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[Note to the reader: These two sections were deleted from my original Anthropology]

## The Continuity of the Divine Covenants

### Introduction

The framework of redemptive history is presented in Scripture in the form of distinctive covenants. All of these covenants find their destination and fulfillment in the New Covenant that Christ inaugurated during the last Passover meal with His disciples the night before His crucifixion. An examination of the covenants is important in the study of Anthropology since they provide the context for understanding God’s relationship to man throughout redemptive history. There is a thread of continuity in all the covenants: God’s people are always saved by grace and not by works. At the same time, works according to the standard of God’s law are all always necessary in any covenant arrangement. God’s people are never lawless.

We will also explore the question of whether OT case law is still relevant for the believer living in the New Covenant. Are these case laws obsolete for the believer, or may they be contextualized for modern culture and society? Lastly, we will examine the question of whether the full revelation of the law of God is found in the Old Covenant scriptures or whether Christ and the Apostles present a fuller revelation of God's moral requirements for Christians.

#### IV. The Divine Covenants

##### A. The Covenant of Works, or Adamic Administration?

Reformed theologians have characteristically spoken of the Adamic administration as a Covenant of Works whereby God placed Adam and Eve on probation in the Garden of Eden. They were told not to eat of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" upon pain of death. The tree represented knowledge independent of God and His word to man. Ever since the fall, man has attempted to be his own god by thinking independently rather than relying on what God has said in His special revelation to man. This unholy experiment at being one's own god has led to ruin—death, war, disease, famine, and immorality. In the book of Revelation, God sends horses and riders of death and destruction upon the earth in response to man's rebellion, all of which will continue until the end of the world. God is not the author of sin, but He will use the sinfulness of man to judge his unrighteousness. Had man not rebelled, he would have been confirmed in righteousness and would have continued to enjoy uninterrupted communion with God and others in a sinless world. This sinless world is precisely what God is recreating in Christ Jesus and is depicted in Rev. 21-22, the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven (cf. Rom. 8: 18-25).

Some theologians have argued against the terminology, "Covenant of Works". First, the element of grace which predominates in God's relationship with Adam is not sufficiently considered by the term "works." Second, the Bible never calls the relationship with Adam a "covenant," and Hosea 6:7 may be insufficient evidence to prove this designation. Third, the term "covenant" is used in Scripture exclusively to designate (name) a relationship between God and man which is redemptive in design and which indicates an

...oath-bound confirmation of promise and involves a security which the Adamic economy did not bestow....It should never be confused with what Scripture calls the old covenant or first covenant....The first or old covenant is the Sinaitic....The Adamic [administration] had no redemptive provision...."<sup>1</sup>

To summarize Murray's last objection, when God told Adam not to eat of the tree, He did not tell Adam what He would do to redeem Adam if he disobeyed. He only explained the consequences of disobedience, not the provisions of grace. All of the other covenants (Noahic, Abrahamic, Sinaitic or Mosaic, Davidic, New Covenant) had redemptive provisions (promises). It was only later after the fall that Adam was told that the seed of the woman (a reference to Christ) would crush the head of the serpent.

The administration with Adam is not technically a Scriptural covenant. Yet, there was an implicit (implied) promise in this administration. Remember that within the garden was the tree of life. Had Adam not sinned, he would have been able to eat of the tree of life and lived forever in fellowship with God. After he sinned, he was banned from this privilege by cherubim who guarded the way to the tree (Gen. 3:22-24). Why Adam had not eaten of the tree previously before the fall, Scripture does not say; we only know that he had not done so. After the fall he was

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<sup>1</sup> John Murray, *Collected Writings*, pp. 49-50

not allowed to do so, and this privilege is reserved for those who “overcome” through faith in Jesus Christ (Rev.2:7; 22:14). Geerhardus Vos explains the tree in terms of its sacramental significance.

The truth is thus clearly set forth that life comes from God, that for man it consists in nearness to God, that it is the central concern of God’s fellowship with man to impart this....The tree was associated with the higher, the unchangeable, the eternal life to be secured through the probation. Anticipating the result by a present enjoyment of the fruit would have been out of keeping with its sacramental character. After man should have been made sure of the attainment of the highest life, the tree would appropriately have been the sacramental means for communicating the highest life.<sup>2</sup>

Had Adam obeyed, he would have been confirmed in righteousness and the eternal life enjoyed in communion with God. This confirmation would have been represented sacramentally by partaking of the tree of life. However, if he had been allowed to eat of it after he sinned, mankind would have been confirmed in an “eternal life” without nearness to God which would not have been true life, but eternal death. True life, can only be obtained on God’s terms, and since man is now sinful and unable to obtain eternal life through perfect obedience, he can only receive it as a gift of God’s grace through Jesus Christ (Rom.6:23), who is the Second Adam (Rom.5). What Adam failed to achieve for himself and for all mankind, Christ has achieved through His active obedience (perfect submission to the law of God; John 17:4) and His passive obedience (perfect submission in death; Matt.27:46). When we partake of the Lord’s Supper, we symbolically partake of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

What then, did the Adamic administration imply and what were the consequences of disobedience? There was nothing inherently wrong with the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. That is, there was nothing wrong with the fruit itself. Eve found that the fruit tasted good, and neither she nor Adam died physically the moment they tasted it. The main point of the prohibition was to force man to “make his choice [to obey or disobey] for the sake of God and of God alone.”<sup>3</sup>

For the simple practical purpose of his first fundamental lesson it was necessary only to stake everything upon the unreasoned will of God. And there was still a further reason why this should be done. If the inherent nature of good and evil had been drawn into the scope of the test, then it would have resulted in a choice from instinct alone rather than in a choice of a deliberate character. But it was precisely the purpose of the probation to raise man for a moment from the influence of his own ethical inclination [desire] to the point of a choosing for the sake of personal attachment to God alone. Too much is often made of the purely autonomous movement of ethics [emphasis upon the right to choose right and wrong independently of God], eliminating as unworthy the unexplained, unmotivated demand of God. To do the good and reject the evil from a reasoned insight into their respective natures is a noble thing, but it is a still nobler thing to do so out of regard for the nature of God, and the noblest thing of all is the ethical strength which, when required, will act from personal attachment to God, without for the moment enquiring into these more abstruse [hard to understand] reasons. The pure delight in obedience adds to the ethical value of a choice. In the present case it was made the sole determinant factor, and in order to do this an arbitrary prohibition was issued, such as from the very fact of its arbitrariness excluded every force of instinct from shaping the outcome.<sup>4</sup>

Through the probation (test) of Adam, God wished to lay the foundation for all moral obedience to His will. That foundation is not in the supposed inherent (independent) nature of a thing (the fruit) or in the activity (eating the fruit). Neither the fruit nor the eating of the fruit was evil in

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<sup>2</sup> Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p.38

<sup>3</sup> Vos, p.42

<sup>4</sup> Vos, pp.42-43

itself. The evil of eating the fruit could not have been determined by Adam and Eve intuitively (without the use of reason) or intellectually (with the use of reason). The evil of eating the fruit lay in the fact that God had forbidden Adam and Eve to do so, nothing else. At its very base, Satan's temptation threw suspicion on the whole idea that good and evil could be determined simply by listening to God. Rather, Satan suggested, good and evil could be determined independently through unaided human reasoning or the intellectual and empirical (scientific) analysis of something.

Scholars speak of a threefold meaning of God's threat in Gen. 2: 17.<sup>5</sup>

(1) First, Adam would die physically.

It is obvious that physical death did not come immediately, since Adam lived to be 930 years of age (Gen.5:5). Nevertheless, remember that after the sixth day of creation, God looked at all He had made and said, "It is very good" (Gen.1:31). There was nothing in the internal makeup of man that prevented him from living eternally. He began to die only after he sinned, not before.

(2) Second, Adam died spiritually on the day he sinned.

He became alienated from God (separated from the fellowship or friendship of God), a broken fellowship manifested in his efforts to hide from God. Until the fall, he would come out to meet with God and walk with Him in the cool of the evening (3:8).

(3) Third, Adam died judicially.

He came under the wrath of God and suffered the curse God placed upon the ground. The specific symbol of this judicial sentence is his expulsion (being thrown out) from the garden to struggle in his efforts to sustain life.

## B. The Covenants of Scripture and Their Relationship to One Another

The Covenant with Noah (Gen. 9: 8-17)

The Covenant with Abraham (Gen.15, 17)

The Covenant with Moses (Ex. 19-20, as well as the case laws which follow)

The Covenant with David (2 Samuel 7; Ps. 89:1-37)

The New Covenant with Christ and His Spiritual Seed (Jer. 31:31ff; 2 Cor. 3; Heb. 8, 10)

### 1. Dispensationalism

The relationship of the divine covenants to one another has been a matter of much debate. Dispensationalism wishes to treat the covenants as the various modes or means of God dealing with his people throughout salvation history. Dispensationalists make a sharp dividing line between the people of God (Israel) in the Old Covenant (which is identified as the Mosaic Covenant) and the people of God (the church) in the New Covenant. Dispensational theologians have modified their views somewhat over the past 20 years, but the separation of national Israel and the church remains a major cornerstone of their hermeneutical system. God has one purpose for Israel and another separate purpose for the church rather than a single purpose for both the Jew and the Gentile to be incorporated into the same church (See Eph. 2:11-22). They acknowledge this unity between Jew and Gentile for the church age, but maintain a radical restructuring of national Israel for the millennial age.

<sup>5</sup> Douglas Kelley, unpublished notes on Systematic Theology, pp.113-114. Kelley now has a published work on Systematic Theology.

