- But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not *in* the oldness of the letter. (Rm 7:6) Note: [God] who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2 Cor 3:6)
- Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Cor 5:17)

The Law is part of the old system, the Old Covenant. The Christian is a new creature (2 Cor 5:17), a new man (Eph 4:24), part of the New Covenant (2 Cor 3:6), that is in the new and living way (Heb 10:20). It is symbolised by a new wineskin (Lk 5:38). He is headed for the New Jerusalem (Rev 3:12) not looking back to the old earthly one. He has a new commandment (Jn 13:34; 1 Jn 2:8), even though it recapitulates the old, amplifies it (1 Jn 2:7) and improves it. He has a new name (Rev 2:17) and a new song (Rev 5:9) and is waiting for a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 21:1). Indeed all things are new (2 Cor 5:17).

⁵⁷ Herman Ridderbos, *Paul – An Outline of His Theology*, Eerdmans, (1990) p144.

This is important. Christ has brought newness with the New Covenant. All is new. We do not look objectively to the earthly and external oldness of the letter, which kills, but look to the life of Christ mediated by his Spirit. This is not to live by subjective feelings that are part of the old nature, but by spiritual intuition applied by the Spirit that rests on objective truths manifested by Christ's apostles explaining his law. This is not neonomianism but a question of what is the foundation of ethics, the external code or dependence upon Christ.

If we are to walk in newness of life, then we will not be relying on the strength of the old life or the system of written codes that governed that old life. All things are new for us, including how we walk, thus we 'should serve in the newness of the Spirit'.

Does the Law as a rule of life inform us of the will of God?

There is no scripture for this idea under the New Covenant. We are led by the Spirit, not by the Law (Rm 8:14; Gal 5:18); just as Jesus was (Matt 4:1; Lk 4:1). Knowing God's will comes not by Law but by the spiritual renewing of the mind (Rm 12:2). In a basic way the Moral Law informs us of basic moral requirements, but the will of God for believers is much more than this.

But doesn't scripture say:

- Your word *is* a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Ps 119:105);
- The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes (Ps 19:8);
- For the commandment *is* a lamp, and the law a light; reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life, to keep you from the evil woman (Prov 6:23-24);

Do not these imply that the Law (as God's word) leads us into God's will?

The writer's point in these texts is that the Law acts as light to point to moral rectitude, in this sense it points to God's will. However, for the believer under the New Covenant, the will of God is far more than basic moral judgments, such as avoiding prostitutes (as in Prov 6:24). It is the task of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth and inform our conscience of far more than that covered by Old Covenant Law. The law will not help us decide about watching TV, going to the cinema, who to vote for or what to read. A certain book or magazine may have no hint of overt sin, but may have content that is very dangerous and which the Holy Spirit stops us reading.

Many believers vote very foolishly and judge candidates by objective factors. If a person states he is a Christian and opposes abortion he must be a true godly candidate for such folk. The fact the politicians lie seems to have eluded them. Supposed 'Christian' national leaders have proved by their character that they are far from the truth. In voting for such people believers have helped usher in anti-christian policies, repugnant attacks on civil liberty and even illegal wars that killed many civilians. The law cannot help expose such matters, but the mind of Christ discerned by the Spirit of Christ in us can. It cannot be God's will that believers support anti-christian leaders, yet many Christian do this.

The rule of the Christian is the Law of Christ.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God. (Gal 6:15-16)

'Rule' here is the word *κανών* *kanon* (Strong's 2583), from *kane* (a straight reed, i.e. rod); thus it means a rod to keep things straight; a measuring rod and, therefore, any rule or standard; a principle or law for judging or conduct. It is where we derive our word *Canon* from regarding what books are scriptural. Here it means God's standard for living. Paul

has spent the entire book of Galatians explaining that this rule is not the Mosaic Law, but the Law of Christ. There is a rule for the circumcision, those in the flesh - verse 12 (Mosaic Law) and a rule for the new creation (believers in Christ), which is Christ's new commandment.

Phil 3:16 also mentions this rule; following this rule leads to unity of mind or thinking. The previous verse implies that this is done by revelation not by external observance.

The rule of the New Covenant is Christ not Law, and this rule functions internally.

Does the Law reveal the way justified sinners should live?

If this were true then every Christian is breaking the Law by meeting on Sunday! The apostles do not teach this. New Covenant believers are called to obey the Law of Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit which entails obeying all the Moral Law in the Mosaic Law and much more. For this reason Paul explains that we are not under Law (Rm 6:14; Gal 4:21), we are not under an external code of regulations that do not help moderate inner thoughts and heart disease. If we live by faith (as commanded) then we cannot live by Law (Gal 3:12). If we walk in the Spirit we are not under Law (Gal 5:18). Paul did not just speak about this in context of justification, but Christian living. He warned the Galatians, who sought to live under Law as a rule of faith (Gal 4:21ff), that it leads to bondage. It is not antinomian to obey the Law of Christ by the Spirit in preference to legalistic bondage to the Mosaic Law. How does the Law help us decide about what TV programmes to watch or music to listen to, how to vote to or whether to smoke? The Law of Christ applied by the Spirit deals with all such matters.

How is the Sabbath subsumed in the Law of Christ?

Contrary to popular opinion, the Sabbath day and the law of the Sabbath was not transferred to Sunday. There are no occasions in the NT where the Lord's day is called a 'Sabbath' day. The day for meeting was changed by the apostles, under the guidance of the Spirit, to Sunday, the first day of the week, in order to commemorate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; but they never called this a Sabbath. Sunday was also the day that Jesus manifested himself to his brethren (Jn 20:19, 26) and the day that the Spirit was outpoured.

People who demand that believers are regulated by Mosaic Law disobey it all the time. The Ten Commandments categorically command a 7th day Sabbath. It is pointless arguing about the change of day from the 7th to the 1st since the Law specifically demands a 7th day obedience. Furthermore the Mosaic Sabbath command primarily regards a cessation of work, not the establishment of worship. Indeed, the inclusion of specific instructions for a Saturday Sabbath rest imply that the Decalogue, in the form given through Moses, is not universally binding.

The basis of the Sabbath law is the cessation from labour. In honour of God resting after the six days of creation, the 7th day was to be a day of rest for the Israelite, 'For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh *day* in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"' (Heb 4:4). Disobedience of this law resulted in death as it signalled rebellion against God - working outside God's plan. Any modern person who insists that the OT law of the Sabbath is to be obeyed today merely by meeting on Sunday fails to obey all that the Sabbath law stipulates (which includes feast days which were Sabbaths): they must cease all activity and follow all the prohibitions, such as having no heat in your home that day. It is not good enough to merely state that worship occurs on that day. If you want to obey the Sabbath day as law, then it must be done fully; obeying all that the Sabbath law entails. One cannot take pieces of the Sabbath law and leave the rest.

Further the Sabbath also began the evening before, not on the Saturday morning.⁵⁸ Obeying the Sabbath law as a Sunday means ceasing all work and travel on Saturday evening. It also means that Sunday evening is not part of the Sabbath but the next day. Evening services are thus not on a Sabbath day.

It is true that the initial principle of the Sabbath as a day of rest was instituted at the time of creation before the Law was given (Gen 2:2), which indicates universality (like marriage or the family). But the Law of Moses amplifies God's purposes for the institution of the Sabbath (just as it did for marriage); this was God's express will for Sabbath-keeping from that point on. Either the Sabbath is to be abandoned as part of an obsolete Old Covenant system or the Sabbath must be obeyed as part of the Mosaic Law.

The OT regulation pointed to the rest of God; but that rest is now found in Jesus, not merely a cessation of work. The Sabbath was a shadow, Christ is the reality, 'For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes' (Rm 10:4). The fundamental principle of the Sabbath law was rest from labour and satisfaction. Hebrews explains that this is fulfilled in obtaining the real rest of God in Christ: 'For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience' (Heb 4:10-11). The fulfilment of the Sabbath is the life of Christ;⁵⁹ Christians enter into this rest as they apprehend the reality of abiding in Christ, living in the Spirit, ceasing from legalism and fleshly works. It does not simply refer to justification, but to sanctification - the believer's ongoing walk in grace and bearing the fruit of the Spirit by resting in Christ and letting him work through us (Phil 2:12-13).

There is no such thing as a 'Christian Sabbath'. Christ is the fulness of what the Sabbath means. We keep the Sabbath principles as we put on the new nature and walk in the Spirit of Christ. Doing this, however, will entail meeting with the Lord's people, especially on Sunday following apostolic precedent.⁶⁰

[With reference to Col 2:17] If the observance of the Sabbath had been, in any form, of lasting obligation on the Christian Church, it would have been quite impossible for the apostle to have spoken thus.⁶¹

The distinctively sacred days appointed in the Mosaic law [are] declared to be no longer binding on the consciences of believers.⁶²

In what way was the law a tutor to Christ, Gal 3:23-4:11?

The Mosaic Law was a tutor until the Messiah came; we are now 'in-lawed' to Christ. It occupied a temporary period of time until the Messiah was revealed who brought in the New Covenant. The Law pointed to Christ showing that man needed a Saviour-Deliverer.

Paul's argument is that before faith came in the Gospel we were under Law as a restraint. It was tutor (Gk: *pedagogue*), custodian or guardian. This was a slave or family steward who took the master's children to school and looked after them until they became of age - a babysitter. Now that faith has come in Christ, we are no longer under a custodian, we are

⁵⁸ Jews counted the day from evening to evening deriving it from Gen 1:5 'the *evening* and the *morning* were the first day.' Thus the Sabbath: 'from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath' Lev 23:32.

⁵⁹ Matt 12:8, 'For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.' Also Mk 2:28; Lk 6:5.

⁶⁰ For more information, see my paper, *Why Do Christians Meet On Sunday?*

⁶¹ Henry Alford on Col 2:17; *Greek Testament*, Rivingtons, (1862), Vol 3, p225.

⁶² Patrick Fairbairn, *The Revelation of Law in Scripture*, p472.

sons of God with authority. While we were under the custodian, we were no better than a slave in the master's house, even though we were the heir of the master. Now we have received adoption. This is not just sonship but the attainment of legal rights as a son; a position of authority. Consequently we are no longer slaves but heirs. No longer in bondage, but free. The pedagogue (Law) was for the period before the Messiah came only.⁶³

Note

Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (Gal 3:24)
The words 'to bring us' are not in the Greek text. Paul is not talking about personal conversion history (hearing Law before hearing Gospel) but salvation history (the period of Law before the revealing of Christ).

The literal text is:

So that the law has been our guide to Christ in order that we may be declared righteous by faith.

The period of law showed the need of Christ in order to be made righteous by faith.

How did Christ fulfil the Law?⁶⁴

1. Christ fulfilled (completed, rendered perfect) all a man's obligations to the Law by rendering perfect obedience to every regulation.
2. At the cross, Christ fulfilled (filled up) all the penalties of the Law against man. The condemnation of sin was absorbed by him and taken into death.
3. Christ, as resurrected, glorified and ascended, fully exhibits and glorifies God by being the fulfilment (completion, consummation) of the law. He is the complete expression of God's will. The Law is absorbed, enhanced, amplified and spiritualised in Christ. As Saviour, King and High Priest he also gives power to obey this enhanced law, the Law of Christ.

This fulfilment is effectual only for the elect; those in Christ.

Is this teaching antinomian?

This does not make us antinomian. Christians are upholding all the principles of the Moral Law, and more, as they obey Christ. The Holy Spirit will not allow our freedom to be a freedom for the flesh, to become disobedient to God's previous revelation of his will for man (see Rm 6).

Can we keep Jewish festivals if they are to last forever?

Jesus said that the Law would not pass away whilst the earth remained (Matt 5:18). Some Messianic teachers use this as a basis for legalistic practices. Some others try to tack on a spiritual aspect saying that Jesus fulfilled the Law so now we can keep it (i.e. feasts or commandments) to glorify him, e.g. celebration of the Passover is to glorify Jesus as the lamb of God's deliverance today.

The Moral Law is in operation as a manifestation of God's will for human conduct in this world. As expressed in Christ it will never pass away and remains as a guide for godly

⁶³ Calvin agrees with this, That slavery of the law lasted as long as it pleased God, who put an end to it at the coming of Christ. ... I deny that Paul here treats of individuals, or draws a distinction between the time of unbelief and the calling by faith. ... Let this point be first of all settled, that Paul here compares the Israelitish church, which existed under the Old Testament with the Christian church. On *Galatians* 4:1.

⁶⁴ Fulfil: πληρόω *pleroo* (Strong's No. 4137) meaning: to make full, to fill up, supply liberally; to complete; to consummate, to render perfect; to carry through to the end, to accomplish, bring to realisation; to bring to pass, ratify.

behaviour. The Mosaic Law is for those who are lawless, those who are without Christ. The external Law is not for those who have the Law of Christ written on their hearts (1 Tim 1:9). Christians are dead to the Mosaic Law and to this world (Rm 7:4, Gal 2:19, 6:14). We live in the light of a new spiritual world to be inherited in fulness at the return of its spiritual king. This new world has a new law - internal and spiritual. We have died with Christ, and this present world with all its features is dead to us. The principles behind the OT Law rest on the character of God and are incorporated into the Law of Christ which will never pass away because God never changes (Gal 5:18).