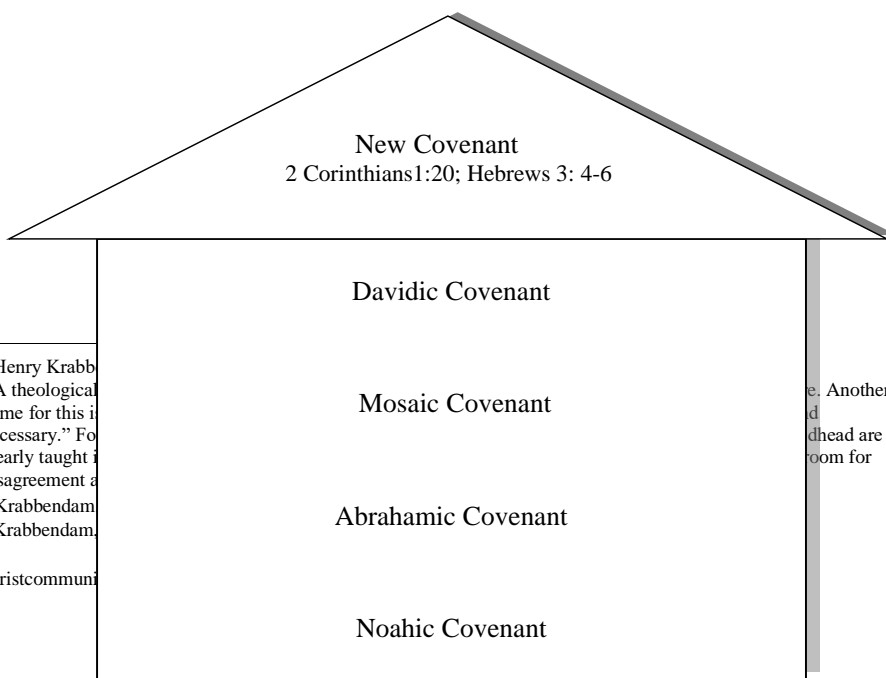
## 2. Covenant theology

There are also differences of opinion among Reformed theologians. Most reformed scholars speak of one Covenant of Grace which flows throughout Scripture and is manifested in the different covenant arrangements (administrations) listed above. Every covenant displays various elements of the ways of God with His people and each one points ahead to the destination of God's plan of salvation in the person and work of Christ and the restoration of the heavens and the earth. It is Christ who holds all the covenants together as the progressively unfolding plan of God for cosmic redemption.

Other Reformed scholars maintain that there is no monolithic (singular) covenant since there are too many differences between the covenants to consider them a singular unit.<sup>6</sup> I would agree with Krabbendam's assessment. Scripture never speaks of one "covenant of grace"; nor does it speak of a "covenant of works" with Adam. Both of these terms are theological constructs.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, we should not lean too far in the other direction—the error of Dispensationalism—by missing the inner relationship of all the covenants.

They are all predicated [based] upon the same promise and are all moving to the same goal. There is an organic relationship among them. The golden thread of the bond-relationship between God and His people with the great goal of union and communion runs through each covenant.<sup>8</sup>

Rather than an unconnected chain of events running through Scripture, the covenants are the floors of the same building which is being progressively constructed during the many centuries of salvation history, one floor on top of the other. The different floors are the different covenants, with the New Covenant being the last floor and roof completing the building.<sup>9</sup> Just as we cannot get to the top floor of a building without going through the other floors, we have not been allowed to see the glory of the New Covenant apart from its relationship to the other covenants. In the same way the believers who lived before the New Covenant were not able to receive the full promises of the Old Covenant since these promises had to await their fulfillment in Christ (cf. Hebrews 11:1-40; especially vv. 39-40).



<sup>6</sup> Henry Krabbendam

<sup>7</sup> A theological name for this is necessary. For clearly taught and disagreement

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Paul tells us that all the promises of God made in any period of salvation history find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ alone (2 Cor.1:20). Even though the Israelites received what God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (the “fathers”), the NT writers did not consider these earthly promises to be the end-goal of the Abrahamic promise (cf. Josh. 21:43-45). The apparent contradiction between Joshua 21 and Heb. 11:39-40 is resolved when we understand that the promises of land and posterity (children) are only fully realized in Christ and the new heavens and earth (cf. Matt. 5: 5). Even Abraham considered the land of Canaan as only a down payment for something far better, and throughout his life he lived as a pilgrim in the land of promise looking for a “city whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11: 8-10). Therefore, Abraham did not consider the land of Canaan as the final installment of God’s promise to him.

We may wonder why God didn’t send Christ to redeem humanity at the very beginning of human history. Instead, He waited 4000 years (maybe more depending on how we interpret the chronology of Genesis). We must remain forever in awe at the wonder and mystery of God’s plan of salvation. It was the good pleasure of God to reveal Himself, His moral perfection, and the gospel in progressive stages rather than all at once.

### C. Law and Promise in the Covenants

Two elements which appear in all the covenants in either a greater or lesser degree are law and promise. Dispensationalism attempts to divide the covenants in terms of whether the covenants are legal covenants of law or gracious covenants of promise. For example, they would characterize the Abrahamic covenant as a covenant of grace and the Mosaic covenant as a covenant of law. The New Covenant is a covenant of grace and we are specifically told that we “are not under law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14). Closer examination would reveal that law and grace (or law and promise) are elements of all the covenants. To be sure, the law is so prominent in the Mosaic legislation that it can be called a “covenant of law”.<sup>10</sup> Yet Robertson is quick to point out that God’s covenantal relationship was already established with Israel before the law-covenant is administered. God hears the groaning of his people in Egyptian bondage and graciously delivers them from Egypt not because they deserved it but because of His promise to the fathers. “...covenant always supersedes law”.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, p. 167

<sup>11</sup> Robertson, pp.170-171

On the other hand, grace is so prominent in the New Covenant that John says “For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ” (Jn.1:17). It could be argued that such a phrase is more for emphasis than it is an absolute description. After all, there had to be grace in the Mosaic Covenant, otherwise none of the Israelites could have been saved. Throughout the history of redemption, no one has ever been saved by any other means than grace. On the other hand, there are many passages in the NT besides Jn. 1: 17 which appear to set the New Covenant apart from the Old Covenant. We will discuss these passages later, but for now, remember that law and grace are evident in each of the covenants.

### 1. Noahic Covenant

In the Noahic covenant, God puts His bow in the sky, bent away from the earth to signify that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood and would guarantee predictable cycles for man’s existence (Gen. 8:21—9:17).<sup>12</sup> This is a promise to all mankind, not just to God’s elect people, and it is not grounded on man’s merits, but God’s grace. Yet, God also commanded Noah to build an ark, a task Noah was obligated to do and without which he and his family would not have been saved. His efforts in building the ark were not saving, meritorious works, but Noah’s response to God’s communication of grace (Gen. 6: 13-22). Had Noah not believed God, and had he refused to build the ark, he and his family would have perished with the rest of the world (Heb. 11:7). In Heb.11 the central theme is faith which is evident in the lives of all the OT people mentioned in the chapter—a faith which is demonstrated in their works. It is true that God found Noah to be righteous *in comparison* to the rest of mankind (Gen. 7: 1), but we must not interpret his righteousness as the grounds for his and his children’s salvation. Assuredly, the author of Hebrews does not interpret his righteousness in this way, “By faith Noah, being warned *by God* about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became **an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith**” (Hebrews 11:7 NASB, emphasis mine). Moreover, Noah’s imperfect righteousness is demonstrated in his drunkenness after the flood (Gen. 9: 21), and Ham’s imperfection is demonstrated in his unwillingness to conceal his father’s nakedness from others (9: 22).

### 2. Abrahamic Covenant

God promised Abraham that his seed (descendants) would become as the stars of the heavens and that he would be a blessing to all the nations of the earth (Gen. 12, 15). God did not promise this to Abraham because he was morally superior to everyone else, for Abraham had worshipped false gods just as his father Terah had done (Josh. 24: 2-3). Thus, God called Abraham out of Ur by grace. On the other hand, God said to Abraham, “Walk before me and be blameless” (17:1), and we are informed that Abraham obeyed God’s commandments, statutes, and laws, which were conveyed to him before the codification of the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone (Gen. 26: 5). Like Noah, Abraham’s faith was proven by his works when he offered Isaac on the altar of sacrifice according to God’s command (Gen. 22; James 2: 21-22). Moreover, circumcision was not optional under the gracious administration of the Abrahamic covenant. Before the inauguration of the Mosaic covenant, God almost put Moses to death because he had failed to circumcise his son according to the conditions of the covenant (Ex. 4: 24-26; Gen. 17:10). Nevertheless, the promise to Abraham could not be invalidated by a law covenant made 430 years later so as to nullify (make void) the promise of grace to Abraham (Gal. 3: 13-18).

### 3. Mosaic Covenant

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<sup>12</sup> Pratt, *Designed for Dignity*, p. 68)

The Covenant with Moses was a covenant of law, and the propagation of the Law abounds throughout this period of salvation history. However, the minute details of animal sacrifice, the priesthood, the tabernacle, the Year of Jubilee,<sup>13</sup> the Day of Atonement, etc. all pointed to the once-and-for-all sacrifice and priesthood of Christ and the promise of the gospel (Hebrews). Hebrews 4:2 says that the Israelites in the wilderness had the “good news” (gospel) preached to them, but it did not profit them because of unbelief. There was, indeed, “gospel” or grace in the Mosaic covenant. The Lord made it clear that Israel was not chosen from among the nations on the basis of merit, but on the basis of the undeserved love of God and because of God’s oath to the fathers (Dt. 7: 6-8). What is more, we learn from Romans 11: 28 that national Israel is still loved for the sake of the fathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and that we may expect a spiritual revival among the Jewish people in the future.<sup>14</sup>

It has been argued that the gracious provision of the sacrificial system is not the primary element of the Mosaic administration but only accessory to the Law. There are multiple passages in the OT and the NT which appear to present the Old Covenant with Israel as a legal administration promising life on condition of obedience to the law and promising death for disobedience (Lev. 18:5; Dt. 30: 10-20; 2 Cor. 3; Rom. 7; Gal. 3 and 4; etc.) For hundreds of years, there has been no mutually satisfactory resolution to the continuity/discontinuity debates dividing reformed evangelical Baptists from reformed evangelical Presbyterians and Anglicans (paedobaptists). The differences between these two camps, as well as between various theological camps within Presbyterianism, are not likely to go away until Christ returns. The Scripture writers could have made the dividing issues more clear, but it appears to be the design of the Holy Spirit to encourage unity among true believers on some other basis than perfect theology.

#### 4. Davidic Covenant

God promised David that his throne would endure forever (Ps. 89; 2 Sam.7). This was God’s gracious promise to David, but King David was never above the law of God, being rebuked for his illicit relationship with Bathsheba and for murder (2 Sam.12). Later, David suffered enormous consequences from his unfaithfulness. His son, Amnon, raped his half-sister Tamar. In revenge for the rape of his full-sister, Tamar, Absalom led a conspiracy to murder Amnon. Absalom, banished from David’s house and harboring resentment, conspired against his father and was later executed by Joab. Although God’s lovingkindness would never be taken away from David’s son Solomon, Solomon’s son Rehoboam would have the kingdom torn out of his hands. It is evident, then, that the Davidic covenant had conditions which must be obeyed (See 2 Sam.7:8-17; 1 Kings 11:1-13, 41-43; 12: 1-24). Solomon was obligated to keep the terms of the Mosaic Covenant in order to keep the united kingdom of Israel together. He failed to do this and God took the kingdom out of his hands (1Kings 11:11). The far-reaching promise to David that he would not lack a man on the throne of Israel must be interpreted in the light of further revelation of the Kingdom of Christ whose kingdom and righteousness has no end.

#### 5. The New Covenant

What about law and grace in the New covenant? Jesus said, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>” “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. (John 3:16-17)—the offer of grace. Nevertheless, Jesus also said, “If you

<sup>13</sup> Lk. 4: 18-20. Jesus said that this Scripture “has been fulfilled”. Luke uses the perfect tense indicating completed action.

<sup>14</sup>See John Murray, *Romans*.



love Me, you will keep my commandments” (Jn.14:15) and “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven” (Matt.7:21).

Paul says, “For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8: 3-4). The law of God summarizes what is required to please God, but it does not give us the power to keep it. In fact because of sin, the law becomes an instrument which stirs up within the unbeliever the very sin it condemns (Rom. 7:8).<sup>15</sup> Sin deceives the sinner into trusting his ability to keep the law thereby earning the life it promises (Rom. 7:10; Mk. 10: 20; Matt. 19: 20).<sup>16</sup> In this way, we fail to properly appreciate the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the devastating effects of sin on the mind, the will, and the emotions.

John Murray summarizes what the law can and cannot do in his book, *Principles of Conduct*.<sup>17</sup>

What the Law Can Do

1. Law commands and demands; it propounds what the will of God is.
2. Law pronounces approval and blessing upon conformity to its demands (Rom. 7: 10; Gal. 3: 12).
3. Law pronounces the judgment of condemnation upon every infraction of its precept (Gal. 3: 10)
4. Law exposes and convicts of sin (Rom. 7: 7, 14; Heb. 4: 12).
5. Law excites and incites sin to more virulent and violent transgression (Rom. 7: 8, 9, 11, 13).

What the Law Cannot Do

1. Law can do nothing to justify the person who in any particular has violated its sanctity and come under its curse.
2. It can do nothing to relieve the bondage of sin; it accentuates and confirms that bondage (Rom. 6: 14).

## D. The Continuity of OT Moral Law

We often find the NT writers assuming the authority of the OT when giving ethical instruction (1 Cor. 9: 8-10; Eph. 6:2-3; 1 Tim.5: 17-18; James 2: 8-11). In each of these passages, there is no explanation needed for using old covenant instruction to support ethical teaching in the new covenant.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup>HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup>SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. <sup>4</sup>Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:1-4 NASB)

Ephesians 6: 2-3 is a direct quotation of the fifth commandment and v. 4 is a reference to Deut. 6: 6-7.

<sup>15</sup> See John Murray, *Romans*, pp.250-251

<sup>16</sup> The young man actually believed he had been successful in keeping the law, demonstrating his misunderstanding of the whole law. The last commandment, “you shall not covet”, pinpoints the sins of the heart which apply to each commandment (Rom. 7: 7-11). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus exposes the mistake of externalizing the law as if only outward actions were important (cf. Matt. 5: 21-22). Hatred is a form of murder and a violation of the sixth commandment.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted from John Frame, *DCL*, p. 180

“These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.<sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7 NASB)

Paul assures Timothy that the OT Scriptures are adequate and profitable for teaching Christians the ethical principles of godly living, equipping them to make the right decisions in everything they do. When he wrote this second letter to Timothy, a small portion of the NT literature had been widely circulated, but all churches had access to copies of the OT.

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;<sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NASB)

Paul makes reference to the Mosaic Law in 1 Tim. 1: 9-10 and says that all these violations of the law are not in accordance with the sound teaching of the gospel. Such violations included kidnapping (cf. Deut. 24: 7; Ex. 21: 16); homosexuality (Lev. 20: 13); and murder—particularly the murder of one’s own parents—all of which are found in OT law. In the NT, the reference to kidnapping is found only in 1 Timothy. Thus, Paul uses two case laws of the OT as the authoritative word against kidnapping and homosexuality, sins which are not explicitly mentioned in the Ten Commandments (Decalogue). The case laws of the OT were given to provide concrete examples or expositions of the Decalogue. Thus, there is no contradiction in Paul’s mind between the Law of God expressed in the OT with the law of God which was still binding in the NT era, and there is no conflict between Law and Gospel as long as the law is used “lawfully.”

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Paul uses an OT case law concerning oxen to support the new covenant practice of providing ample support for elders (1 Cor. 9: 9; 1 Tim. 5: 18). We have seen earlier that Paul alludes to a case law as a means of encouraging husbands and wives to fulfill their covenant commitments to one another (1 Cor. 7: 3-4; 33-34; Ex. 21: 10-11). Thus, Paul does not distinguish between the moral authority of the Ten Commandments and the moral authority of the case laws which provided practical guidelines in applying Ten Commandments. He reminds the Corinthians that he was not speaking “according to human judgment” since “the Law” (i.e. the case law) also spoke about these things (1 Cor. 9: 8).<sup>18</sup> For him, the case laws were equally applicable as a rule for God’s people. In this particular case, he argues from the lesser to the greater. If God was concerned about hard-working oxen sharing in the harvest of the field, then He is much more concerned about preachers sharing materially from the “fields” they plant (people). He also uses a common formula used by the Lord himself in citing the authority of the case laws, “For it is written” (cf. Matt. 4: 4, 6, 7, 10; 21: 13; 26; 31). In this particular passage Paul could say, “For it is written in the Law of Moses...” and he could confidently assert that this law was written “altogether for our sake” (1 Cor. 9: 10a).

Paul’s occasional use of case law suggests that all of them should be studied for application in modern society while being sensitive to the broad differences in time, culture, and redemptive history. It would be short-sighted to claim that only those case laws which Paul specifically mentioned are relevant. Paul’s use of *any* case law implies the authority of *all* of them which may be applied similarly in a non-theocratic context or else contextualized for a different redemptive-historical context. In other words, does the application of the law require the existence of a theocratic society and a chosen nation? (See below.)

<sup>18</sup> It is important to note that Paul did not say that the Ten Commandments spoke about such things. The Ten Commandments do not contain instructions about muzzling oxen. Thus, Paul lumps the Ten Commandments with the case laws and calls the later, “the Law”.

Case laws were designed to illustrate the application of the Ten Commandments. For example, the eighth commandment tells us not to steal, but there are many ways to steal. Exodus 22:25 and Lev. 25: 35-38 forbids an Israelite from loaning money to a poor Israelite at interest. Such a practice would be equivalent to theft from God's point of view (cf. Prov. 19: 17). For hundreds of years this law was used to forbid charging interest on loans to anyone, not just the poor—a misunderstanding which hindered the economic progress of nations for many years. Consequently the Jews, who understood this law better than the Roman Catholic Church, became the bankers and “kept business alive in Europe”.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the wrong interpretation of an OT case law designed to help the poor actually resulted in continuing poverty. This brings up the question: Were the case laws meant to be exhaustive illustrations of the Ten Commandments? The answer is, no. Nevertheless, the case laws given served to provide the principles by which other civil laws were formulated. For example, one modern case law which is principally founded in the sixth commandment is the law against speeding on the highway. Speeding is dangerous, and millions of Africans are killed each year by speeding drivers who lost control of their vehicles. “You shall not kill” is the foundational commandment which gives rise to the modern case law against speeding.

Consider the following case laws:

“If the thief is caught while breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account.<sup>3</sup>” But if the sun has risen on him, there will be bloodguiltiness on his account. (Exodus 22:2-3a NASB)

The principle seems to be that the thief is more dangerous at night when you cannot determine whether or not he is armed and dangerous. At night, the homeowner can use lethal force, but not during the day if he can see clearly that the thief is unarmed and not a threat to life. He may only want food. OT case law was not intended to cover every situation. I am not suggesting that we have a complete manual of legal precedents in the OT to cover every possible scenario (situation). But we should not ignore Ex. 22: 2-3 as if it were irrelevant to current situations in modern jurisprudence (philosophy of law). The NT does not tell us what to do if someone breaks into our home at night, and many pacifist Christians—including some missionaries—claim that Jesus would tell the thief's victim to “turn the other cheek” and not “resist those who are evil”. Now if the Sermon on the Mount requires passivity in this case, we should comply; but this means that the case laws of the OT no longer have any relevance. It would also mean that we may never protect ourselves and others from aggressive action from others. But this position drives a wedge between Jesus and the very law that He came not to abolish (Matt. 5: 17-18).<sup>20</sup>

“When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, so that you will not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone falls from it.” (Deuteronomy 22:8 NASB)

Roofs on houses were flat, used for entertaining guests during the cool part of the day. A parapet was a railing to prevent someone from accidentally falling off. The principle here is public safety, and it is incorporated into the laws of many countries. When people in the US build swimming pools, they must have some kind of boundary around it protecting small children from accidental drowning. Stair railings are subjected to strict guidelines and specifications. The law is not commonly enforced in Kampala and Mbarara where sewer holes are left open on public

<sup>19</sup> Hubbard and Duggan, *The Aid Trap*, pp. 23-24

<sup>20</sup> As a general rule, if our interpretation of Scripture can be reduced to an absurd conclusion, the problem is not Scripture, but our interpretation. This general rule would also apply to the miracles of the Bible that appear absurd to the modern reader. But the absurdity must be leveled at anyone who believes that God is too small and powerless to perform miracles.

sidewalks. That's why I always walk with my head down. It isn't because I'm sad; I just don't want to fall into an open sewer access and break my neck.