Jewish feasts are part of the external written code that has been cancelled (Heb 8:13, 10:1-9). It must, therefore, be wrong for Christians to return to that which God has abolished. Paul teaches that to do so is to submit to bondage (Gal 4:9, 24, 5:1). This can be hard for Jewish believers, as Paul discovered, and so he gave specific teaching on the dangers of returning to Jewish practices in the letters to the Galatians and Colossians. The letter to the Hebrews also deals with this.

In Col 2:16-23 he warns believers not to submit to Old Testament regulations and specifically mentions Jewish festivals (feasts). He suggests that the idea of elevating the celebration of these to a 'spiritual' level is 'empty deceit' and 'not according to Christ' (v8). He argues that in Jesus we have the reality of what the feasts represented in Christ and, therefore, should not go back to the shadow. The context speaks of spiritual warfare. Satan will try any means to prevent believers from appropriating Christ, especially means that seem religious or superficially spiritual.

This also means that the modern concept of Jewish based churches and Messianic Christianity where feasts, fasts, names, culture and other Jewish idioms are practised is unbiblical.

What is the motivation for the believer's conduct?

It is not Law. The Christian must always be motivated by Christ himself, both by his teaching and example, and this is then empowered by Christ's Spirit to be turned into action – good works. As salvation is not of human works, neither are good deeds. These are performed according to God's eternal plan and by God's workmanship (Phil 2:13). Note what Paul says just before explaining that the commandments of Law have been abolished in Christ -

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Eph 2:8-10)

Believers are God's poem ('workmanship' = *poiema*), the expression of God's heart and the result of his work to manifest Christ. Conduct is performed in Christ not by servile obedience of external laws.

Whenever the apostles direct believers regarding conduct, even when appealing to examples from the Law, they do so in the context of the example or teaching of Christ, they never simply issue a command or apply a Mosaic Law in isolation. Thus:

- We should receive one another as Christ received us (Rm 15:7); i.e. take one another to heart as companions. This implies hospitality, kindness, friendship, open-heartedness, guidance, care.
- Give in the way that Christ gave (2 Cor 8:7-9). [Note that tithing is never commanded in the NT. Giving is to be sacrificial and considered on the basis that all we have belongs to God. This means that the rich should give far more than a mere 10%. Further, the focus of giving is to the poor and needy, not buildings, maintenance or

leadership. Only itinerant preachers received gifts. Local elders were expected to be workers. In the context of a team ministry of equal elders, and in the atmosphere of mutual edification, an elder's task should not be arduous requiring full-time ministry.]

- Walk in love as Christ gave himself for us in love (Eph 5:2).
- Husbands are to love their wives in the sacrificial way that Christ loved the church (Eph 5:25).
- Children are to obey their parents as if honouring Christ (Eph 6:1-3).
- Slaves are to obey their masters as if serving Christ (Eph 6:5).
- Christians must be like-minded, humble and loving as Christ was (Phil 2:1-5).
- Forgive each other as Christ forgave us (Col 3:13).

Application of the Law of Moses is never by direct command but is always grounded and interpreted in the light of the changes made by the New Covenant. If the Law is referred to, it is the work of Christ that interprets it.

The Gospel

Do we have to preach the Law to unbelievers before we preach the Gospel?

No! Many state that the Law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ in the sense of a necessary preamble to Gospel proclamation; first preach Law, then grace. This misunderstands Paul's mention of this.

But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor (*pedagogue*) to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. (Gal 3:22-25)

The Law was a pedagogue unto Christ⁶⁵ in the sense that it was a temporary period of time leading up to the revelation of Christ in Israel; it revealed sin and showed all men that there was no hope without a Messiah-Deliverer (Rm 5:20; Gal 3:19). The same situation applies to individuals before conversion to some degree. Before having faith, they are controlled by a period of Moral Law, behaviour is judged by conscience. Once faith is revealed in their hearts, they are no longer under law. As the pedagogue controlled the master's child and stopped bad behaviour that could endanger him, the Law restrains us and points us to the perfection of the obedience of Christ.

It is necessary in Gospel preaching to preach the guilt of sinner before a holy God, but this is part of the Gospel and is not preaching Law as the law. The Spirit convicts of sin in the Gospel, not Law (Jn 16:8).

Some have even said, 'Take away the Law and you lose sight of the Lawgiver'. So a sinner who comes to Christ cannot see God unless he sees the Law? Rubbish. Jesus said, He who has 'seen me has seen the Father' (Jn 14:9). Jesus is the express image of the Father and God now speaks through his Son not the Law (Heb 1:1).

While it is true that a sinner must be made aware of his sin and need of God, we are never told to do that by formally preaching Law before preaching the Gospel. There is no model of apostles doing this. To the Jews Paul preached Law as a preamble to the Gospel (Acts 13), since that was how a Jew would be judged and they knew God under the Old Covenant. To the Gentiles he preached responsibility before the creator before expounding the Gospel (Acts 17), since they had no Law and only knew pagan gods. In both cases, belief in Christ and repentance were part of the same Gospel message (Acts 13:39, 17:30). There is no teaching in the NT that we have to preach Law as a preparation for the Gospel; there is no model for it, no command to do it and no specific teaching on it. We are called to preach Christ and him crucified to Gentiles who have no Law and to Jews who do (1 Cor 1:23). It is the job of the Spirit to bring conviction of sin, not the law (Jn 16:8, 'And when he has come, he will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.').

Law is not spoken of as a method of evangelism; no apostle teaches, 'Preach the Law, then preach the promise'. Explaining man's guilt before God is part of the Gospel and is important, but it can be done in various ways; mainly by demonstrating the righteous requirement of Christ as God's standard for mankind. The Moral Law is now subsumed in Christ as the righteous man; the Mosaic Law is not God's standard for man, Christ is - who has fulfilled the Law. Christ is the Gospel, not Law. Christ is the measure of godly man, not Law. With Gentiles Paul used their responsibility as creatures accountable to the creator

⁶⁵ The words 'to bring us' are not in the Greek text. The *paidagogos* was a trusted slave who acted as tutor and custodian of the master's children. He was responsible for the academic and social education, as well as the character development, of the heirs until they grew of mature age.

God, not law. In fact the introduction of the Law came after the initial Gospel message, both to Adam and Abraham. Before Moses, the elect were saved through hearing the Gospel promise; the law having not yet been given on tables of stone.⁶⁶

The cross throws in upon his [the sinner's] conscience a flood of light which sheds a reflex lustre of the law. Hence we believe that the Gospel of Christ, and especially the doctrine of the cross of Christ, is the most powerful instrument for impressing the conscience of a sinner, and for turning his convictions into genuine contrition of heart.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Gal 3:16-19, Now to Abraham and his Seed [Christ] were the promises made ... the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later ... What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made. However, God's will was known and understood from Adam onwards, both objectively through oral tradition and inwardly in the conscience.

⁶⁷ James Buchanan, *The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit*, Banner of Truth (1966), p64.

Theological Issues

Is there a contrast between Law and grace, Law and Gospel, or is there continuity?

The answer to this question determines key theological systems.

The cause of centuries of argument is the apparent contrasting statements in the NT, and even within Paul's letters. For instance to sample a few:

Apparent Continuity	Apparent discontinuity
Matt 5:18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.	Rm 6:14 For you are not under law but under grace.
Rm 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.	Rm 7:4 Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ.
Rm 7:12 Therefore the law <i>is</i> holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.	Rm 7:6 We have been delivered from the law.
Rm 7:14 The law is spiritual.	Rm 10:4 For Christ <i>is</i> the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.
Rm 7:22 I delight in the law of God.	1 Cor 9:21 ... as without law ... that I might win those <i>who are</i> without law.
1 Tim 1:8 We know that the law <i>is</i> good.	Gal 2:19 For I through the law died to the law
Ps 11:7-8 All His precepts <i>are</i> sure. They stand fast forever and ever.	Gal 3:12 The law is not of faith
	Gal 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.
	Gal 5:18 If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.
	Col 2:14 Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us.
	Heb 7:12 For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.

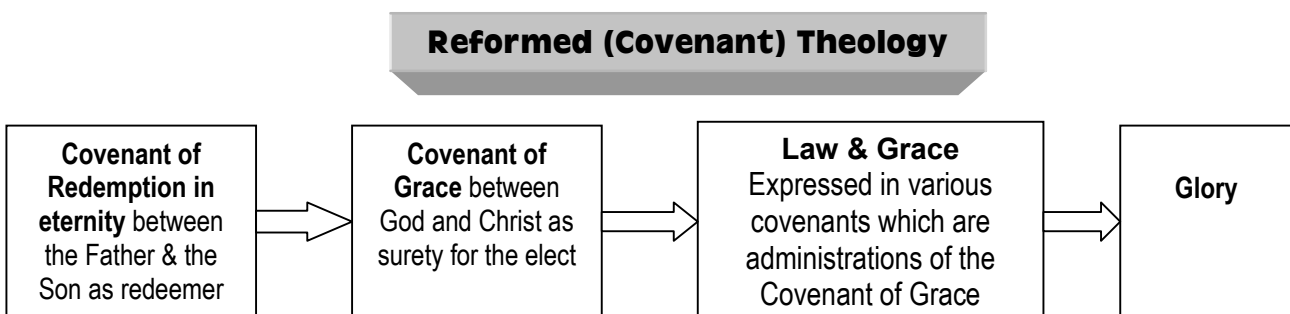
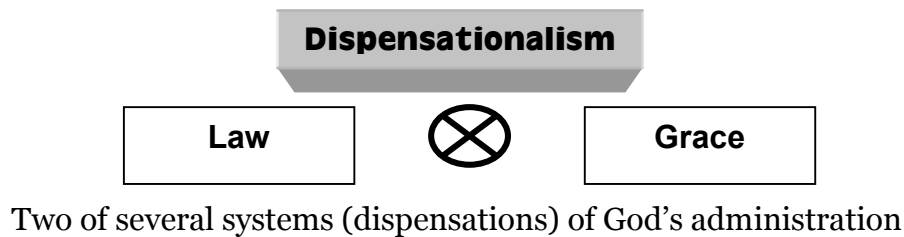
The way the negative statements about the Law are understood in order to minimise the discontinuity varies:

- Christian freedom is from the condemnation of the Law. (Calvin)
- Christian freedom is from the Covenant of Works. (Many Puritans and Reformers)
- Christian freedom is from Jewish legalism. (Several modern writers, e.g. Greg L Bahnsen)
- Christian freedom is from the ceremonial laws, which are rescinded. (Many Reformed)

The way one interprets this problem has great effect on one's overall theological system; thus Lutherans, many Charismatics and Dispensationalists emphasise the discontinuity; while Reformed, and particularly Theonomist, theologians emphasise the continuity. However, many sound theological writers also observe the discontinuity but maintain a balanced view on Law. We will briefly look at two systems.

Dispensationalism⁶⁸ emphasises that there is a sharp contrast and discontinuity between Law and grace. They comprise two completely different systems where salvation was by different methods.⁶⁹ The current age of grace is a stop-gap period caused by Israel's failure to accept Christ. At the end of the Gospel age the system of Mosaic Law will be re-instituted to govern an earthly, Jewish kingdom in the millennium which is currently postponed.

Reformed (or Covenant or Federal) Theology is based upon a continuity between law and grace. The overarching Covenant of Grace between the Father and Christ in eternity is expressed in progressively different forms in time.⁷⁰ The Covenant of Works [originally with Adam but codified in the Mosaic Law] was one preparatory expression of this covenant, the New Covenant is the fulness of it. Both form part of the same system. There is grace in Law and law in grace.



Firstly, we have to denounce traditional Dispensationalism as completely unbiblical, resting upon the foundational notion of two peoples of God [Israel and the church] with the emphasis on the former. Sound theology teaches that there is one Biblical method of salvation in all administrations of God's covenant, and that is by faith in the Messiah, whether looking forward to God's prophet and deliverer under the Old Covenant, or looking back to the cross under the New Covenant. Dispensationalism is a modern, novel

⁶⁸ Or Dispensational Premillennialism. First propounded in Edward Irving's 19th century heretical church, later developed by JN Darby and spread via the Scofield Bible notes. It teaches: a split between the church and Israel (there are two peoples of God); that history is developed through various systems (dispensations) where the means of salvation differs; that there is a future millennium of a Jewish earthly kingdom and that the church is only a temporary stop-gap measure, God being primarily concerned with Jews. There are many versions of this theology which constantly changes. Most popular is the classic version which teaches: a pre-tribulation secret rapture of saints and that Christ comes to earth twice in the future, once to secretly rescue saints from the tribulation and another to come in glory to reign for 1,000 years on earth over saints and sinners, where a Jewish temple is rebuilt before a final battle with evil. There are many other errors.

⁶⁹ This is now denied by modern Dispensationalist theologians (e.g. Wayne Strickland) who teach that salvation was always by faith in Christ. However, some historic Dispensationalists did teach this at the beginning and many Christians favouring this system still believe it.

⁷⁰ That is, the principle of the overarching Covenant of grace, suggested in Gen 3:15, was progressively developed through one covenant after another, the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic culminating in the New Covenant.

and dangerous heresy for many reasons. I cannot pursue this here.⁷¹ Its interpretation of the OT prophecies do not find fulfilment in the New Covenant inaugurated by Jesus at the cross, i.e. in the church, but to the fulfilment in Israel in a future millennium where the Mosaic Law will be reinstated in every detail. This is in complete opposition to the NT revelation (Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:7-13.).

However, there are also some serious issues for traditional Covenant Theology to contend with, which is too big an issue to deal with fully here, we can only touch on some key points.