"If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall surely be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall go unpunished.<sup>29</sup> "If, however, an ox was previously in the habit of goring and its owner has been warned, yet he does not confine it and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death.<sup>30</sup> "If a ransom is demanded of him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is demanded of him." (Exodus 21:28-30 NASB)

The text above is one reason I will not own a dog that is uncontrollably aggressive and known to bite. Besides not wishing to have someone's life on my conscience, how much money would it take to ransom my life?

"Now this is the case of the manslayer who may flee there and live: when he kills his friend unintentionally, not hating him previously—<sup>5</sup> as when a man goes into the forest with his friend to cut wood, and his hand swings the axe to cut down the tree, and the iron head slips off the handle and strikes his friend so that he dies—he may flee to one of these cities and live; (Deuteronomy 19:4-5 NASB)

Have you checked your axe-head lately, or the breaks on your car? Careless people in OT Israel paid a heavy price. In the event of accidental manslaughter, one could flee to the city of refuge, but he could not return home until the death of the high priest (Num. 35: 25). Moreover, the careless individual had to live in the same city with many other careless people—with axe-heads flying all over the place!

Some of the case laws given to Israel *would not be appropriate* for any other nation. For example, worshipping any other god than the true God was punishable by death, and whole cities could be destroyed for idol worship.

"If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you to live in, anyone saying that <sup>13</sup> some worthless men have gone out from among you and have seduced the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods ' (whom you have not known),<sup>14</sup> then you shall investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly. If it is true and the matter established that this abomination has been done among you,<sup>15</sup> you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it and all that is in it and its cattle with the edge of the sword. <sup>16</sup> "Then you shall gather all its booty into the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God; and it shall be a ruin forever. It shall never be rebuilt. (Deuteronomy 13:12-16 NASB)

"If there is found in your midst, in any of your towns, which the LORD your God is giving you, a man or a woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, by transgressing His covenant,<sup>3</sup> and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host, which I have not commanded,<sup>4</sup> and if it is told you and you have heard of it, then you shall inquire thoroughly. Behold, if it is true and the thing certain that this detestable thing has been done in Israel,<sup>5</sup> then you shall bring out that man or that woman who has done this evil deed to your gates, that is, the man or the woman, and you shall stone them to death. <sup>6</sup> "On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. <sup>7</sup> "The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. (Deuteronomy 17:2-7 NASB)

The case laws for the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before Me", are found here in Deut. 13 and 17. No other nation in the history of the world has ever been chosen by God to be his unique possession, a distinction now belonging only to the church consisting of people

from every tribe, tongue, and nation (Rev. 5: 9). Israel was a theocracy, a nation chosen by God and ruled under His law. Today, it would be impossible to make civic applications of the first commandment without joining the church and the state—something attempted from time to time in world history by so-called “Christian” nations or Christian colonies. There are no chosen nations today, nor are there any biblical theocracies. Today, the closest resemblances to theocracies are Muslim nations ruled under strict Shariah law—with the wrong god and the wrong law. When nations are predominately Muslim, tyranny inevitably follows.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, the principle behind the first commandment and the case laws of Deut. 13 and 17 is still applicable within the context of the church as the new Israel of God (Gal. 6: 16). Contrary to the theocratic errors of the Roman Catholic and Reformed churches of the sixteenth century (but not limited to that century), the death penalty for idolatry is no longer legitimate.<sup>22</sup> It is punished by excommunication from the church. Paul pronounces anathema upon those who preach a false gospel (Gal. 1: 8-9); and he declares in no uncertain terms that idolaters will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Some have argued that we can discern every moral principle of God from the NT by means of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thus, we no longer need the direct assistance of the laws of the Old Covenant.<sup>23</sup> This view has much to commend it in that it carefully considers the discontinuity between the old and new covenants and the eschatological fulfillment of the Law through Christ. Yet, I believe the position errs on the side of too much discontinuity—and too much confidence in modern believers. When trying to make his case that “The entire Mosaic law...is no longer a direct and immediate source of, or judge of, the conduct of God’s people”,<sup>24</sup> Moo appears to back himself into a corner by using Exodus 21: 22-23.

A second continuing function of the Mosaic Law is its “filling out” and explaining certain basic concepts within both old and new covenant law. For instance, a Christian reading the laws about personal injury in Exodus 21 might well conclude—rightly, I think—that the killing of an unborn baby falls into the category of those takings of human life that are prohibited by both the Decalogue and by the New Testament. The detailed stipulations of the Mosaic law often reveal principles that are part of God’s word to his people in both covenants, and believers continue to profit from what the law teaches in this respect.

Finally, as many New Testament authors emphasize, the Christian should read the law as a witness to the fulfillment of God’s plan in Christ. Its authority therefore continues—I am no Marcionite. But its authority is not, in the era of the new covenant, the authority of “law” but the authority of prophetic witness.<sup>25</sup>

Moo’s qualification of his position appears ambiguous. Is old covenant law relevant, or not relevant, for today’s Christian? Do we have to obey it? Is it sin not to obey it? This is not the same question as: Is the believer under the Old Covenant? The answer to this question is found in the epistle to the Hebrews and elsewhere in Romans, Galatians, and 1 Corinthians (see below).

<sup>21</sup>Robert Spencer, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)*. Historically, Christians have gotten it wrong, as well. Puritan Congregationalists in New England beat Baptists for preaching within Puritan political precincts. Two such Baptists were forced to sleep on their hands and knees for two weeks following one such beating (Leonard Verduin, *The Anatomy of a Hybrid—A Study in Church-State Relationships*, page number unknown).

<sup>22</sup>McNeill, “Religious Persecution during the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant Reformation”

<sup>23</sup>Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology*; and Douglas J. Moo, *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, “The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View”

<sup>24</sup>Moo, p.343, emphasis his)

<sup>25</sup> Moo, p. 376. Marcion taught that the OT was no longer relevant or binding upon the believer. Moo is an outstanding theologian and expositor, but his position seems ambiguous to me.

Dispensationalists—who represent the extreme end of the discontinuity argument—agree that stealing, murder, and adultery, et al are wrong, although they oppose any obligation to the Mosaic Covenant.

But what Moo appears to do is kick the law out the front door and then bring it in again by the back door when he finds it helpful in establishing important ethical principles.<sup>26</sup> The fact is: we do not find any specific mention of abortion in the NT. In Ex.22 we find that if a woman's unborn child is injured in a brawl, the one responsible for the death of the child will be punished. The measure of the punishment is to be decided according to the *lex talionis*.<sup>27</sup> In other words, if the mother or child dies, the one causing the death of the may be punished to the fullest extent of the law—capital death. However, since the death of the child and/or mother was accidental homicide, the man may pay a ransom for his life—essentially transferring his wealth to the woman's husband. Only premeditated murder (and possibly rape) could *not* be ransomed.<sup>28</sup> Moo “thinks” that this unpremeditated (unintentional) taking of life would fall under the prohibition of the Old and New Testaments and that a Christian would come to this conclusion on his own. I believe Moo is correct in saying that the average Christian *should* come to this conclusion, but the problem is that many professing Christians have not taken a strong stand on abortion in the US partly because they have been taught for decades that OT law is no longer relevant for the Christian living in the age of grace. They really don't know what the Bible says about the unborn infant, especially in Ex. 22 (cf. Ps. 139: 13-16).<sup>29</sup>

It would appear that the definitive argument for the continuing relevance of OT moral law for the new covenant is present in Jer. 31: 31-34.

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a **new covenant** with the **house of Israel** and with the **house of Judah**,<sup>32</sup> not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.<sup>33</sup> “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “**I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.<sup>34</sup> “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” (Jeremiah 31:31-34 NASB; emphasis mine)

In this text, the promise of a “new covenant” is made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—that is, with the ethnic nation consisting of the two divided kingdoms. New Testament writers interpret both “houses” to include Christians, both Jew and Gentile (Heb. 8: 8-12; Lk. 22: 20; 1 Cor. 11: 25; 2 Cor. 3: 6). The law written on the heart, moreover, can be none other than the Law of Moses; otherwise, Jeremiah would have been compelled to qualify what this internalized law would be. Short of any qualification, the Israelite reader would have assumed it to be the

<sup>26</sup> Luther does something similar by distancing the Christian from the third use of the law as a guide to holy living while simultaneously using the law in his catechisms for the same purpose (See Waltke, p. 436, footnote).

<sup>27</sup>The “eye for an eye” principle (Ex. 21: 24)

<sup>28</sup> Numbers 35: 15-34 clearly distinguishes between premeditated murder (“lying in wait”, v. 20) and accidental homicide (“unintentionally”; v. 15). The text emphasizes the fact that there was no ransom for premeditated murder thus implying that non-premeditated homicide could be ransomed.

<sup>29</sup> For a thorough investigation of the hermeneutical problem of continuity and discontinuity in the application of OT law, see Vern Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*, and Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*. Poythress sees the problems of contextualization of the law in modern times more clearly than Rushdoony, but Rushdoony provides an excellent commentary on OT case laws.

Mosaic Law, the Torah. Just as God had given Israel the Law following their deliverance from Egypt, the Lord is now declaring through Jeremiah that His law would be written on their hearts following their “exodus” from Babylonian exile.<sup>30</sup>

The fourth and most important continuity between the covenants is that the substance of the new is essentially unchanged from the original, ratified covenant: “I will put my Torah in their minds and write it on their hearts” (Jer. 31: 33, presumably a reference to the Torah God gave Israel on Mount Sinai, especially the Decalogue. How could it be otherwise? *I AM*'s [Yaweh's] covenant stipulations stem from God's heart, from his unchanging nature, and so their principles are absolute and eternal, though their application may change and be relative. That is why the regenerate, the Israel of God who have the Torah written on their hearts, know *I AM* (v. 34). “Know *I AM*” refers to the finding of what is sought and the resulting state of having internalized it. By internalizing the Torah of God, one knows the God who authored it (cf. Prov. 2: 1-5). Knowing God entails exercising his kindness, justice, and righteousness (Jer. 9: 23-24).<sup>31</sup>

### E. The Moral Law of God Progressively Revealed

While there is much continuity between the moral law in the old covenant and the new, there is more detailed internalization of the law in the four gospel accounts and the NT epistles. Theologians talk so much about the Ten Commandments being the summary of the law of God that the NT commandments seem to be dismissed as good advice. For example, consider Paul's statement in Eph. 5:25, “Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her...” Is this a nice suggestion, or a commandment of God with equal force and validity as any of the Ten Commandments? The commandment carries the sanction of Christ's own example.

Some would say that Paul's command is included in the seventh commandment, “You shall not commit adultery,” but such reasoning is a long stretch at best. Just as the command to love one another is a “new commandment” because never demonstrated so wonderfully before the cross, so also the commandment to love our wives as Christ loved the church cannot be fully explicated (fully explained) in the commandment “do not commit adultery.” Expositors of the Ten Commandments have treated them in such a way that every conceivable principle of NT ethics can be found in the Ten Commandments, as if the Sermon on the Mount and the NT epistles were merely repetitions of the Decalogue.

Since God gave the Ten Commandments, certainly in His mind the commandments would *anticipate* every ethical principle known today from the NT, but this does not imply that the OT saints could discern these principles themselves from the Ten Commandments without the aid of additional revelation. Much of the exposition of the Ten Commandments by covenant theologians may be accused of importing into the OT text the principles derived from later revelation in the NT. Now that we have the NT, we may rightly preach the law from the OT with all the meaning and force given to it in the NT, but to imply that such meaning and force was always clearly understood from the law-text itself diminishes the importance of the NT canon for ethical instruction. An example of this kind of logic is revealed in the writing of Robert L. Dabney, one of the most prominent Presbyterian theologians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The whole Decalogue is found written out in full in two places in the Bible...It is the **doctrine of the Catechism** that these “Ten Words” were intended to be a summary of man's whole duty. Why, it may

<sup>30</sup> Bruce K. Waltke with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, p. 438

<sup>31</sup> Waltke, pp. 438-439

be asked, is **so much made of them?** Why, not make **equal account** of some verses taken from Proverbs, **or the Sermon on the Mount?**<sup>32</sup>

Commenting on Dabney's view, Reisinger says,

Dabney frankly admits that the Law of Moses is more important to him than Christ's Sermon on the Mount. Dabney may not have intended his exaltation of Moses to minimize both the authority of Christ and the New Testament epistles. However, this is exactly what his statement does. Once you accept the idea that the Ten Commandments are the highest moral law ever given, it must effect your attitude to the authority of the New Testament Scriptures in the area of ethics and morals.

Dabney's view, clearly expressed in the statement quoted above, produces a mentality of "two tier" ethics and the Decalogue will always be the highest tier. The Tablets of Stone are "God's unchanging law," and the rest of Scripture, including the Sermon on the Mount, is subservient to this rock of granite. God's laws will always carry more weight in the conscience of a believer than the mere "*Scriptural advice*" in the Epistle of Paul. Paul's "*admonitions*" to husbands and wives in Ephesians is good Scriptural *advice* that we are urged to obey in order to have a happy marriage. However, the **Law** of God is a different matter altogether. We dare not, under pain of death, break any of God's *commandments*. It is impossible to treat Paul's imperative commandments as having equal authority with the Law of Moses as long as our mind and conscience are controlled by Covenant Theology's system of two tier ethics.<sup>33</sup>

Reisinger is a Reformed Baptist who would include any specific errors in interpreting the Law under the general error of covenant theology. I disagree that covenant theology is the culprit. However, I would agree with his general assessment that covenant theologians have tended to prioritize the Ten Commandments to a position above the ethical admonitions of the New Covenant Scriptures.

Focusing more attention on the seventh commandment than "husbands, love your wives" does injustice to the implications of the sacrifice of Christ for ethical instruction. Had God intended to give us the full revelation of His moral character in the OT, He would have done so and not left this task to the NT apostles and other writers. The same reasoning can be applied to the subject of polygamy and divorce in which the NT sheds more light upon the ideal of monogamous marriage than the OT did, being a preliminary revelation and an economy that was fading away and making room for the superior revelation of Christ (2 Cor.3).

We should not be surprised that the ethic of the New Covenant is more demanding and more comprehensive than the revelation of God's law in the Old Covenant. Progressive revelation would demand this, even as the first born Son of the house is superior to the servant of the house (Heb. 3: 5-6). Jesus brought us into a greater understanding of God's moral law by emphasizing the inward thoughts and motives (Matt.5:21-22, 27-30).<sup>34</sup> He also instructed us to extend our love beyond those who are family and friends to those who are our enemies.<sup>35</sup> There is no specific instruction in the OT to "hate one's enemies", but we can understand the difference between Jesus' instructions from those of Leviticus which directs the Israelites to love their "fellow countrymen", their "neighbor" and the "stranger who dwells in their midst" and Deuteronomy which instructs them never to seek the peace and prosperity of the Moabite.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Robert L. Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, p. 354, quoted from John G. Reisinger, *But I Say Unto You*, p. 11; emphasis Reisinger's

<sup>33</sup> Reisinger, p. 11; emphasis his

<sup>34</sup> Although the inwardness of the law was also present in the OT (Ex. 20: 17; Ps. 119), Christ elucidates (clarifies) this inwardness more vividly than anywhere in the OT, even the Psalms (see comments below by Vern Poythress).

<sup>35</sup> Compare Lev. 18:17-19; 19: 34; Dt. 23: 3-6 with Matt. 5: 43-48

<sup>36</sup> Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology*, p.100



Jesus did not come to be a “rubber stamp” of Moses but actually transcended the Law of Moses in His teaching and became the new Law-giver superior to Moses.<sup>37</sup> The disciples follow in Jesus’ footsteps by teaching us that we should do good to “all men, and especially [*but not exclusively*] to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal.6:10; words in brackets mine). The Israelites were ordered to be kind to the sojourner and alien in their midst, but not if they openly worshipped false gods, in which case they should be executed (Lev. 23: 22; 24: 16; Num. 15: 16).

As we have seen earlier, the example of Christ’s sacrifice broadens our understanding of generosity in the New Covenant (2 Cor. 8-9). Likewise, the apostle John appeals to the love of Christ in laying down His life as the means of generating hearts yielded to ministry.

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.<sup>17</sup> But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?<sup>18</sup> Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:16-18 NASB)

In Philippians, the selflessness of Christ in taking the form of a bondservant and laying down His privileges as God to die for His people is the example needed by two women, Euodia and Syntyche, who were not getting along very well (Phil. 2: 1-8; 4: 2). Paul did not quote the sixth commandment, “You shall not kill.” The sixth commandment would have had about as much effect upon Euodia and Syntyche as it did on the young ruler: “The young man said to Him, ‘All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?’” (Matthew 19:20 NASB) As long as the young man had not actually killed someone, he had kept the commandment. Jesus challenges him to think more clearly about the internal requirements of the law: (1) renounce the god of money by giving up your money and giving to the poor, (2) renounce the god of money and follow me, the true God.

Truly, the life and teaching of our Lord Jesus gives us a new dimension to moral purity. Although the OT was “inspired by God” and “profitable” (2 Tim. 3: 16), it still wasn’t complete. Jesus Christ is not only the fulfillment of the law in his soteriological<sup>38</sup> dimension, but also in its ethical dimension.

#### F. Christ the New Law-Giver

The Gospel of Matthew goes to great lengths to demonstrate the fulfillment of Israel’s history and the Law in the person of Christ. Herod attempted to put Him to death just as Pharaoh attempted to put Moses to death. Jesus and His parents then go to Egypt, revisiting the early history of the Israelites who remained in Egypt for 400 years (Matt. 2:15). His return to Palestine after Herod was dead is His “exodus” analogous to the exodus of Israel from Egypt. When He was baptized, a voice comes out of heaven saying, “This is my son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Matt.3:17), but God was never well-pleased with the Israelites (1 Cor.10:5; Heb. 3: 17). Thus, the active righteousness of Christ fulfilled what was lacking in the people of Israel. In Matt. 4, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted, analogous to the tempting of Israel in the wilderness. In every temptation, Jesus answered with the word of God, a testimony to the fact that He came not to do His own will but the will of the Father who sent Him (Dt. 8:3; 6:16, 13). Christ’s healing of diseases parallels the deliverance of Israel from the diseases of Egypt (Dt.7:15; 28:59-60). In the same way that we will find Christ to be the new Moses (the new “prophet” according to Deut. 18:18-19), Jesus is also the new Israel.

<sup>37</sup> Reisinger, p. 10

<sup>38</sup> Soteriology is the doctrine of salvation.

As the narrative portion of Matthew 1—4 corresponds to the history of Israel, the didactic (teaching) portion found in Matthew 5—7 corresponds to the Law of Moses. Notice that Jesus teaches from the mountain, reminiscent (as a reminder) of the giving of the Law from Mt. Sinai. The blessings of the beatitudes, with their implied curses (cf. Lk. 6: 25-26), are parallel to the curses and blessings of the Law (Deut. 27—28). The promise: “the meek shall inherit the earth,” corresponds to the nation of Israel inheriting the land of Canaan. As the nation of Israel was supposed to be a holy people in the midst of heathen nations, Christians are supposed to be salt and light in the world (Matt. 5: 13-16). If the salt becomes tasteless and the light is hidden (corresponding to faithless Israel) both are worthless.<sup>39</sup>

In Matt. 5:17-20, we find a comprehensive declaration that Jesus had not come to do away with the Law and the Prophets. Rather, He had come to “fulfill”<sup>40</sup> the Law and the Prophets. Following this statement, He then begins an exposition of the Law in a manner unlike the typical method of the scribes and Pharisees, but in a manner which established His unique authority in the eyes of the people (7:28-29). At this point in the Sermon on the Mount, the general consensus of opinion among many scholars is that Jesus was correcting the abuses of the Law by the scribes and Pharisees; and, thus, interpreting the Law as it was originally intended. This view is correct in part. We have already seen in our study of divorce in Matthew 19 and 5 that the Pharisees had taken the permission for divorce for any indiscretion to be a command for divorce, something God had never intended. On the other hand, there is more to Jesus’ words than a mere restatement or reinterpretation of Moses. Sometimes He clearly goes beyond the teaching of Moses. According to Poythress,