1. *Scripture clearly teaches significant contrasts between Law and grace* and these statements must be given due weight, understood and applied. If believers are no longer under Law, then Law cannot be the means of regulating Christian behaviour.
2. *Scripture does not even mention a 'Covenant of Grace', a 'Covenant of Redemption' or a 'Covenant of Works'*; nor does it teach some of the key foundations of this theory. For instance: the Holy Spirit is left out of this Covenant of Redemption in most formulations and the divine decree of redemption in eternity is never called a covenant but rather a 'counsel'. This is something that is unilateral and established by God to save men. There is also no suggestion of a bilateral contract with man as suggested in the Covenant of Works, still less that Adam could have achieved salvation without Christ crucified. It should be noted that Calvin's theological system had no concept of a Covenant of Works; in general the Reformers taught one covenant, that of grace, as implied in scripture though not delineated. The notion was introduced into England by William Perkins and others at the beginning of the 17th century.
3. *The formal concept of Federal (Covenant Theology) did not arise until 100 years after the Reformation.* It originated in initial formulations by Johann Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), was developed (with problems) by Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669) but was most ably codified by Herman Witsius (1637-1708). Luther and Calvin were not formal Covenant theologians and sometimes made statements that appear inimical to it.⁷² The Puritans also separately developed a covenantal system, starting with William Perkins, John Preston, George Downame, James Ussher and William Ames, though there were variations in how this was perceived.
4. *There has been a danger of importing legalism into the New Covenant* by teaching that the New Covenant is just a sort of extension of the Old Covenant under the larger Covenant of Grace. Water baptism is seen as replacing circumcision with no scriptural warrant. [The antitype of circumcision is the spiritual cutting away of the flesh in the cross, Col 2:11.] This covenant interpretation in turn lays the foundation for paedobaptism and tends to view the church like theocratic Israel, often leading to Erastianism⁷³ but always to formalism and a clergy/laity split.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Premillennialism is historic but the Dispensational form is modern. Dispensationalism did not arise until after 1830 through the scandalous and proto-charismatic church of Edward Irving, being based upon some Jesuit notions (of Manuel Lacunza) allied to the ravings of a hysterical Scottish girl claimed to be tongues and visions (Margaret Macdonald). The key ideas were taken up by Brethren leader JN Darby and popularised in the Scofield Bible. For those interested see my notes on *Dispensationalism, or A Synopsis of the Theological Systems Behind Current UK Church Streams*.

⁷² *Luther and Calvin did not bring God's dealings with Adam in Paradise under the covenant idea, nor did they know of any covenant between God and man, save the Covenant of Grace.* EF Kevan referring to W. Adams Brown, *The Grace of Law*, Guardian Press, Grand Rapids, (1976) p29.

⁷³ The right of the state to intervene in church matters.

⁷⁴ Almost in the manner of Israel's formal priesthood, Reformed churches emphasise the office of pastor, and especially the preaching senior minister. In some extreme cases the pastor acts almost like a priest to be honoured as elite. Members are not allowed to participate in any form at church services. This is opposed to the Spirit and the letter of Paul's teaching on the church. Paul himself acted as a Father (1 Thess 2:11) or a nursing mother (1 Thess 2:7) and did not emphasise his office but persuaded and implored with teaching (2

5. *Covenant Theology leads directly to paedobaptism.* Baptists who are Covenant Theologians need to take this on board. [It teaches that the seal of covenant life is baptism instead of circumcision; and that as infants are included in this rite in the Old Covenant life, so they are in the New.]
6. *Many eminent Presbyterian theologians have denied that there is a Covenant of Works at all.* The logical conclusion is that Adam could have potentially merited eternal life by works. Most effective in this have been Herman Hoeksema and David Engelsma. Baptists, such as E F Kevan also took this view. The idea of a Covenant of Works was also denied by many Puritans.⁷⁵ Other theologians (such as John Murray) have noted the weaknesses of Covenant Theology and advised that a reworking is necessary.
7. *Other theologians have denied that there is a Covenant of Redemption.* While yet others prefer to teach that the Covenants of Redemption and of Grace are two modes of the same covenant (such as WGT Shedd). Covenant Theology has never been universally agreed in detail amongst the Reformed.

In our current context, Covenant Theology all too often tends to legalism in sanctification. Believers are called to look to the Law for regulation and strive for holiness instead of looking to Christ by faith and working with the Holy Spirit from the heart first. Many Reformed people lead lives that are focused on the external rather than understanding the Law of Christ and the putting off of the old nature. It is interesting that when writing on sanctification, Arthur Pink noted that early Brethren writings were of more help to him than Reformed works, Covenant Theology being hindered (or even Old Covenant) in this respect.

In my view the truth is that there is a contrast *and* continuity between Law and grace. We have noted many of the contrasts in this paper already; essentially, justification is not established by Law and Christian living is not regulated by the external expression of Law. But there is also a continuity that we have touched on. This continuity rests upon Christ fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant, a covenant that is constantly expounded by the apostles as a fundamental doctrine of grace. The Law pointed forward to the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham and established that it would be by faith, something Law could not do.

This covenant predated the Mosaic Law and is the foundation of the Gospel, along with the Genesis 3:15 protevangelium. Abraham had a heart relationship with God and this acceptance was formalised in a covenant of friendship. Abraham's walk with God was not based upon fleshly observance of external statutes, but a heart submitted to God and established by grace. The Mosaic Law was added 430 years later for reasons already explained. This Law was fulfilled and internalised by Christ and incorporated into the New Covenant to be expressed with spiritual power as the Law of Christ. This law is written in the believer's heart and empowered by the Spirit of Christ.

Here we have the continuity that is, essentially and ideologically, close to the Reformed conception - i.e. the New Covenant is not contrasted with the Old in the sense that the Old is rejected as fleshly, based on works and disregarded by God. No, the New Covenant is the fulfilment of the Old, which prepared the way for Christ. One difference from the Reformed conception is that the legalistic approach is not imported into the New

Cor 5:11, 20, 6:1). Members were encouraged to check teaching in a Berean manner (Acts 17:11) and all could share the gifts that God had sovereignly given for the benefit of all (1 Cor 12).

⁷⁵ Such as John Ball: *Neither can it be proved, that ever God made the Covenant of works.* See *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace*, (1645) p93.

Covenant. Another is that the New Covenant is seen as the direct fulfilment of the promise to Abraham, while the Mosaic and Davidic Covenants are typologically fulfilled. The Moral Law being enhanced and internalised and welded to grace.

If we observe both the contrasts and the continuity we avoid the errors of false theological systems (like Dispensationalism) and also the legalism that tends to hinder Reformed Theology in practice. The Law is not rejected but understood as fulfilled and incorporated into the Law of Christ; internalised and empowered.

What is the position of the magisterial reformers on the use of the Law for believers?

All traditional Covenant (i.e. Reformed) theologians hold that the Mosaic Law, being one administration of the Covenant of Grace, is binding to regulate the ethical life of the believer. The Ten Commandments, in particular, are fundamental in this regulation.

However, as we have noted earlier, Covenant Theology was not formally in existence at the time of the Reformation and was a developing system during the Puritan period. Both the Reformers and the Puritans spent much time expounding the idea of covenant, but only gradually became Covenant (or federal) theologians.

Luther, however, did not take this view. He saw the Law as important to the believer but did not emphasise that it is normative in regulating Christian ethics.⁷⁶ Indeed he occasionally made strong statements against it, such as, '*I will be bold to bid Moses with his tables ... be gone*'.⁷⁷

Having learned about justification by faith so powerfully, and believing it to be so utterly crucial, he strongly focused on man's depravity (hence his work, *The Bondage of the Will*). Thus he denounced the use of reason as being of any significance in approaching God, and did this in very colourful language. He saw a danger in the Law being used by fleshly reason to do God's work and thus did not stress the Law as fundamental in the Christian life. He said, '*Christian holiness ... is that which comes when the Holy Spirit gives people faith in Christ, ... that is, He makes heart, soul, body, works and manner of life new and writes God's commandments ... on hearts of flesh according to 2 Corinthians 3*';⁷⁸ yet he opposed the Antinomians that arose in his time.⁷⁹

However, Luther's position is somewhat more complex. Luther did not always equate the word 'law' with Mosaic Law. When he saw commands in the NT, he taught that these were expressions of law; the Gospel was always promise and not demand. Moral demands arise from law; law is God's word in a commanding aspect.

[Law is] what we are to do and give to God. [Gospel is] what has been given us by God.⁸⁰

This is not the place to examine this confusion in detail.

⁷⁶ *The Lutherans give but a very small place in their system to the 'tertius usus legis' [i.e. the use of the law to determine the Christian's conduct], and some doubt lingers as to whether Luther accepted it at all.* EF Kevan, *The Grace of Law*, p38.

⁷⁷ Quoted in EF Kevan, *The Grace of Law*, p110.

⁷⁸ Luther, *Works*, 'On the Councils and the Churches, Vol. V. p267ff.

⁷⁹ The formal rise of modern Antinomianism began in Germany with Johannes Agricola (1492-1566). Luther disputed with him in Wittenberg (1537) regarding his denial that the believer had to fulfil the Moral Law. Despite Luther's opposition to the notion that salvation had nothing to do with moral character, the Antinomians frequently used Luther's own works to defend their position. Like Calvin, Luther made many ambiguous comments, or even apparently contradictory comments, regarding the use of Law.

⁸⁰ Martin Luther; *Works*, Vol 35, p162.

Calvin stressed that the Law was key in determining the Christian's conduct, indeed he sees this as foundational to sanctification and called it, the third use of the Law.⁸¹ The Law shows believers their duty, instructs them in spiritual life and provokes them to holiness.

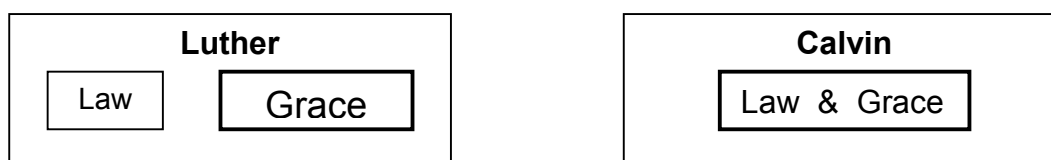
By downplaying God's plan in history (dare we say, not fully discerning the implications of the history of redemption) he stressed the unity of the Covenant of Grace and understood Law and grace merely as two administrations of the same thing; both apply all the time. There is a failure to see the radical changes from the Old Covenant to the New and a lack of giving necessary emphasis to the Law of Christ. Abolition of Law only regards the Covenant of Works and a means of gaining potential justification. Law is cancelled as a means of justification (it was never for this) but remains for sanctification. So Law and Gospel are not distinguished properly. One reason for this was Calvin's desire to steer a middle course between the Anabaptist rejection of Mosaic Law and Jewish restoration of it, tendencies towards both were prominent at the time.⁸²

However, there are times when Calvin's language appears to contradict all this as he follows the thought of certain Biblical passages in commenting. This shows the tension in this doctrine, something that leads to controversies to this day. However, in general Calvin's position is basically that of Covenant Theology.

J S Whale summarises these reformer's positions thus:

Whereas Luther distinguishes Law and Gospel and ever gives the pre-eminence to the latter, Calvin unites them; sometimes he comes near to transforming the Gospel into a new Law.⁸³

Diagrammatically we can show this as:



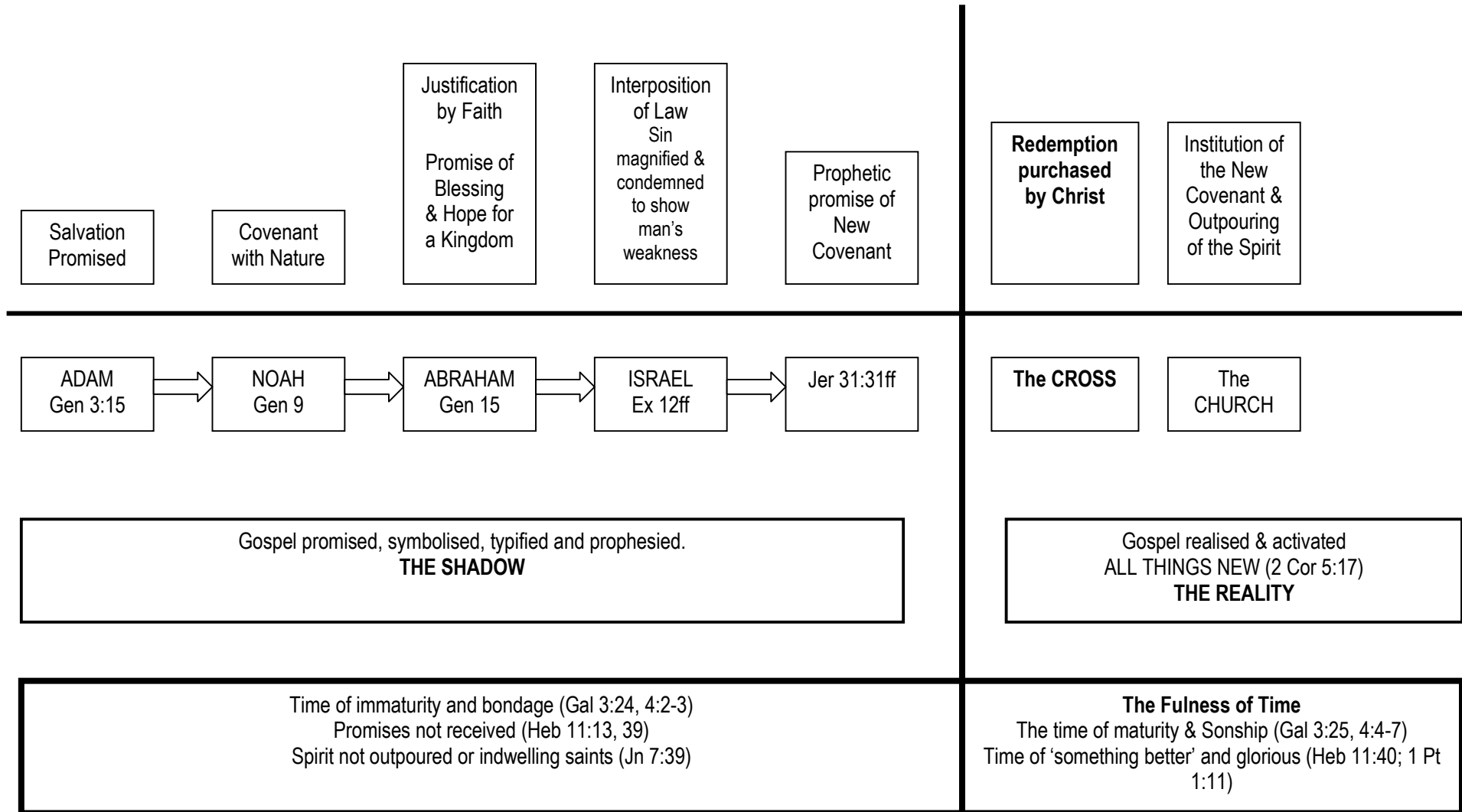
The Reformers and the Puritans tended to view the progress of redemption in a 'static' or unified way within the Covenant of Grace; all is the same but with different superficial administrations. However, this does no justice to the newness of experience that is emphasised in the New Testament or the contrast of Law and grace. It is crucial for us to understand the change from the Old to New Covenants if we are to properly understand the relationship of Law and grace. This can be demonstrated in the following diagram.