...Jesus’ concentration on issues of the heart represents a **shift of focus** in comparison with the law of Moses...the stress of the law is *predominantly* on externals. The Ten Commandments...focus in their obvious meaning on the most obvious violations...Jesus’ teaching does not contradict the true meaning of the law of Moses, but **neither is it a straightforward exposition** of the obvious meaning of Moses. For example, Jesus intensifies the punishments of the law. Now that the kingdom of heaven is near, the copy is about to be superseded by the reality. The preliminary is about to be superseded by the final. Jesus therefore speaks of the final judgment, the judgment of hell, rather than merely the preliminary judgments embodied in portions of the law of Moses...(Matthew 5:22; 5:30, 5:20). Jesus here confirms...that the external punishments enjoined by Moses foreshadow the ultimate punishments to be executed by God.<sup>41</sup>

All the civil punishments administered under the Law were shadows of the final judgment to come, a judgment which will come upon the unrepentant without mercy. Yet, even these civil punishments have a merciful purpose in that they warn the sinner of a more severe judgment to come, giving even the convicted and sentenced murderer time to repent before he is judged in hell. The obligations of mercy found in the Sermon on the Mount apply not to the state but the individual Christian. Jesus was not giving any instructions to the Roman government; He was talking to His church to which would be given the task of reflecting the holiness, but also the mercy, of God for future generations even unto the end of all time. Failure to distinguish these obligations will lead us to false conclusions: (1) that Jesus is overturning the entire judicial and civic legislation of the Old Covenant, something He positively said He was not doing (Matt.5:17) and (2) that the state has the dual responsibility to execute justice and to show mercy to offenders,

<sup>39</sup> Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*, “Fulfillment of the Law in the Gospel According to Matthew”

<sup>40</sup> Also translated, “complete”

<sup>41</sup> Poythress, pp.258-259, italic emphasis his; bold emphasis mine).

something it was never designed to do (Rom. 13: 1-5). If the state is obligated by God's law to execute murderers, it cannot be obligated at the same time to show mercy.

## Summary and Conclusion

Dispensationalism fails to appreciate the continuity of redemptive history by distinguishing between God's plan for Israel and His plan for the church. Rather, we should interpret the NT church as the spiritual continuation of Israel, the true children of Abraham the believer and the spiritual seed of Christ. Yet, not all covenant theologians are agreed on how to interpret the continuity and discontinuity of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Most reformed theologians attempt to include all the covenants found in scripture under the umbrella of one covenant of grace. The problem with this is the terminology—"covenant of grace" is not found in Scripture—and with the fact that there is a considerable body of NT literature (the Pauline epistles and in Hebrews) distancing the New Covenant from the Old Covenant. I have concluded that "not under law" implies the discontinuation of the Old Covenant as an administration governing God's people; but this does not imply the discontinuation of expressed moral requirements found in the Law, requirements which were in place before the Mosaic Law was ever given.

There is law and gospel in all the covenants. Noah and his family were singled out for salvation, but they were required to build an ark and enter the ark to experience this salvation. Abraham believed God, and his faith was reckoned as righteousness, but he obeyed God in offering Isaac for a sacrifice. Israel was under the Mosaic Law, but those who brought their sacrificial animals by faith were forgiven on account of the once for all sacrifice of Christ. Christians are surely saved by grace through faith, but we may not do and live as we please. The grace of God is an active power freeing us from the dominion of sin.

Theologians insisting on the continuity of the Ten Commandments often disregard the case laws illustrating the application of those commandments. The Apostle Paul does not hesitate to use obscure case laws to support ethical principles for NT Christians (1 Tim. 5: 17-18). I have argued for the continuity of OT law, including case laws, with due consideration for the need of contextualization in modern culture. For instance, capital punishment for idolatry is now contextualized as excommunication from the church. There are no modern nations today who share the same relationship to God as did ancient Israel. Yet, the temporal capital punishment for idolatry is eschatologically fulfilled in eternal punishment in hell. The former warns us of the later. For other laws, only slight modifications are necessary, and good civil laws can always be traced to God's law. Liability for a goring ox is equivalent to liability for an automobile with poor brakes (Ex. 21: 29-30). "You shall not kill" has many shades of meaning.

## Lesson One Questions

1. Discuss the tree of life as a sacrament?
2. Explain how Christ is the second Adam.
3. In what ways did Adam die after he sinned?
4. Although the Mosaic Covenant is called a covenant of law, what evidence do we have that grace preceded (came before) law in this covenant?
5. Briefly trace the two elements of law and grace throughout the biblical covenants.
6. What can the law do and what can it not do?
7. Where is the NT evidence for the abiding validity of OT law? Elaborate on these texts.
8. Do the case laws of the OT still have practical application for the new covenant Christian? Defend your answer. (And you may disagree with me as long as you provide biblical justification for your answer.)

9. How is the law of God progressively revealed in the NT?
10. How does Matthew present Christ as the new lawgiver? Give details from the text.

## Lesson Two—The Discontinuity of the Divine Covenants

### Introduction

The thread holding all the covenants together is God’s gracious determination to save a people for Himself through Jesus Christ. However, God’s relationship with his elect people was not the same under all covenants, particularly if we consider the two main covenants mentioned in scripture, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. I have already argued for continuity between the Old Covenant and the New, focusing on one particular issue, the law. I will now argue for some degree of discontinuity in the means by which God’s grace is mediated to His people. This mediation is what Paul describes in Rom. 5: 5, “and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. The New Covenant provides a greater freedom of conscience and evangelical love for God and His law than was possible under the Old Covenant. Since the New Covenant is the internalization of the law of God through the power of the Holy Spirit, the obedience of God’s people in the New Covenant is greater than in the Old.

In this lesson we will explore some of the distinctions between the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants in the method of inauguration and how the Abrahamic covenant prefigures the New Covenant in the epistle of Galatians. Brown argues that the Mosaic covenant was an interlude (break or intermission) from the Abrahamic administration because of the sinful emersion of the Israelites into Egyptian idolatry. Had it not been necessary to hedge them in to prevent complete absorption into the heathen nations of Canaan, the less burdensome arrangement of the Abrahamic covenant might have continued. This theory goes against the more common reformed interpretation of the Mosaic covenant as a more gracious progression in the history of redemption.

We have in Paul's testimony in Romans the individual expression of the weakness of the Mosaic economy that finds national expression in Israel. Paul wanted to keep the Law, but the Law was weak through the sinful flesh. But what the Law could not accomplish in making a holy people, God accomplished through Jesus Christ.

## G. Discontinuity between the Old and the New Covenants

The Mosaic Covenant (the Old Covenant) was necessary as a disciplinarian to bring us to Christ, but now that Christ has come, we are no longer under this disciplinarian (Gal. 3: 24-25). To argue for the continuity of the moral laws of the old covenant is not the same thing as arguing for the continuation of the old covenant itself. Theologians of every persuasion, dispensationalists included, argue for some kind of moral law, but to say that we are obligated to keep the moral commandments in the Old Covenant (the Ten Commandments) is not the same as saying that we are "under" this covenant as an administration governing our relationship to God, something the New Testament repeatedly denies.

The moral law of God has been in existence from the first day of man's creation (Gen. 17: 1; Rom. 5: 13-14; 1: 18-32; 2: 14-15).<sup>42</sup> It did not come into existence with the Ten Commandments and the nation of Israel, but the Law as a covenant administration—with a *written* law—came into existence with Israel. Thus, while the Law as a covenant administration can be abrogated by God and replaced with some other administration, the moral law expressing His divine perfections will remain binding upon man's behavior. The moral law can no more cease to exist than the being of God whose nature is reflected in this law. To repeat Waltke,

How could it be otherwise? *I AM*'s [Yaweh's] covenant stipulations stem from God's heart, from his unchanging nature, and so their principles are absolute and eternal, though their application may change and be relative.<sup>43</sup>

### 1. 2 Corinthians 3

In 2 Cor. 3, Paul makes a sharp contrast between (1) the covenant of the "letter" which "kills", the covenant which is "the ministry of death in letters engraved on stones", the "ministry of condemnation", the ministry which "fades away" and (2) the "new covenant" or "ministry of the Spirit" which does not kill but which "gives life", the "ministry of righteousness", "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts", the covenant which does not fade away but "remains" and has a glory which "surpasses" the glory of the Old Covenant.

<sup>42</sup> Gen. 17: 1 reads, "Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless'" (Genesis 17:1 NASB). If Abram had no clue about what it meant to be blameless, God's command to be blameless was meaningless.

<sup>43</sup> Waltke, p. 438; words in brackets mine

The New Covenant is not treated in this text as merely a “new administration” of the covenant of grace but a covenant which “surpasses” the old one. The reason the new covenant surpasses the old one is not in the fact that there are no moral requirements for the believer under the new covenant<sup>44</sup> but in the fact that the new covenant is attended by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who enables the believer to desire and to keep the law’s demands and who produces in the believer the filial love of a child for his father (cf. Phil.2:12-13; Gal.4:4; Rom. 8:15). The old covenant kills in that it pronounces death upon the one who does not keep it, and at the same time does not give the power to obey its demands (Dt. 30; Rom. 7—8).<sup>45</sup> The new covenant is therefore superior to the old covenant.<sup>46</sup> As we have seen earlier, the content of the law in the New Covenant is essentially the same except ceremonial requirements which have been fulfilled in the person and work of Christ. Yet, the medium of teaching the law to the people of God is through the indwelling Spirit rather than external tablets of stone. The law is now written on the heart.

## 2. Galatians 3—4 and Romans 7

According to the first text, the Law as a covenant had a beginning point and an ending point. It began 430 years after the Abrahamic covenant was “previously ratified by God” (Gal. 3:17). It ended as a covenant administration for the believer in the death and resurrection of Christ (vv. 19, 25). Further, the Law does not in any way set aside or “invalidate” the Abrahamic covenant so as to render the promise to Abraham null and void. The inheritance promised to Abraham was never based on the conditions of keeping the law but on the basis of faith (v.18). It is true that Abraham was told to “walk before [God]” and “be perfect”, yet the history of Abraham bears eloquent testimony of his failure to live perfectly within the standards of God’s law. Rather than trusting in his own obedience, the Bible says, “. . .he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6 NASB). The promise to Abraham, therefore, was based on faith in the promises of God. “For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith” (Romans 4:13 NASB). Abraham becomes a model for every believer.

Meredith Kline notes that the Abrahamic covenant is ratified (brought into effect) by an oath which God takes upon Himself while symbolically walking between the pieces of slain animals (Genesis 15). If God fails to deliver on the promise made to Abraham, it is God, and not Abraham, who will suffer the curse of the covenant. On the other hand, with the Mosaic covenant, it was not God who swore to keep the covenant, but the people of Israel themselves (Ex. 24: 7-8). The blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the people, symbolically signifying that if they failed to keep the covenant it would be upon pain of death.<sup>47</sup> Kline then makes the following observation:

The systematic theologian must beware lest his proper concern for unity and continuity of the divine covenants or for the sovereignty of God in the covenant relationship blur or even virtually obliterate in his thought the distinct identity of the Sinaitic Covenant as a particular administration with its own historical beginning in a concrete occasion of covenant making. . . .the covenantal transaction of Exodus 19-24 cannot be defined in terms of a unilateral promissory commitment from the divine side [a

<sup>44</sup> See previous discussion of the evidence of law and grace in each covenant.

<sup>45</sup> Review Murray’s analysis of what the law can do and what it cannot do.

<sup>46</sup> See Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, pp. 296-320.

<sup>47</sup> Meredith Kline, *By Oath Consigned*, p. 17

promise based on God's commitment alone]. This particular engagement was, on the contrary, constituted a covenant by Israel's formal pledging of obedience to God's law. It was a law covenant.<sup>48</sup>

Kline employs Paul's argument in Galatians 3 to support this position.

Paul found the difference between two of the Old Testament covenants to be so radical that he felt obliged to defend the thesis that the one did not annul the other (Gal. 3: 15ff.)...The chronological details show that Paul was contrasting the promise covenant not to some general law principle but to the particular historical administration of law mediated through Moses at Sinai after Israel's 430 years in Egypt....

And we must recognize that, according to Paul, it was this specific covenantal entity, the Sinaitic Covenant as such, that made inheritance to be by law, not by promise—not by faith, but by works....

[Paul] did not allow his systematic interests [his interests in systematizing the teaching of Scripture]...to obscure the radical opposition of the law covenant of Sinai to the principle of inheritance by promise....

But what was there about the Sinaitic Covenant that compelled Paul to identify it so exclusively in terms of law? Elements of redemptive grace were present in and around the transaction...the historical prologue of the Decalogue—digest [Ten Commandments] of this covenant reminded Israel that the Lord of the covenant was their Redeemer, who had fulfilled ancient promise by leading them forth from bondage; and among the law's sanctions [commandments] was the promise of mercy, a promise enhanced by the location assigned to the covenant tablets under the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant, a place redolent [sweet smelling] of atoning grace. Yet Paul identified it as a covenant of law in opposition to promise because there was in his thought, as in that of the Old Testament, a virtual synonymy [identity] of covenant and oath, and because the Sinaitic Covenant had been ratified by human oath alone. [That is, the Lord had not sworn an oath against Himself as He did in the ratification of the Abrahamic covenant. Rather, the people had sworn an oath against themselves if they did not keep the terms of the covenant.] Promise was present as well as law in this covenant but it was *only the law that had been covenantally solemnized*. The elements of the redemptive promise [symbolized in the sacrificial system] were not as such formalized by a divine oath of ratification. There was only human oath, giving covenant form to the law which Israel swore to obey....

In contrast to his classification of the Sinaitic Covenant as law, Paul placed God's covenantal dealings with Abraham in the category of promise....

...the unquestionable fact emerges in Galatians 3 that Paul saw in the Old Testament alongside the covenant of promise *another covenant* which was so far from being an administration of promise as to raise the urgent question whether it did not abrogate the promise....The contrast between these "two covenants" is, if anything, more sharply drawn in [Gal. 4]. The promise covenant is characterized by freedom and the Sinaitic Covenant by bondage....

The Sinaitic law Covenant was consistent with the earlier promise [Abrahamic promise], but as a covenant it did not consist in promise.<sup>49</sup>

Robertson challenges Kline's conclusions, arguing that he forces the old covenant into a legalistic system of works righteousness.<sup>50</sup>

But the law under Moses cannot be understood as opening a new way of attaining salvation for God's people. Israel must maintain the law, not in order to enter the favored condition of the covenant of

<sup>48</sup> Kline, p.18.

<sup>49</sup> Kline, pp. 22-25; emphasis and words in brackets mine

<sup>50</sup> Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, pp.174

redemption, but in order to continue in the blessings of the covenantal relationship after having been empowered to do so through their covenantal oneness-with-God experienced by grace through faith alone.<sup>51</sup>

In regard to Paul's sharp distinctions in Galatians 4, Robertson argues that Paul's description of "Mount Sinai" (vv.24-25) was intended as a "legalistic misinterpretation of the Sinaitic law-covenant" by Judaizers rather than the Sinaitic covenant properly understood.

The covenant of "law" corresponds to the "present Jerusalem," the Jerusalem of the Judaizers [the legalists who insist that one cannot be saved apart from obedience to the law of Moses]. It is the *legalistic misapprehension* [misunderstanding] of the Sinaitic law-covenant that is in the mind of the apostle. Slavery inevitably will result from resorting to natural human resources as a means of pleasing God. Ishmael, the current Judaizers, and unbelieving Israel conjointly [together] find themselves to be slaves....

...it must be stressed that the understanding of Mosaic law with which Paul is contending cannot be viewed as the divinely intended purpose of the giving of the law at Sinai....This assertion rests on the clear purpose of law-giving as explicated by Paul in Galatians 3: 24. The purpose of the law was to lead to Christ, not away from Christ. The effect of the law on the current Judaizers was not in accord with God's purpose in the giving of the law. By reading the law in terms of an alternative way of salvation, current Judaism blinded itself to the true intention of God in the giving of the law....

Instead of serving to convict them of the absolute impossibility of pleasing God by law-keeping, the law fostered in them a deeply entrenched determination to depend on personal resources in order to please God. Thus the law did not serve the purposes of grace in leading the Judaizers to Christ. Instead, it closed them off from Christ.<sup>52</sup>

Disagreement among scholars over the issue of the continuity and discontinuity of the old and new covenants seems to hinge on the different ways "law" can be interpreted in the NT. Robertson notes four different ways in his book: (1) the Pentateuch as a literary unit—Rom. 3:21b (2) a legal works righteousness—Rom.3: 21a (3) a "general principle"—Rom. 3: 27 (4) the Ten Commandments—Rom. 2: 21-23.<sup>53</sup>

His interpretation of Gal. 4 raises many questions. In v. 24 Paul says that he is referring to "two covenants", one which produced slaves and the other free children. He did not say that he was referring to a Judaistic "misrepresentation" or "misunderstanding" of the covenant, but the covenant "from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves"—the same description he gives earlier in the chapter for children who had not reached the age of maturity and the full benefits of their sonship.

Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything,<sup>2</sup> but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.<sup>3</sup> So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.<sup>4</sup> But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,<sup>5</sup> so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.<sup>6</sup> Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (Galatians 4:1-6 NASB)

Moreover, the "weak and worthless elemental things" of v. 9 are identified in v. 10 as the observance of "days and months and seasons and years"—the very observances required in the

<sup>51</sup> Robertson, p. 175

<sup>52</sup> Robertson, p. 181, emphasis mine

<sup>53</sup> Robertson, p. 180



Law. It appears, then, that his emphasis is not how the covenant is *interpreted* (rightly or wrongly) but the *covenant itself*. The old covenant administration produces slavery—not because there is something inherently wrong with the old covenant, but because it was not adapted to the sinful human condition. For this reason, God “found fault” with His own covenant and replaced it with a better covenant (Heb. 8: 8; see explanation below). This in no way implies that the old covenant was a mistake. God doesn’t make mistakes. The old covenant was necessary, as Robertson says, to lead men to Christ, but the only way this covenant could lead men to Christ was to kill their hopes of salvation through law-keeping. To accomplish this purpose, the Law necessarily had to create a burdensome situation within the individual hearts of sinners and within the nation. This interpretation would harmonize with other statements by the Apostle Paul to the effect that being under the Mosaic economy is equivalent to being “under law” and in a state of bondage. The Israelites were not under law because they were all legalists but because they lived under the legal system of a law covenant. Jesus was certainly not a legalist, but He was “born under the Law”.<sup>54</sup> True believers in Israel were saved by grace alone, the same way Abraham was saved; yet, they lived “under the law” because they lived under the economy-administration of the Mosaic covenant. Paul advises the Galatians not to return to this economy by submitting themselves to circumcision (Gal. 4: 9); to do so would be to fall from grace (5: 4).

However, if the arrangement under the Abrahamic promise was superior to the later arrangement under Mosaic Law (which appears to be the case from Gal. 3—4), then why was the Law given in the first place? Why didn’t God simply continue redeeming His people under the promissory arrangements of the Abrahamic covenant? John Brown maintains that the Mosaic economy was necessary due to the nation’s spiritual descent into idolatry.

In consequence of the descendents of Jacob coming down into Egypt, they gradually contracted a fondness for Egyptian superstitions, and were fast relapsing into a state of idolatry, which must soon have terminated in their being lost among the nations, and the revelation with which they were entrusted being first corrupted and then forgotten, when God raised up Moses as their deliverer, brought them out of Egypt, and placed them under that very peculiar order of things, which we commonly term the Mosaic law—an order of things admirably adapted to preserve them a distinct and peculiar people....We are not so much, if at all, to consider the Mosaic law as a punishment for the transgressions of the descendents of Abraham. We are rather to consider it as the means which their transgressions rendered necessary in order to secure the object of their being chosen to be God’s peculiar people. To be preserved from being involved in the ignorance, and idolatry, and vice in which the surrounding nations were sunk, was a blessing at whatever expense it might be gained. At the same time, had it not been for the transgressions of the Israelites [sic], the more spiritual and less burdensome order of things under which Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob might have been continued, and the law as a distinct order of things never have existed because never needed.<sup>55</sup>

Brown brings up some very interesting alternatives to the standard covenantal approach to the Mosaic Law. Rather than seeing the Mosaic covenant as *progressive* in comparison to the Abrahamic covenant, Brown presents it as *parenthetical*—an interruption in the original relationship between God and His covenant people. Had it not been for the waywardness of the Israelites, the Mosaic Law may never have been given. But it *was* given, and it was necessary to the progress of God’s redemptive plan. It was necessary to prove that salvation could not be accomplished on the basis of works, and it was necessary to build a hedge or fence around the people of God protecting them from the corrupting influence of paganism<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> In contrast to all other Israelites who lived under the law, Jesus successfully kept the Law at every point, thus earning, not His own salvation which had never been forfeited, but the salvation of every sinner trusting in Him.