⁸¹ The three uses are: 1) moral standards for civil rule; 2) its use for conviction of sinners; 3) use for Christian ethics. Modern Lutherans reject the third use but Melancthon taught it in the Formula of Concord, Art. VI.

⁸² Ford Lewis Battles, *Interpreting John Calvin*, Baker (1996), p311.

⁸³ J S Whale, *Protestant Tradition*, Cambridge (1955), p164.

Redemptive-Historical Framework of the Bible



Calvin, particularly, did not teach the full significance of the change from the old to the new as regards sanctification, and this helped the development of the emerging Covenant Theology begun mainly by Bullinger and flowering later in Witsius.

Part of the reason the Reformers failed in this was fear about social repercussions during a very sensitive political climate. There was real fear that the Reformation could be squashed by political and military means if the support of a few princes and electors (German rulers) collapsed. The Anabaptists emphasised the change in redemption-history at the cross, but many groups wrongly over-emphasised this and fell into Antinomianism. Some of these groups also went into excesses leading to anarchy, millennialism and even public rebellion. The Reformers, especially Luther, greatly feared social disruption if the 'extreme' views of the Anabaptists were allowed to receive support. Instead the Anabaptists were persecuted, both the good and the radical.⁸⁴

What is the position of the Puritans on the use of the Law for believers?

In general, the Puritans followed Calvin and gradually adopted the Covenant Theology that became formally defined in the Westminster Standards, which were strongly influenced by Ussher's *Irish Articles*. However, the Puritans also greatly respected Luther. Consequently, there are wide variations amongst different Puritan writers on this matter, and there is no unanimity. Ernest Kevan states,

It is not surprising, therefore, to find a wide variety of thought among the Puritans about the exact nature of the Mosaic Covenant... It is not possible to make an accurate classification of the Puritans on the basis of their views about the Mosaic Covenant, because many of them held several of the different views in varying combination'.⁸⁵

Many Puritans closely linked human reason with law, seeing them as two sides of the same coin; God gave man rationality and also gave him natural (i.e. moral) law. This led to all sorts of discussions about natural law, positive law (i.e. revealed law such as the Edenic prohibition or Mosaic Law), conscience, reason, the Fall and its effects, and so on. There was general agreement, however, on the nature of law as: right, spiritual, holy, a revelation of God's will and command, written on all men's conscience, and necessary for well-being.

However, there was debate as to how far the Law was the sole guide and arbiter of Christian conduct. At the Westminster Assembly intense debates occurred in January and February 1645 on the place of the Law and Christian liberty. Despite a widespread condemnation of Antinomianism, there was also recognition that while extremists, enthusiasts and libertines deserved this condemnation, many godly, evangelical ministers (like Tobias Crisp) did not. It was said of Crisp that he was an honourable, devout minister and that, '*a person skilled in theology will perceive that many of his statements are capable of sound interpretation. But they misled the ignorant and occasioned grievous errors.*'⁸⁶ Such was the case with many supposed Antinomians, as is the case today. Many Puritans were anxious to uphold the life and walk of faith and avoid legalism, but suffered for doing so. There were even calls for repressive state measures against them.

Outside the specific Antinomian controversy, there was further debate and discussion,

⁸⁴ Key Anabaptist ideas were sometimes more Biblical than the Reformers. For instance: a Biblical view of the Law and New Covenant, church buildings, vestments, separation of church and state, mission, fellowship and worship. Sadly many Reformed tar all the Anabaptists with the same radical, heretical brush. The Anabaptist movement has been called 'The Radical Reformation' since they demanded reform of areas the magisterial Reformers neglected, such as the church.

⁸⁵ EF Kevan, *The Grace of Law*, p113.

⁸⁶ J B Marsden, *Later Puritans*, p227.

point and counter point, amongst the Puritans regarding the proper use of the Law for believers. EF Kevan gives the following examples of rigorous printed debates that occurred.⁸⁷

- Robert Towne [Antinomian] wrote *Assertion of Grace* (1644) against Thomas Taylor's *Regula Vitae* (1631) and John Sedgwick's *Antinomianisme Anatomised* (1643). Towne's work was then attacked by Anthony Burgess' *Vindiciae Legis* (1646). This was then counter-attacked by Towne's *Re-Assertion* (1654).
- John Saltmarsh [Antinomian], in *Free Grace* (1645) offended Thomas Gataker, who replied to it in 1646. Saltmarsh responded in *Reasons* (1646), which was counter-attacked by Gataker, and then re-defended by Saltmarsh.
- Henry Denne's [Antinomian] *Man of Sin Discovered* (1645) was answered by Thomas Bedford's *An Examination* (1646).
- Richard Baxter's [Amyraldian and Neonomian] *Aphorisms* (1649) was attacked by John Crandon's *Aphorisms Exorised* ('expelled'; 1653) and by William Eyre's *Free Justification* (1654); which itself was rebutted by John Graile in *Conditions in the Covenant of grace* (1655).
- The works of Tobias Crisp [alleged Antinomian] set off a chain of attack and counter attack by various people for over 50 years.

Unfortunately, the Puritans did not generally appreciate or expound the fulness of Paul's theology of identification in Romans 6 and there were misunderstandings about the need to put off the old nature and put on the new (Rm 6:11; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:8-14). They made this a legal matter rather than faith in an accomplished fact, followed by daily trust, reliance upon grace and self-denial. As a result they emphasised the use of Law to live righteously and this often led to legalism (hence the continuing derogatory characterisation of Puritans to this day);⁸⁸ holy living being judged more by a list of what one did not do than what one positively did.

By combining logic with Law, and desiring to be of pastoral help to wounded souls, many Puritan teachers compiled great lists of theoretical problems and actual case histories in their practical theology so that spiritual directions were applied to every possible aspect of human conduct. This method contains similarities to that of the Pharisees. It is the opposite of trusting the Holy Spirit to develop holiness in converts after establishing essential foundational principles, and modelling sanctified behaviour, the system used by Paul (imitation of leaders: 1 Cor 4:16, 11:1; Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:6; 2 Thess 3:9; Heb 6:12. trusting in believers: 2 Cor 7:16; Gal 5:10; Phil 1:6; 2 Thess 3:4; Philem 21).

The more you focus on Mosaic Law, and a legalistic, meticulous system, the less disciples develop individual, spiritual discernment or understanding Christ's law of love. Typical of the Puritan approach is the following:

Though the moral law [i.e. the Decalogue] be not a Christ to justify us, it is a rule to instruct us ...[it is] as a hedge to keep us within the bounds of sobriety and piety ...

We say not that he is under the curse of the law, but commands ... We say not that it saves, but sanctifies.⁸⁹

We cry down the law in respect of justification, but we set it up as a rule of sanctification.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ *The Grace of Law*, p35-36.

⁸⁸ This is denied by some; e.g. by Kevan, op. cit. p259. However, while it is true that the Puritans did not elevate their obedience as meritorious, they did manifest the character of being focused on external law; while many gave the appearance of being under bondage to forms rather than living from the heart.

⁸⁹ Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments*, Banner of Truth, p12-13.

⁹⁰ Samuel Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, Banner of Truth (1964), p71.

You must walk under the conduct of Moses; you must live in obedience to the law.⁹¹

Thus, as in Calvin, the Law is abolished as a means of justification, but is raised again as a means of sanctification. Ceremonial and civil laws are obsolete but the Mosaic moral commands continue in that form.

Sanctification, for many Puritans, was often only stated in terms of a gradual dying to sin by effort whilst missing the effect of being dead to sin through the death of Christ. The basis of Biblical freedom from the dominion of sin lies in my being dead, not in my gradual struggle. This half-hearted idea is of no comfort to believers struggling with an increasing awareness of the blackness of sin in their nature. Indeed, greater sensitivity to my sin is a vital part of sanctification, resulting in a greater desire to put off the old man, not a greater struggle to strive to obey Law.

But the Puritans demanded legal obedience and an entirely unbiblical way (to say nothing of a proto Theonomic position – see later). For instance Watson again:

Though we cannot exactly fulfil the moral law, yet God for Christ's sake will mitigate the rigour of the law, and accept of something less than he requires. God in the law requires exact obedience, yet will accept of sincere obedience, he will abate something of the degree, if there be truth in the inward parts.⁹²

So Christian duty is to sincerely try to obey the Law, and when disciples fail God covers up for them. This is the opposite of what James and Paul say in the NT whereby they insist that anyone wishing to obey the Mosaic Law must obey all of it and fully perfect it; which no man can do (Gal 3:10; Jm 2:10). God never reduces the command of Law. Under the Gospel, believers are outside the realm of that Law and thus not condemned by it for failures. Those in Christ are forgiven their weaknesses by the power of the blood.

AW Pink noticed this problem when he wrote on sanctification and said,

On some aspects of this subject he [Pink] has found the Plymouth Brethren much more helpful than the Reformers and the Puritans. ... many theologians have confined their views far too exclusively to the legal aspect of the atonement, whereas both the Old Testament types and the New Testament testimony, with equal clearness, exhibit its efficacy in all our relations to God. Because we are in Christ, all that He is for us must be ours. ... Not only is the believer "justified by His blood" (Romans 5:9), but we are "sanctified (set apart, consecrated unto God, fitted and adorned for His presence) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10). It is this blessed aspect of sanctification which the denominational creeds and the writings of the Puritans almost totally ignored.⁹³

At worst, this Puritan legalism is trying to renovate the old nature, putting new wine in old wineskins, instead of living by faith that the old nature is dead and then obeying the Law of Christ from the heart by walking in the Spirit. Denial of self (putting off the sinful old nature; dying to oneself) is the beginning of right living, not trying to obey external rules in the power of human volition (Matt 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23; Jn 12:24-25).

However, it must also be added that the Puritans, superlatively, led lives under the fear of God; indeed, godly fear was called by William Perkins, '*a most excellent and wonderful*

⁹¹ Samuel Bolton, *ibid* p76.

⁹² *Ibid*, p16, 47.

⁹³ *The Doctrine of Sanctification*, p4, 97-98. Note also his criticisms of certain Presbyterian, Baptist and Anglican standards,

grace of God'.⁹⁴ Though focused on Law, the Puritans led disciplined lives distinguished by a desire to serve and please God. They delighted in God and surpassed many other groups in their meditation on, devotion to and service of God. They lived according to the light they had and maintained an excellent testimony to God in lives of practical godliness.

The essence of the Puritan position on sanctification was their desire to steer a course between legalism and Antinomianism. They did this by affirming the use of the Law, obeyed from the regenerated heart. They expounded this *'in terms of the paradox of active-passivity, or a working out in active godliness of that which had been worked in by the renewing and enabling grace of God*'.⁹⁵ The paradox was that their position was neither passivity (Antinomianism), nor activism (legalism); though not under Law, the believer was still in the Law. Their freedom was dependent upon Law and the obedience was from love to the Law.

It must be said that all evangelical groups generally maintained the truth of Gospel sanctification in practice, even if they differed in their theological formulations of it (excepting radical extremists). Though their explanations differed, the Puritans (as with evangelicals today) all agreed that personal sanctification after justification was based upon the mystical union of Christ and the believer; that law was written on the heart; that godliness was a life of conformity to the character of God, maintained by the power of the Spirit, mortifying the flesh, on the basis of new life. If the various Puritan factions were ignored and their individual lives examined, most would be seen to be living godly lives; despite the theological division on this issue which separated them.

The Puritans generally identified the end of the Law as the end of the Covenant of Works. Their whole apologetic to answer the problems caused by Paul's use of terms of abrogation regarding the Law was explained by the termination of the Covenant of Works. Thus whenever Moses or the Law is mentioned as dead or opposing grace, it is Law as identified with the Covenant of Works. However, if there is no Covenant of Works (see above) then this whole apologetic falls apart. Thus many Puritans closely allied law and grace instead of separating them. For example:

Christ has made faith a friend of the Law.⁹⁶ (Cf. Rm 7:6⁹⁷)

The Obligation of it [Law] is still in force to binde the consciences of beleevers.⁹⁸ (Cf. Rm 8:15⁹⁹)

The Gospel sends us to the law againe to enquire what is our dutie being justified.¹⁰⁰ (Cf. Gal 5:18¹⁰¹)

This is also why Luther was more clear on the place of Law in Christian ethics as he was not subject to a theology based upon a Covenant of Works that has no scriptural warrant.

However, in answer to the question what is liberty or what does it mean to be not under law, the Puritans gave various answers.

1. IT MEANT NOT UNDER LEGALISM but willing compliance to law. [Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae, The Rule of the Law under the Gospel*, p14; George Downame, *A Treatise of*

⁹⁴ 'A Treatise tending unto a declaration, whether a man be in the estate of damnation, or in the estate of grace', 1588; *Works*, (1604), p443.

⁹⁵ Kevan, op. cit. p267.

⁹⁶ Samuel Rutherford, *The Trial & Triumph of Faith*, (1645) p121.

⁹⁷ But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

⁹⁸ Thomas Blake, *A Treatise of the Covenant of God*, (1653) p48.

⁹⁹ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption.

¹⁰⁰ Samuel Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, (1645) p98.

¹⁰¹ If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Justification, p524.] But Paul says not under ‘the Law’ itself, he does not say, ‘not under legalism’.

2. DESTRUCTION OF THE LAW AS THE POWER OF SIN or the provocation of sin in the believer. A new attitude to Law. [Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, p219; George Downname, *The Covenant of Grace*, p49-51. However, note that William Strong still suggested that there is an irritation by Law since believers still have sin in them, but not an irritation like the unregenerate have; *A Discourse of the Two Covenants*, p38.] But how can Mosaic Law be the foundation of the believer’s walk when its purpose is to expose and condemn sin? If Law irritates sin (as many said) how does this help the believer be free from it? Strong shows that the argument is a fudge; the Law irritates Christians a little but unbelievers a lot! Nowhere does scripture teach this change in the Mosaic Law so that it continues in two forms.
3. NOT UNDER LAW AS A MEANS OF JUSTIFICATION. [We have dealt with this earlier.]
4. NOT UNDER LAW AS A COVENANT OF WORKS. [We have dealt with this above.]
5. NOT BEING SERVILE TO LAW but serving from the heart. [Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Saints Treasury*, p100-101; Samuel Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, p195-196.] But believers serve Christ from the heart not Moses. Dying to the Law removes the Law, not servility to the Law.
6. FREEDOM FROM CONDEMNATION, but not from Law as a rule of life. [Samuel Rutherford, *The Trial & Triumph of Faith*, p105.] But Mosaic Law condemns and brings death; that is its job. To be outside condemnation, one has to be outside the Law.

Thus there was no unanimity and much fudging of root issues; clearly these statements do not answer all the necessary questions. The Westminster Confession even says that liberty was common to believers under law in the Old Testament, but under the Gospel the Spirit gives more help [XX.1]. This flies in the face of Paul’s argument in Gal 4, where he confirms that the Mosaic Law brought bondage (Gal 4:24).

For the Puritans liberty is really just a new attitude of love to the Law. The Law hasn’t changed but the Christian has; ‘*Christian liberty freed the believer, not from the Law, but for the Law*’.¹⁰² But this is not what scripture says. In trying to avoid extremes, they missed the import of vital texts such as: the Law has been changed (Heb 7:12); the Law is ended (Rm 10:4; Heb 8:13); Christians are dead to the Law (Rm 7:4).

We could go on. There was not a settled, universal opinion on the use of the Law amongst the Puritans; there were godly, evangelical Puritans who were Antinomian, Neonomian and Reformed; but it is true to say that the majority took what would now be seen as the Covenant position. While much of the debate centred on semantics and could have been avoided, there is a basic difference of opinion that continues to this day, often being seen between conservative Reformed Baptists and traditional Presbyterians. A modern book (*Five Views on Law and Gospel*) outlines four different aspects of Reformed theology and one Dispensational, all having different views on the place of Law for the believer. The current disputes between traditional Covenant theologians and New Covenant theologians in the US further illustrates that the age-old tensions in this doctrine are still not resolved. [The position of the writer (whilst being a consistent Calvinist as regards the Doctrines of Grace) is to avoid all modern systems and be informed only by his interpretation of scripture, seeking to be as faithful to the truth as possible.]

What about the dangers of Antinomianism?

This is a thorny subject and one that quickly generates more heat than light. Essentially Antinomians are those who abandon the Law and become lawless. They use theological

¹⁰² E F Kevan, op. cit. p267.

pretexts of Gospel liberty to excuse sin.

Historically the debate regarding Antinomianism has targeted many sorts of people.

- There are extremists who deserve the title (such as the original followers of John Agricola, the English Ranters and such like). These excuse lawless living by claiming they are under grace, or worse, that they are perfected. Some claim that God can see no sin at all in any believer at any time, no matter how lawless the behaviour.
- There are evangelicals who have mistaken views about the Gospel and Biblical theology who hold Antinomian ideas, but who do not live reckless lives.
- There are those who seek to exalt grace at the expense of moral obligation and get led astray.
- Then there are very godly men who champion grace to the extent that they make misleading theological comments or who overstate their case about Law.
- Then there are sound Biblical teachers, who seek to live devout lives and have a Biblical view of grace and Law but are falsely accused of being Antinomian by those who fail to understand their writings.

As a result the waters can become very muddied indeed. It behoves Christians to take care and use the title with discernment for fear of misjudging a brother.

Many people accused of being Antinomian actually believe that they have great obligations to live a holy life and are subject to God's moral law, but do not believe that this is effected by striving to follow Mosaic Law or an external written code. If certain genuine Christians believe that they have an obligation to lead a sanctified life, and fear God, then others should be very cautious about calling them derogatory names, even if they disagree with their teaching about the Law.

Freedom from Mosaic Law should never result in freedom from ethical obligations. We are free from sin's dominion but are always subject to God, who is holy and demands holiness. The suggestions of real antinomians that, as a result of the redemption in Christ, believers are free from all forms of law, are never seen by God as sinners, have no moral duty and are never subject to commands - are proved to be false by the following scriptures:

- **And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. (Rm 6:13)**
- **Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God *is what matters*. (1 Cor 7:19)**
- **If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 Jn 1:8)**
- **He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (1 Jn 2:4)**
- **And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. (1 Jn 3:22-24)**
- **By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. (1 Jn 5:2-3)**
- **Blessed *are* those who do His commandments. (Rev 22:14)**

Antinomians fail to separate various different concepts.

- They fail to distinguish between the Mosaic Law, as external, and Christ's Law, which is internal. Though we are not under Mosaic Law we are subject to law in Christ. Where there is a command there is a duty to law.

- They fail to see the difference between the old and new nature. The new nature is formed in the likeness of God (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10) but the old nature (which remains until death) will not only continue in sin but will get worse (Eph 4:22). The new nature is holy but the old is sinful. [Sanctification is learning to deny the old and put on the new.] Christians sin and this sin is a breach of law.
- They fail to see the difference between legal sanctification that follows from justification, that we are seen as sinless in heaven and have the righteousness of Christ accounted to us (1 Cor 1:30, 6:11 – spoken to a sinful church; Col 1:20-22); and the process of sanctification in this life whereby the soul is being saved through godly training by the Spirit using law (2 Cor 2:15).
- They fail to understand the tenses of salvation. We are saved (past tense), i.e. our spirit is saved and in the Spirit we are seated with Christ (Eph 2:6). We are being saved i.e. being gradually sanctified as the soul is saved (Heb 10:39; Jm 1:21; 1 Pt 1:9, 22) and we will experience the consummation of salvation in the future when our bodies are saved and changed (1 Cor 15:49; Phil 3:21; Col 3:4; 1 Jn 3:2). Past tense – ‘we were saved’ (Rm 8:24); present tense – ‘to us who are being saved’ (1 Cor 1:18); future tense – ‘we shall be saved’ (Rm 5:10).

True antinomians misunderstand some or all of these doctrines.

Some statements on the differences between the Old and New Covenant.

First we should note that the promise of the Gospel in the Old and New Testaments is the same. Redemption is by faith in Christ as God’s deliverer. Whether one looks at this unity as a unified Covenant of Grace (as Covenant Theology), or as the Gospel, or as God’s decree, this unity is expressed in such terms as:

- There is one Gospel promise (Rm 1:2; Gal 3:8; Heb 4:2).
- There is one mediator (1 Tim 2:5).
- Salvation is always by faith not works (Acts 10:43, 15:11; Rm 4:11).
- The promises are the same: forgiveness of sins, justification, everlasting life, fellowship with God, and an eternal inheritance (2 Cor 6:16; Rm 4:22; Gal 3:18; Heb 11:10).

We have earlier listed many differences. Most of these are subsumed in the fact that the Old Covenant contained the Gospel promise under a dimmer revelation, a shadow of the reality, the type rather than the antitype, a lesser (though vital) experience of the Spirit. Spiritual promises were focused on earthly and temporal objects rather than heavenly ones, such as the land, the offerings or the temple. The Law is in this dispensation of the childhood of the Gospel promise rather than the maturity (as Calvin puts it).

One of the greatest theologians, Herman Bavinck, says this:

[The Old Covenant] has been abolished. Better still, nothing was abolished, but the fruit was ripe and broke through the husk. The church, carried like a foetus in Israel’s womb, was born to an independent life of its own and in the Holy Spirit received an immanent life principle of its own. The sun of righteousness rose to its zenith in the heavens and shone over all peoples. The law and the prophets have been fulfilled and in Christ as their end and goal reached their destiny. The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (Jn 1:4). He is the truth (Jn 14:6), the substance (Col 2:17) in whom all the promises and shadows have been realised. In him all things have been fulfilled. ... Nothing of the Old Testament is lost in the New, but everything is fulfilled, matured, has reached its full growth, and now, out of the temporary husk, produces the eternal core. It is not the case that in Israel there was a true temple and sacrifice and priesthood and so on and that all these have now vanished. The converse, rather, is true: of all this Israel only possessed a shadow, but now the substance itself has emerged. The things

we see are temporal, but the invisible things are eternal.¹⁰³

The Law of Moses is part of this system of shadows, temporal things that are seen, the husk that has now been superseded by the reality of Christ. Law is now invisible – a spiritual obligation under the New Covenant. The practical results of following this Law of Christ are just the same as under the Old Covenant – saints will not steal, not lie, not covet etc. But the basis of such ethics are resurrection life, life in the Spirit, abiding in Christ, walking in the new man, putting on Christ etc. and all these require a previous putting off of the old man, denying oneself, dying with Christ, taking up one's cross.

Following the Mosaic Law is based upon the old life, the natural life, the flesh. It was designed for sinners and brings death; it cannot minister life and works against grace. The new man does not walk by sight but by faith, and thus does not rest on Old Covenant forms. The Gospel promised an inheritance and this could not be delivered by law (Gal 3:18); but Christ delivers it and maintains it spiritually not in an earthly fashion.

What about New Covenant Theology?

This is a recent development in Reformed denominations that has been in slow formation for 25 years. Key foundational thinkers were Jon Zens and John Reisinger, amongst others; however there are now a large number of writers and preachers championing this viewpoint. NCT is more a hermeneutic, a means of interpreting scripture, than a formal theological system, and as such the proponents usually consider themselves as living within the framework of Reformed Theology, most often being Reformed Baptists assenting to the London (Baptist) Confession of Faith or the 1689 Baptist Confession.

Some of the NCT proponents would be happy, more or less, to assent to the position given in this paper; however, others have expressed views which the present writer would be very uncomfortable with.

Following earlier historical patterns, all the followers of NCT have been tarred with the same brush and denounced as Antinomians or Neonomians¹⁰⁴ by certain uninformed sections of the Reformed press. This is all the more unfair since there is a wide divergence of opinion expressed in so called NCT publications and there is no formal, centralised HQ, organisation, conference or publishing body. Certain statements of faith have been released but these have not received universal support. A few books have been written to outline the NCT position, but these have been from specific standpoints and again would contain statements not universally agreed.

In general the broad accepted position would be something like this:

- A position that considers itself a return to original Calvinism and Reformed faith before the development of Covenant Theology, especially the idea of a Covenant of Works.
- A denial of the Covenant of Works.
- An emphasis on being 'in Christ'.
- A discontinuity between the Old and New Covenant.
- An assertion that the historical covenants are all separate ('cut' in time) and are all consummated in the New Covenant.
- A sharp antithesis between Law and grace.
- Credobaptism (believers baptism).

¹⁰³ *Reformed Dogmatics* Vol 3, Sin and Salvation in Christ, Baker Academic (2006), p224.

¹⁰⁴ Establishing an imaginary new law. Historically, Neonomianism was a theological controversy centred upon Richard Baxter's erroneous notion that grace is a new law and that justification is completed by our righteous works.

It is my view that it is too early to either jump on the NCT bandwagon or to dismiss it as heresy. Some of the NCT proponents (who may or may not call themselves by this name) have some very valid points to make and deserve a hearing. Others have gone too far; for instance by saying that no OT law is valid unless it is specifically commanded in the New Testament. This tends to demean the Old Testament and discourage use of it. While the New Testament adopts all the moral precepts of the Old Testament in apostolic exhortations, it is wrong to give the impression that the Moral Law is pointless. This fails to appreciate that Christ did not institute a completely new legal system (neonomianism), but that he *fulfilled* all the Moral Law and all the moral precepts of the Mosaic Law. All the expressions of Moral Law (in Eden, in Mosaic Law and in Christ's Law) are based on the eternal, unchanging Moral Law that exists in the mind of God, the lawgiver. The essential principles never change because they are part of the holiness of God and an expression of his will for man. The true relationship is that OT moral law is the shadow which points to the fulness and reality of law in Christ.

In my view movements do not necessarily assist understanding or promote sound debate. A re-evaluation of Covenant Theology is called for in several areas, but this is best done by open debate, general discussion and monographs on certain subjects, such as the validity of the Covenant of Works, without forming camps.

What about Theonomy?

This is the theological opposite of antinomianism; the term means 'legislation inspired by God'. It is the theological position of some Reformed groups who seek to re-introduce the Law of Moses as the standard of legislation for global society. It is often part of a postmillennial movement that is founded on the supposition that the Lord will return after a Christian golden age that lasts for a 1,000 years or more. There are various expressions of this and they have been labelled by different titles such as Dominion Theology or Christian Reconstructionism.¹⁰⁵ Some theonomists merely hold a theological position with no triumphalist aims.

While the position of this paper is that there is a discontinuity between Mosaic Law and the New Covenant (however, not between Moral Law and the New Covenant) the position of Theonomy is that there is a strict continuity.

While some Reformed theologians would have us believe that there is unanimity amongst the Reformed community on the question of Law and Gospel, in fact there is no consensus at all. There is more consensus amongst those who strictly hold to Covenant Theology, but even here there is much current debate and even apostasy (such as in the groups that follow the American 'Federal Vision'). Historically there have been many expressions of opinion regarding the precise relationship between the Law and the New Covenant.

The traditional Covenant Theology, or Reformed, position is that there is continuity between Law and Gospel; that there is law in the Gospel and there is the Gospel promise in the Law (this is true). The Mosaic Covenant, though with law in the forefront, is but an administration of the Covenant of Grace. Thus Mosaic Law continues, but with the abrogation of the ceremonial law and the civic or judicial law of Israel. The moral content

¹⁰⁵ Dominionism refers to the triumphalist hopes that Christian ethics will control the world. There is a charismatic form of dominionism which preposterously claims that believers will have supernatural powers (flight, invulnerability, teleportation etc.) and that the church will rule the world through the ministry of apostles and prophets. Reformed Reconstructionism has not been of this order, though some dominionist Reformed groups have allied with dominionist charismatic groups. Reconstructionism refers to the desire to reconstruct society on the basis of Mosaic Law.

of the Mosaic Law remains unchanged and is subsumed in the New Covenant without alteration as the rule of life for the Christian.

Now I have explained that this is untenable since scripture does not describe this threefold compartmentalisation of the Mosaic Law. Covenant Theology recognises that Paul teaches a sharp divide between Law and grace and this is their attempt to marry this up.

Theonomy also recognises this problem and, while erring, tries to be more honest in exegesis. It shows that while there are clear statements in the NT that the ceremonial laws have been cancelled, there is no such abrogation of judicial laws.¹⁰⁶ Thus they claim that they continue. They also show that the position of the Puritans was not so dissimilar from this – hence the attempts to establish theocratic commonwealths in England and America.

The Westminster Confession supports this idea in principle. The assembly affirmed the abolition of ceremonial laws but only stated that the judicial laws had ‘expired’ (19.3 and 4). Christ was the antitypical fulfilment of the ceremonies but the judicial law still had moral authority, though the actual arrangement it originated in (Israel) had passed away. The Westminster standards also affirmed certain judicial laws as binding upon magistrates (*Larger Catechism* 108, 135). In fact the whole Puritan understanding of the magistrate’s responsibility was undergirded by implicit reference to Mosaic judicial law. This led to Puritan Erastianism.¹⁰⁷ Though not emphasised by the Westminster standards, they come pretty close to Erastianism – for example:

The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: (1) yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemes and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. (2) For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God. [*WCF* 23:3. The American Edition differs in this section.]

When the Westminster standards address the liberty of the Christian over the Israelites, they cite the freedom from the ceremonial laws but do not include the judicial law. In expounding the Decalogue, the Puritans treated the judicial laws as binding. By this they did not mean the specific, cultural, Israelite form (say stoning), but the principle of punishment for certain civil offences (*WCF* 19.4).

By asserting this false threefold division of the Mosaic Law to enable the presuppositions of Covenant Theology, the Reformed laid up problems that are insoluble without fudging. Theonomists are correct in their claims. Consistency demands that judicial laws remain if

¹⁰⁶ ‘Though we have clear and full scriptures in the New Testament for abolishing the ceremonial law, yet we nowhere read in all the New Testament of the abolishing of the judicial law, so far as it did concern the punishing of sins against the moral law.’ Thus the government is ‘obliged to those things in the judicial law which are unchangeable and common to all nations ... The Christian magistrate is bound to observe these judicial laws of Moses which appoint the punishments of sins against the moral law ... he who was punishable by death under the judicial law is punishable by death still’. George Gillespie, quoted by Greg L. Bahnsen, *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, Zondervan, (1996) p68. Gillespie was one of the leading contributors to the Westminster Standards at the Westminster Assembly.

¹⁰⁷ That is the church and state are not separated but the state protects and supports the (Reformed) church; hence ‘the Church of England’. It was Thomas Erastus (1524-83) who originally proposed that the rule and power of the church is entrusted to the civil government.

you do not affirm the abolition of the Mosaic Law in its entirety.

Thus many theonomists seek to change a future American Constitution and government to outlaw adultery and homosexuality on pain of death. But would they also condemn gathering sticks on a Saturday? I doubt it, but logical consistency also demands this.

Clearly the Theonomic position is false, not just because it is extreme or Erastian, but because it fails to understand that the Mosaic Law, in every respect has been terminated replaced, realised, fulfilled, and subsumed into Christ as a person. His law is spiritually performed and empowered, and includes all the Moral law that was contained in the Mosaic Law. Mosaic Law undergirded every aspect of society in Israel because it was a theocratic nation; God was its true king. It was a godly nation (or was meant to be so). This cannot apply to any earthly nation today.

Objective Features of the Law of Christ

The Law of Christ is not just an internal guide and prompting of the Holy Spirit (as true antinomians claim); nor just an improved and enlightened conscience; but the New Testament revelation provides ample objective, practical instruction for the disciple. It is not left to 'fancy' or subjective impressions, which can lead astray or lead to abandon, but there are clear instructions, commands and directions made by Christ and his apostles to enable clear thinking and remove accusations of a lack of objective focus.

To list these all would take far too much space, but in this table we examine how the Law of Christ amplifies and improves on the Ten Commandments, which is the main guide demanded by most Reformed teachers. This table shows that it is not enough to look to Sinai, but we must look to the New Covenant revelation for ethical direction.

The Law of Moses	The Law of Christ
The summary of the Ten Commandments	
You shall have no other gods before Me. (Ex 20:3)	<p>No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (Lk 16:1)</p> <p>God <i>is</i> Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (Jn 4:24)</p> <p>For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. (Phil 3:3)</p> <p>Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water. (Rev 14:7)</p>
You shall not make for yourself a carved image. (Ex 20:4)	<p>Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. (Col 3:5)</p> <p>Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites. (1 Cor 6:9)</p> <p>Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol <i>is</i> nothing in the world, and that <i>there is</i> no other God but one. (1 Cor 8:4)</p> <p>Little children, keep yourselves from idols. (1 Jn 5:21)</p>
You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain. (Ex 20:7)	<p>But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. (Col 3:8)</p> <p>Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy <i>against</i> the Spirit will not be forgiven men. (Matt 12:31)</p> <p>Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? (Heb 10:29)</p>
Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. (Ex 20:8)	<p>1 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.</p> <p>3 For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore</p>

	<p>in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,' " although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.</p> <p>4 For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh <i>day</i> in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works";</p> <p>5 and again in this <i>place</i>: "They shall not enter My rest."</p> <p>9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.</p> <p>10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God <i>did</i> from His.</p> <p>11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. (Heb 4)</p> <p>For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath. (Matt 12:8)</p>
Honour your father and your mother. (Ex 20:12)	<p>He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. (Matt 10:37)</p> <p>Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes <i>are due</i>, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. (Rm 13:7)</p> <p>But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Tim 5:8)</p>
You shall not murder. (Ex 20:13)	<p>Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all. (Gal 6:10)</p> <p>See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. (1 Thess 5:15)</p> <p>Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. (1 Jn 3:15)</p> <p>You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. (Matt 5:43-44)</p>
You shall not commit adultery. (Ex 20:14)	<p>For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. (Eph 5:5)</p> <p>But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast <i>it</i> from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. (Matt 5:28-29)</p>
You shall not steal. (Ex 20:15)	<p>Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labour, working with <i>his</i> hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. (Eph 4:28)</p> <p>Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. (Matt 5:42)</p>
You shall not bear false witness. (Ex 20:16)	<p>Repeated mention in the NT, often quoting the OT. (E.g. Mk 10:19; Lk 18:20; Rm 13:9)</p> <p>Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds. (Col 3:9)</p>
You shall not covet. (Ex 20:17)	<p>Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. (Matt 6:19-20)</p> <p>Put to death ... covetousness. (Col 3:5)</p> <p><i>Let your conduct be</i> without covetousness; <i>be</i> content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' (Heb 13:5)</p>

Some examples of other commands not highlighted by Moses.

Meddling in others' business condemned.	But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. (1 Pt 4:15)
Rejoicing commanded.	Rejoice always. (1 Thess 5:16)
Constant prayer commanded.	Pray without ceasing. (1 Thess 5:17)
Constant thanksgiving commanded.	In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thess 5:18)
Submission to the Spirit commanded.	Do not quench the Spirit. (1 Thess 5:19) Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. (Gal 5:16)
Testing and obedience to prophecy commanded.	Do not despise prophecies. (1 Thess 5:20) Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. (1 Cor 14:29) This is not submission to the formal prophetic office (as in the OT) but the acceptance of prophetic ministry from within the church community. The formal prophetic office was recognised (such as Agabus, Paul or Barnabus) but the prophetic ministry of others was also accepted (such as Philip's four daughters who prophesied; Acts 21:9).
Command to check everything.	Test all things; hold fast what is good. (1 Thess 5:21)
Avoid all forms of evil.	Abstain from every form of evil. (1 Thess 5:22)
Avoid wrong disputes and contention.	But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions. (Titus 3:9)
Command to avoid the works of the flesh in all its forms.	Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told <i>you</i> in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal 5:19-21)
Love and service commanded.	Through love serve one another. (Gal 5:13)
Inward lusts condemned.	But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. (Matt 5:28-29)
Hate condemned.	You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. (Matt 5:43-44)
Hospitality commanded.	Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. (1 Pt 4:9)
Moaning condemned.	Do all things without complaining and disputing. (Phil 2:14)
Love at all times commanded	1 Cor 16:14; c.f. killing in Deut 20:13, 16-17. Note: The Mosaic Law did not countenance personal retribution or revenge, as some suggest, but emphasised doing good to men; the godly man was always to show love to his neighbour. In this it complies with New Covenant law. However, in the Mosaic Law there are commands to utterly blot out certain nations as a result of the fullness of their condemnation as a result of sin. This is literally genocide and military ethnic cleansing by any description, but it has divine sanction due to God's patience being ended with the evil-doing of certain tribes, such as the Canaanite nations. The New Covenant differs remarkably from this where violence is never sanctioned at any time. Furthermore, violence against one is to be met with patience (Matt 5:39). Further, the psalms endorse hate of the wicked.
Loving provocation commanded.	And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. (Heb 10:24)

Many more examples could be added, indeed the apostolic writings are full of practical exhortations. Every letter has a doctrinal section where truth is expounded and then this is applied in practical commands, exhortations, admonishments and direction.

The unity of the law in the Old and New Covenants

The foundation and essence of moral law in both is love. Jesus summarised the Moral Law as love to God and love to man (Matt 22:37-40), which is also affirmed by Moses (Deut 6:4-5; Lev 19:18). Indeed the Decalogue is divided into two aspects, love to God in the first group (1-4) and love to man in the second (5-10). The Law of Christ takes this principle and emphasises it beyond the scope of Mosaic Law.

Some final notes on some key texts

Matt 5:17

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil.

Jesus fulfilled all that the Old Covenant promised. It was made obsolete in the form it then held (as objective, external, written law), but was continued and fulfilled in the spiritual covenant inaugurated by Christ. The moral laws were extended and completed as Christ's Law written in the hearts of believers (2 Cor 3:3); while all the civil, judicial and ceremonial aspects were fulfilled as antitypes in Christ's work.

Rm 2:14-15

Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness.

The essential principles of the Moral Law are known in men's conscience. But this is either enhanced by learning or debased and weakened by sin.

Rm 3:19

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law.

The Law only applies to those under it (Jews). It cannot apply to Gentiles who have no knowledge of it, neither does it apply to believers who are not under law but are in-lawed to Christ.

Rm 3:20

Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Law exposes sin. It does not impart grace, righteousness or give life.

Rm 3:28-31

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. ... Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

Men are justified by faith in Christ not by Law; but those justified establish the Law by living holy lives as the obey moral law from the heart - obeying the Law of Christ by his Spirit.

Rm 4:15, 5:20

The law brings about wrath; for where there is no law *there is* no transgression. ... the law entered that the offence might abound.

As well as exposing and magnifying sin, the Law brings punishment and condemnation.

Rm 6:14, 7:3

For you are not under law but under grace. ... you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another.

Christians are not under Law as Jews, but are in-lawed to Christ. They fulfil the Law as they put on Christ and walk in the Spirit.

Rm 7:6, 8:2

But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not *in* the oldness of the letter. ... For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

We are not under law because we have died with Christ. The Law only applies to Adamic men, our Adamic life died at the cross and we are now new creatures in Christ, subject to spiritual laws not the written Law of Moses. The Law can only apply to flesh and not spirit.

Rm 8:4

The righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

As we walk in the Spirit we obey the Law of Christ. This ensures we obey all the moral principles of the Mosaic Law and much more.

Rm 8:7-8

Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

The flesh (carnal mind) is meant to be subject to the law which regulates human behaviour; but men hate God and love sin and thus refuse to be subject to God's law. Man has no power to obey the Law because he is sinful flesh.

Rm 9:31-32

Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because *they did not seek it* by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law.

Jews, as any men, cannot attain righteousness by works of the Law, even though they pursued it and sought to be religious. Justification can only ever be by faith.

Rm 10:4

Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Christ is the realisation and fulfilment of Mosaic Law; he is both the goal and termination of it. He has internalised the demands of the Moral Law and subsumed them into his life. Saints now continue in law by continuing in Christ's life by his Spirit.

2 Cor 3:2-11

The Mosaic Law was the administration of death and condemnation (including the 10 commandments v3, 7: i.e. that which was carved on stone tablets), it has now passed away (Gk 'rendered inoperative'). The Law of Christ replaces it by an internal, spiritual law (Gal 6:2, Rm 8:2).

Gal 3:2

Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Effort under the Law is antagonistic to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is only received by faith. Work for God that is not inspired by the Spirit is a dead, legalist work.

Gal 3:10

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.'

Relying on the Law puts you under a curse.

Gal 3:11-12

that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for 'the just shall live by faith.' Yet the law is not of faith, but 'the man who does them shall live by them.'

Gal 2:16

a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

The Law cannot justify, legalism produces dead works. The Law is not of faith. Faith and Law are two systems: Law is based on works faith is based on grace.

Gal 3:19

What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

The Mosaic Law was never meant to be permanent, it was added to the Abrahamic Covenant and lasted until Jesus came to fulfil that covenant and inherit God's promise to Abraham as his seed.

Gal 3:17-18, 21

And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise; but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise. ... *Is* the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

Righteousness cannot come by Law. Law is the strength of the old nature which works under it. It results in works not fruit. The Law wasn't opposed to the promise, it was added to reveal sin 430 years after the promise to Abraham.

Gal 3:23-25

But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Faith was only revealed with the coming of the Messiah. Justification was only fully obtained and enjoyed by faith in Christ's atonement. The Law kept Israel under guard, confined in God's order, until Christ came. The Law led God's people towards Christ, showing man's essential weakness and need of grace. Its purpose as an external, objective focus of God's will ceased when Christ came as the fulness and reality that the Law foreshadowed.

Eph 2:11-16

The Law was a wall keeping the Gentiles from Jewish blessings which has now been broken down. Unity amongst God's people is in the Spirit, not by Law.

Heb 7:11-12,18

Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. ... For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness,

Christ's priesthood is based on Melchizedek not Aaron. The Law was the basis of the Aaronic priesthood. Melchizedek's priesthood requires a new law - Christ's law (Heb 5:1-10).

Heb 7:19

The law made nothing perfect

The Law cannot make anything perfect. It cannot sanctify.

Heb 10:1

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things.

The Law was not the reality; Christ is the reality of spiritual life and righteousness.

1 Jn 2:3-8

3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

7 Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.

8 Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

Note that believers are called to walk like Christ; they are directed to look to Jesus and not to the Law. John does not say that believers live by obeying moral regulations but by walking as Christ did.

Believers do not ignore law; in fact the law they live under is the commandment they had from the beginning (love) but is also a new law. This refers to the fact that Jesus called it a new commandment (Jn 13:34-35) and gave it a new and higher motivation, '**Love one another as I have loved you**' (Jn 15:12). The Mosaic Law called people to love their neighbours; Christ called his brethren to love their enemies – only grace can achieve this. Christian love is loving as Christ loved us. Christian law is focused on Christ's commandments not the Law of Moses; it is centred on keeping His word as we are in Christ. Obedience to the new commandment is possible only 'in Him'. The result of walking like Christ is to live in the perfection of God's love. As we walk in Christ by His Spirit, we obey God's Moral Law.

A few select quotes

Charles D Alexander

The Old Testament order, with its temple and priesthood, its sacrifices, feasts and daily ritual, all comprehended under the one general name of the Law, was a temporary administration to tide over the ages till in the fullness of God's time, the gospel should come. The old dispensation was to the new as the cold light of the moon to the glorious, life giving, warming rays of the sun.

Revelation Spiritually Understood, K & M Books (2001), p294.

Andrew Robert Fausset

The legal covenant of Sinai came in as a parenthesis (*pareiselthee*; Rm 5:20) between the promise to Abraham and its fulfilment in his promised seed, Christ. "It was added because of the (so Greek) transgressions" (Gal 3:19), i.e. to bring them, and so man's great need, into clearer view (Rm 3:20; 4:15; 5:13; 7:7-9). For this end its language was that, of a more stipulating kind as between two parties mutually covenanting, "the man that doeth these things shall live by them" (Rm 10:5). But the promise to David (2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89; 2; 72; Isaiah 11) took up again that to Abraham, defining the line, the Davidic, as that in which the promised seed should come.

Bible Dictionary, Art. 'Covenant'.

The law that interposed a mediator and conditions between man and God was an exceptional state limited to the Jews, parenthetically preparatory to the Gospel, God's normal dealing, as He dealt with Abraham-viz., *face to face directly*, by *promise* and *grace*, not conditions.

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown; *Comm. On the Old and New Testaments*, Vol 3, Eerdmans, (1993) A R Fausset on Gal 3:20, p384. [Emphasis original.]

F. F. Bruce

Nor is it only the Aaronic priesthood which must be superseded. That priesthood was instituted under the Mosaic law, and was so integral to it that a change in the priesthood carries with it inevitably a change in the law. If the Aaronic priesthood was instituted for a temporary purpose, to be brought to an end when the age of fulfilment dawned, the same must be true of the law under which that priesthood was introduced.

Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 145.

If he [Paul] is no longer under the law of Moses, he recognises the will of God, comprising 'what is good and acceptable and perfect' (Rm 12:2), as something which he is bound to obey. But this is no longer a matter of conformity to an external code, but of 'doing the will of God from the heart' (Eph 6:6) in terms of the New Covenant (2 Cor 3:2-6). Paul acknowledges himself to be under the law of Christ (Gk. *ennomos christou*).

The New Century Bible Commentary, 1 & 2 Corinthians, p87-88.

The dictates of Christian charity ... are summed up by him [Paul] as "the law of Christ". ...But when "law" is used this way it cannot be understood "legally": the law of love is incapable of being imposed or enforced by external authority. Rather, it is the spontaneous principle of thought and action in a life controlled by the Spirit of Christ; it is willingly accepted and practised. Paul was persuaded that the freedom

of the Spirit was a more powerful incentive than all the ordinances or decrees in the world.

Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit, Paternoster Press, (1992) p187.

John Calvin

As the authority of the Law and the priesthood is the same, Christ became not only a priest, but also a Lawgiver; so that the right of Aaron, as well as of Moses, was transferred to him. The sum of the whole is, that the ministry of Moses was not less temporary than that of Aaron; and hence both were annulled by the coming of Christ, for the one could not stand without the other ... We must then remember, that the Law is that part of the ministrations which Moses had as peculiarly his own, and different from that of Christ. That law, as it was subordinate to the ancient priesthood, was abolished when the priesthood was abolished.

Hebrews, 7:12

As soon as the Law presents itself before us, the curse of God falls upon our heads.

Four Last Books of Moses; III, p197

The perpetuity of the Law is grounded in Christ.

Acts II:30

Under the Law was shadowed forth only in rude and imperfect lines what is under the Gospel set forth in living colours.

Hebrews, p222

The Law was the grammar of theology, which, after carrying its scholars a short way, handed them over to faith.

Galatians, p108.

If the Law is separated from Christ, it is a dead letter; Christ alone gives life.

Ezekiel II: p176-177.

Moses had no other intention than to invite all men to go straight to Christ.

John I: p217.

Christ chose to become liable to keep the Law, that exemption from it might be obtained for us.

Galatians, p118-119.

John Eadie

To be led by the Spirit is incompatible with being under the Law.

On *Galatians* 5:18.

John Owen

So is the 'law of commandments contained in ordinances taken out of the way,' being 'nailed unto the cross of Christ,' where he left it completely accomplished.

Hebrews, vol. 5, pp. 428, 434.

Vavasor Powell (Puritan)

Believers are dead to, and free from the law as it is a Husband ... If you be believers, and married to Christ, the law hath no more power over you, than a dead husband hath over his relict and living wife.

Christ & Moses Excellency or, Sin & Sinai's Glory (1650), p233.

Augustine

The law was given that trace might be sought; grace was given that the law might be fulfilled.

De Sp. And Lit; Sec 19. Quoted in, *The Revelation of Law in Scripture*, Patrick Fairbairn, Zondervan (1957), p179.

Douglas J. Moo

The entire Mosaic law comes to fulfilment in Christ, and this fulfilment means that this law is no longer a *direct and immediate* source of, or judge of, the conduct of God's people. Christian behaviour, rather, does not consist of legal prescriptions and ordinances, but of the teaching and example of Jesus and the apostles, the central demand of love, and the guiding influence of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Five Views on Law and Gospel, Zondervan (1996) p343. [Emphasis original.]

Paul pictures the law as something of a parenthesis within salvation history; it was "added" well after the promise to Abraham and was in effect until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.

Five Views on Law and Gospel, Zondervan (1996) p361.

Richard N. Longenecker

[The law of Christ is the] prescriptive principles stemming from the heart of the gospel ... which are meant to be applied to specific situations by the direction and enablement of the Holy Spirit, being always motivated and conditioned by love.

Galatians, Word, (1990) p275-6.

Herman Ridderbos

(a) The law no longer has an unrestricted and undifferentiated validity for the church of Christ. In a certain sense, the church can be qualified as "without the law."

(b) The law of God is not thereby abrogated.

(c) The continuing significance of the law can be qualified as "being bound to the law of Christ."

Paul – An Outline of His Theology, Eerdmans (1990) p284.

There can thus be no doubt whatever that the category of the law has not been abrogated with Christ's advent, but rather has been maintained and interpreted in its radical sense ("fulfilled"; Matt 5:17); on the other hand, that the church no longer has to do with the law in any other way than in Christ and thus is *ennomos Christou*.

Paul – An Outline of His Theology, Eerdmans (1990) p285.

Loraine Boettner

The old order died when Christ died. No requirements from the Old Covenant are binding upon the Christian except the moral principles that are repeated in the New Covenant. The Old Testament is our *history* book. It is not our *law* book.

The Meaning of the Millennium, Ed Robert G. Clouse, IVP, (1977) p98. [Emphasis original.]

John Murray¹⁰⁸

Paul's teaching ... consists in our having become dead to the law by the body of Christ (Romans 7:4). Believers died with Christ and they lived again with him in his resurrection (cf. Romans 6:8). They have, therefore, come *under* all the resources of redeeming and renewing grace which find their epitome in the death and resurrection of Christ and find their permanent embodiment in him who was dead and is alive again. The virtue which ever continues to emanate from the death and resurrection of Christ is operative in them through union with Christ in the efficacy of his death and the power of his resurrection life. All of this Paul's brief expression 'under grace' implies. And in respect of the subject with which Paul is dealing there is an absolute antithesis between the potency of law and the potency of grace, between the provisions of law and the provisions of grace. Grace is the sovereign will and power of God coming to expression, not for the regulation of thought and conduct consonant with God's holiness, but for the deliverance of men from thought and conduct that bind them to the servitude of unholiness. Grace is deliverance from the dominion of sin and therefore deliverance from that which consists in transgression of the law.

The purity and integrity of the gospel stand or fall with the absoluteness of the antithesis between the function and potency of law, on the one hand, and the function and potency of grace on the other.

Principles of Conduct, Eerdmans (1981), p186. [Emphasis original]

The conclusions to which we must come are as follows. (1) In one sense the believer is not under law. To be 'under law' in this sense is correlative with the dominion and bondservice of sin. The believer has been discharged from the law (Romans 7:6), he has been put to death to the law through the body of Christ (Romans 7:4), and therefore he has died to the law (Romans 7:6). Having died to the law he died to sin (Romans 6:2), and sin will not have dominion over him (Romans 6:14). (2) In still another sense the believer is not under law; he is not under the ritual law of the Mosaic economy. This pedagogical tutelary bondage has been terminated by the epochal events of Calvary, the resurrection, and Pentecost. Christ redeemed them that were once under this law so that all without distinction may enjoy the mature and unrestrained privilege of sons. Freedom from the law in this specific sense is just as absolute as freedom from law in the preceding sense. (3) There is another sense in which the believer is 'under law'; he is bound in law to God and to Christ. The law of God and of Christ binds him precisely because of his relation to Christ.

Principles of Conduct, Eerdmans (1981), p190.

Patrick Fairbairn¹⁰⁹

There can be no doubt that the law, taken in its entirety ... however wisely adapted to the time then present, was still inlaid with certain inherent defects, which discovered themselves in the working of the system, and paved the way for its

¹⁰⁸ Murray is a Reformed Covenant theologian, though he clearly saw that there were problems with the system towards the end of his life (see *The Covenant of Grace*). In these quotes he takes a Biblical view on law that is not common amongst covenant theologians; though his emphasis here is not always consistent with his own overall thesis.

¹⁰⁹ Fairbairn generally adopts the Covenant Theology position, though not without criticism, and his magisterial work on law is a standard book for theologians. However, in his thoroughness, honesty, and despite his theological position, he is frank about the strong statements in the NT implying that the New Covenant has changed the believer's relationship to the Law, and on many occasions, comes close to contradicting his general position. Since his work is so full and authoritative on this subject, several quotations are fitting.

ultimate removal. As an economy, it belonged to an immature age of the Divine dispensations. ... It is plain, therefore, that matters existed then only in a provisional state. ... The main element of weakness in the Sinaitic law ... stood in its having so much of the outward and objective. It was engraved on tables of stone, and stood there before men as a preceptor to instruct them, or a master to demand their implicit submission, but without any direct influence or control over the secret springs and motives of obedience.

The Revelation of Law in Scripture, Zondervan, (1957), p180-181.

While they [the prophets] speak plainly enough of the old being destined somehow to pass away, they not less plainly declare that all its moral elements should remain and come into more effective and general operation.

The Revelation of Law in Scripture, Zondervan, (1957), p204.

[It was in the purpose of God that] while the demands of the law should thus be forever established, the law itself should be made to take another place than it had been wont to do in economical arrangements, and should be so associated with the peculiar gifts and graces of the Spirit, as to bring out into quite singular prominence the spiritual elements of the covenant.

The Revelation of Law in Scripture, Zondervan, (1957), p206.

The Decalogue itself, and the legislation growing out of it, were in their form adapted to a provisional state of things; they had to serve the end of a disciplinary institution, and as such had to assume more both of an external and a negative character, than could be regarded as ideally or absolutely the best.

The Revelation of Law in Scripture, Zondervan, (1957), p231-232.

A marked distinction is made in various places between the position which Israel occupied toward the law, and that now occupied by believers in Christ; such that there is a sense in which Israel was placed under it, and in which Christians are not; that it had a purpose to serve till the fulfilment of the covenant of promise in Christ, for which it is no longer required; that somehow it is done away with or abolished.

The Revelation of Law in Scripture, Zondervan, (1957), p275.

The Spirit ... is himself a living law, and renders unnecessary a detailed system of rules and prescriptions concerning all that should be done, and exactly how to do it.

The Revelation of Law in Scripture, Zondervan, (1957), p287.

Conclusion

There is no need to unnecessarily complicate the exposition of law in order to undergird a theological system. The three expressions of law are:

- *The Moral Law*, vestiges of which remain in fallen man's conscience;
- *The Mosaic Law* which Jews remain under and which comprises and formalises the Moral Law;
- *The Law of Christ*, which fulfils and spiritualises the Mosaic Law / Moral Law for spiritual people.

Christians are not under the formal, external, written code of Mosaic Law because they have died with Christ; they fulfil the Moral Law, subsumed into the Law of Christ, as they walk in the Spirit and live Christ's life. Though not under an external law, they obey far more than the Mosaic Law prescribed since Christ's law deals with thoughts and motivations as well as actions, and enables thoughts to be taken captive.

CHRISTIANS	
Do not walk by sight (2 Cor 5:7)	They live by faith (Rm 1:17; 2 Cor 5:7) and follow the law in their heart (Jer 31:33; Heb 8:10, 10:16) by spiritual power (Gal 5:5, 16, 18).
Do not follow Mosaic Law (Rm 7:4)	But are under law in Christ (1 Cor 9:21).
Are not legalistic	But walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:25) who guides godly conduct (Gal 5:22-23).
Do not focus on written commandments (2 Cor 3:1-11; Col 2:20)	But set their minds on the above, where Christ is (Col 3:1-2).

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. ... And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*. (Jn 1:14-18)

Does the Law continue and is it the rule of life for the believer? We have answered this several times over. Law always continues since it is God's mind for man, but the Mosaic expression of this has been terminated. Believers do not look to the Law as a rule of life, they do not focus upon a written code (2 Cor 3), but they focus upon the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in his Spirit to guide and empower them to live fully obedient lives. Jesus is our model of godly life and he did not focus upon the Law, indeed he confounded the legalist scribes. What he focused upon was his Father's will through spiritual communion; he only ever did what he saw the Father do and said what his Father told him to say. John's Gospel emphasises this most strongly.¹¹⁰ This is how we are to live, focused upon God and communing with his Spirit.

The Word of God is now concentrated in a man, a man in the glory. He glorifies the Father and is, in himself, full of grace and truth. The Law had truth, but Jesus has grace and power as well as truth.

We have received grace and more grace from the fulness that is in Christ. Grace emanates

¹¹⁰ Jn 5:19-20, 8:16, 28-29, 38, 10:37, 12:49-50, 14:9, 15:15. Etc.

from Christ to his disciples by the Spirit in an ever-increasing flow. Moses could only bring the *torah*, point the way, but grace and truth comes through Jesus. Indeed Moses must now be interpreted by the New Covenant which Christ inaugurated (Lk 24:27, 44). The Law and the prophets concern Christ and must now be understood as fulfilled in Christ.

The Law pointed to the character God required in a man, but Jesus comes declaring all that the Father is. As we are in Christ, we don't see the Father second-hand via the words of the Law, we see God in the face of Jesus Christ. To see God unfolded, declared, we go to Christ not the Law and can even know the mind of God expressed by the Spirit. Where the Spirit brings the things of Christ the Son, there is no need of an external, written law.

Am I saying that Christians are under no law at all? No, I am not.

Am I saying that there is no moral obligation upon believers? No I am not.

Are there any reductions in our ethical obligations as believers? No; Christ's Law raises our obligations.

Am I saying that Christians are perfect and seen as sinless by God? There are two aspects to the answer. The first is that God as Father sees the sins of believers and chastises them as sons for their good (this is the process of sanctification; Heb 12:7; 1 Jn 1:8); we will never be perfect while in this human body. However, God as Judge sees believers as legally righteous in Christ (this results from the act of justification; 1 Jn 3:6, 9; Rm 8:1; 1 Cor 1:30; Phil 3:9) and Jesus as our advocate deals with our sins to keep our place in heaven (1 Jn 2:1-2)

Am I saying that Christians can contravene the Ten Commandments (or rather all minus the Sabbath law of the 7th day)? No, I am not. A genuine believer will always obey all these commandments. How will he do this? By walking in the Spirit and especially by loving others.

Love the fulfilling of the law.

By obeying the Law of Christ and walking in obedience to the Spirit, believers will obey all the Moral Law and much more. We not only bear one another's burdens to fulfil Christ's Law (Gal 6:2), but also seek to do good to all (Gal 6:10). For instance, if a non-Christian neighbour is in need, in love you might lend him your car or give him money. The Mosaic Law does not command this, but it is an act of love. If your enemy attacks you and you turn the other cheek, this is way beyond the scope of the Mosaic Law, which could never contemplate such an action, let alone command it; but it is an action engendered by the love of Christ.

Let all *that* you *do* be done with love. (1 Cor 16:14)

Love is following Christ.

Rm 13:8-10

In the practical section of the letter to the Romans, Paul never says 'obey the law to live a holy life', but does say, 'Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law' (Rm 13:8). Note that he commands love, not law-keeping of a formal code. He then says that the commandments are 'summed up' [gathered together and unified under one principle] in acts of love to one's neighbour and that love is the fulfilment of the law: 'Love does no harm to a neighbour; therefore love *is* the fulfilment ['fulness'] of the law' (Rm 13:10).

In other words, the will of God for human behaviour is summed up in love. Those under external moral law cannot achieve this because the written code does not go far enough. Even as far as it went it proved that man could not even keep it. However, those in Christ have a new life and spiritual power, plus the fellowship of the Holy Spirit to enable them to love all the time they walk in the new nature. All the commands of the Law are fulfilled, not by trying to obey these specific written ordinances, but by focusing upon Christ and following the Spirit all the time. Then all the Law is fulfilled as the believer walks in love.

This is called bearing fruit. The fruit a Christian bears is not described as law fulfilled, but a manifestation of the character of Christ – love, joy, peace etc. Christians do not bear fruit by looking to the Law.

Jesus said that he brought a new commandment,

‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.’ (Jn 13:34-35)

‘This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.’ (Jn 15:12)

He commanded his disciples to love one another, but never specifically commanded them to regulate their lives by the Law of Moses. The commandment to love was new in that it is predicated upon loving as Christ loved – the sacrificial love of the cross.

John also identifies the commandments of Christ with walking in love, especially love to each other in Christ (1 Jn 2:7-8; 2 Jn 1:5-6). The Law of Christ is the Law of love, and this is more than fulfilling the Mosaic Law. Setting your eyes on the Mosaic Law is lowering your sights to the fleshly ordinance instead of trusting in spiritual power.

In developing this in detail, the apostles broke down loving into certain actions, as they were relevant to the point they were making. Paul mentions: forgive one another, serve one another, edify one another, be patient with one another, teach one another, admonish one another, submit to one another, be kind to one another, comfort one another. Peter mentions, be hospitable to one another. James mentions: pray for one another, do not speak evil of one another, do not murmur against one another and confess your sins to one another. We could add more; but all these specific exhortations are merely amplifying one aspect or another of love. Love covers all these things. The Ten Commandments do not tell people to be hospitable to one another or to confess sins to one another and so on, but the Law of Christ demands total love, a love that can only be worked out by the Spirit of God through the new nature.

In following the Spirit, glorifying Christ and walking in love, the Moral Law of God is fulfilled completely. This is neither antinomianism (against law) nor neonomianism (establishing new law) but the fulfilling of the highest moral law of God as it is found in Christ, the standard for human beings.

To summarise this paper, my position is this:

1. CHRIST IS THE END OF THE LAW, THE FULFILMENT AND OBJECTIVE OF IT. All of it has been realised and completed in Christ. This means that its temporary purpose has ended.
2. A DEATH HAS OCCURRED IN THE UNITING OF THE BELIEVER IN CHRIST’S CROSS AND RESURRECTION; so that the Christian is a new order of spiritual being no longer under earthly laws meant for human sinners.
3. CHRIST HAS INSTITUTED A NEW COVENANT WITH A NEW PRINCIPLE OF LIVING – ETERNAL LIFE. Mosaic Law is not appropriate for this spiritual life (or resurrection life). The New Covenant is maintained by the Holy Spirit, who imparts grace and enlightens the conscience of those with new life.

4. SINCE WE ARE IN CHRIST, BELIEVERS ARE NOT UNDER MOSAIC LAW. By simply being in Christ they are in-law to Christ. Christ is not just the objective standard (instead of Mosaic Law) but is also the power and the ability. Those in Christ have grace to will and to work given by God to fulfil Christ's commands.
5. BELIEVERS DO NOT LOOK TO THE LAW BUT TO JESUS AND THEY FOLLOW HIM, NOT MOSES.
6. BELIEVERS ARE NOT FREE FROM THE PRINCIPLE OF LAW. As people who seek to obey God they are, by necessity, under the principle of a spiritual/moral law, but not earthly written codes.
7. THE LAW OF THE NEW COVENANT IS THE LAW OF CHRIST. This is the fulfilment and perfection of all moral law, the very stamp of God's holiness, manifested in a man on the throne – Jesus Christ the Lord. It is far more demanding and comprehensive than the Mosaic Law and can only be obeyed by people who have resurrection life maintained by the Spirit. Paul only ever commands us to fulfil one law – the Law of Christ (Gal 6:2).
8. FOLLOWING EXTERNAL LAWS LEADS TO LEGALISM AND FLESHLY WORK. Believers are not to be legalistic but obey from the heart in response to the Spirit's guidance. Christians who look to Mosaic Law are going back to the powerless, condemning shadow instead of feeding on Christ himself.
9. TO HELP OUR WALK, THE APOSTOLIC LETTERS REVEAL MANY ASPECTS OF CHRIST'S LAW OBJECTIVELY. It is enhanced moral law, demanding inner purity as well as outward obedience.
10. THE FUNDAMENTAL ESSENCE OF CHRIST'S LAW IS DIVINE LOVE.

Following Law to regulate behaviour is a dishonouring of Christ. Paul asks the legalistic Galatians, 'if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations, do not touch, do not taste, do not handle ...' (Gal 4:20-21). I ask the same question. We are not worldly people anymore and do not follow systems meant for the world and the unrighteous. God has set a man on the throne of the universe to be the standard of human behaviour. We honour God by following Christ not Moses. Moses was a servant in God's house in a former dispensation, now passed; but Christ is God's Son and the very stamp of his nature. We look to what was brought in by the Son and not the servant.

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