<sup>55</sup> Brown, *Galatians*, pp.61-62. Brown was a Scottish theologian of Edinburgh (1784-1858).

<sup>56</sup> This is the only explanation of the obscure laws in the Pentateuch (food laws in Lev. 11 and laws against mixed breeding, planting, or dressing in Lev. 19: 19). Such mixtures violated the fundamental picture of being a holy nation

Robertson disagrees with Brown's view, pointing out that redemptive history cannot allow for retrogressive interruptions in the progress of salvation.

Often the suggestion is made that the people of God were in a better condition under the Abrahamic covenant of promise than under the Mosaic covenant of law. Rather than rashly accepting the conditional covenant mediated through Moses, Israel should have pled humbly for a "continued relationship of grace" at Sinai [quoting the dispensationalist theologian, C.I. Scofield in *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*]. Such suggestions clearly imply that Israel was better off under the terms of the Abrahamic covenant rather than under the terms of the Mosaic covenant. The concept of continued progression in the unfolding of God's redemptive truth cannot allow for such a movement of retrogression.<sup>57</sup>

Among some of the "advances" made in the Sinaitic covenant, Robertson mentions the "comprehensiveness" of the law of God which enables Israel to stand...

in a much better relation to the God of the covenant...It is far better for the people of God to be fully aware of the precise nature of their particular sin rather than continuing to sin in ignorance. God's law serves as an essential tool in making his people understand the nature of their sin...For this reason, the fuller revelation of the will of God in the Mosaic covenant should be regarded as a great boon [blessing].<sup>58</sup>

There is ample evidence for this benevolent effect of the Law upon the life of Israel. For example, in his extended discourse to the nation, Moses extolled (praised) the Law as a witness to the wisdom of God in the sight of all nations.

"So keep and do *them*, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'<sup>7</sup> "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him?<sup>8</sup> "Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?" (Deuteronomy 4:6-8 NASB)

Moreover, the psalmist extolled the Law as that which gave him wisdom beyond the expectation of his age.

O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.<sup>98</sup> Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine.<sup>99</sup> I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation.<sup>100</sup> I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Your precepts. (Psalm 119:97-100 NASB)

The Apostle Paul extolled the Law as that which was holy, righteous, and good; and he agreed in his inner man that the Law justly condemned the evil that was still present in him.

So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. (Romans 7:12 NASB)

For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man (Romans 7:22 NASB)

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distinct from the Gentiles. The same was true for mixed marriages with the Gentiles except those who become Jewish proselytes (e.g. Ruth the Moabite who renounced her religion and culture to follow her Jewish mother-in-law, Naomi).

<sup>57</sup> Robertson, p.186; words in brackets mine

<sup>58</sup> Robertson, p. 187; word in brackets mine

Yet, it is also apparent that Paul clearly recognized that the Law of God (the Mosaic Law or the moral law in general) could not deliver him from sin's bondage. Although the Law made Paul aware of his sin, "the fuller revelation of the will of God in the Mosaic covenant" was not the "boon" Paul was looking for. In fact, the awareness of his infractions (violations) of the law produced a sense of wretchedness (Rom. 7: 24). Deliverance could be achieved only through Christ.

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. <sup>3</sup>For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:1-4 NASB)

Therefore, we have in Paul's testimony in Romans the individual expression of the weakness of the Mosaic economy (the old covenant) that finds national expression in Israel. Aside from its wisdom, goodness and righteousness, the Law and the Mosaic economy was weak through the flesh—the fallen nature of man. A sovereign act of regenerating grace engraving the law on the heart was necessary to accomplish what externalized law—engraved on stone tablets—could not accomplish (cf. 2 Cor. 3). It is this weakness of the old covenant that caused Paul to characterize the old covenant in less generous terms than we might have expected given the descriptions of this covenant in Deuteronomy, the Psalms, and elsewhere. By way of contrast, Paul nowhere casts any shadow over the benefits of the Abrahamic covenant, but virtually identifies this covenant with the new covenant.

So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. <sup>10</sup> For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM." <sup>11</sup> Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." <sup>12</sup> However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM." <sup>13</sup> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE" <sup>14</sup> in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:9-14 NASB)

His concluding identification between these two covenants comes in v. 29, "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:29 NASB).<sup>59</sup> However, we should not assume from Paul's remarks that the new covenant is merely a return to the Abrahamic covenant without the completed sacrifice of Christ and the full measure of the Holy Spirit. Paul is making one point of comparison. The Abrahamic covenant was grounded in God's unchanging promise inaugurated (brought into being) by His personal self-maledictory oath while passing between the pieces (Gen. 15).

It is proper to say that the Old Covenant was progressive in that the Law was exactly what Israel needed at the time it was given. In this sense it is not contrary to the promise to Abraham (Gal. 3: 21). Had it not been for the Law, Israel would have been swallowed up in the idolatrous and immoral practices of the nations around them and would have ceased to exist as a nation. This is still one use of the law today, helping believers live in ways distinguishable from unbelievers.<sup>60</sup> Thus, the Law had the gracious purpose of Israel's preservation.

<sup>59</sup> It would be beneficial at this point to read Gal. 3 in its entirety.

<sup>60</sup> See "D. The Continuity of the OT Moral Law"

However, the demands of the Law were not a demonstration of God's gracious promise. It was, as Brown says, the means by which the promise could be perpetuated (continued) to the nation of Israel. The Law was a standard of righteousness which no one could perfectly perform but which pronounced curses upon all who did not perform it perfectly (Deut.30). This is why Paul said that the Law was "not of faith" (Gal.3:10-12). Nevertheless, the sacrificial system was provided during this period of time as a remedy for failure to keep the Law, a failure which was foreordained by God to drive all mankind to despair of any self-efforts of being saved by keeping the Law. All the animal sacrifices associated with the Law pointed to the grace of God in the gospel. The *sacrificial system* attending the Law was the "good news" preached to the Jews (Heb. 4:2), but not the Law which commands and demands.

From Gal.3:17 we may conclude that the Law was never given to replace the promises of the Abrahamic covenant, promises still firmly in place when the Law was given and during the entire administration of the Law. Salvation then and now has always been by grace through faith (by believing) and not through obedience to the Law (by doing). The mistake of the Galatians (and the Pharisees, scribes, and Jewish people in general) was to believe that by keeping the Law, justification could actually be achieved. Justification by law was not possible (Gal. 2: 16), not because it was not legitimately offered (Matt. 19: 17<sup>61</sup>; Lev. 18: 5; Neh. 9: 29), but because of sinful human inability (Rom. 7:10). Rather, the Law was a "tutor [literally, a *disciplinarian*] to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith" (Gal. 3: 24).<sup>62</sup> It was designed to demonstrate to the Jews—as an object lesson for everyone else—that salvation by law is unachievable (Rom. 8:3).

Now that faith in Christ "has come" (Gal. 3: 25) in its fullest revelation, there is no longer any need for the believer to be "under the Law" *as a covenant administration*. His disciplinarian, the Law, has been dismissed, and as a full-grown son<sup>63</sup> he is now assigned a new Teacher, the Holy Spirit, who implants the law on his heart. The law is no longer the letter that judges and kills, but the believer's road map to pleasing God and conducting himself appropriately within His family.<sup>64</sup> While the content of the law has not essentially changed—except those ceremonial requirements typifying the sacrifice of Christ—the believer's disposition to the law has changed.

### 3. The effects of the old and new covenants upon the believer

While it is true that the OT saints were saved by grace, this does not nullify the fact that they lived under a legal economy that gave them little psychological and spiritual release from the guilt of their sins (Heb. 10:1-4). As Calvin indicates, even the best OT saints did not enjoy the freedom and joy of saints living under the economy of grace. Summing up his conclusions from Heb. 12: 18-22 and Gal. 4: 22-31, Calvin remarks,

To sum up: the Old Testament [i.e. the old covenant] struck consciences with fear and trembling, but by the benefit of the New they are released into joy. The Old held consciences bound by the yoke of bondage; the New by its spirit of liberality emancipates them into freedom.

<sup>61</sup> If the Law did not legitimately offer eternal life to those who kept it, why did Jesus answer the rich ruler's question in the way he did? "And someone came to Him and said, 'Teacher, what good thing **shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?**'<sup>17</sup> And He said to him, 'Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is *only* One who is good; **but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.**'" (Matthew 19:16-17 NASB)

<sup>62</sup> For more explanation of *pedagogos*, see McNeill, "Galatians"

<sup>63</sup> Gal. 4: 1-7

<sup>64</sup> 2 Cor. 3: 6 compared with Romans 8: 3-4, 12-13. The Holy Spirit does not render the law useless or unnecessary. The law is a reflection of God's character which the Spirit is zealous to produce in the life of the believer. See also 1 Tim. 3: 15.

But suppose that our opponents object that, among the Israelites, the holy patriarchs were an exception: since they were obviously endowed with the same Spirit of faith as we, it follows that they shared the same freedom and joy. To this we reply: *neither of these arose from the law*. But when through the law the patriarchs felt themselves both oppressed by their enslaved condition, and wearied by anxiety of conscience, *they fled for refuge to the gospel*. It was therefore a particular fruit of the New Testament [New Covenant] that, apart from the common law of the Old Testament they were exempted from those evils. *Further, we shall deny that they were so endowed with the spirit of freedom and assurance as not in some degree to experience the fear and bondage arising from the law*. For, however much they enjoyed the privilege that they had received through the grace of the gospel, they were still subject to the same bonds and burdens of ceremonial observances as the common people. They were compelled to observe those ceremonies punctiliously [very carefully about every detail], symbols of a tutelage [education] resembling bondage (cf. Gal.4:2-3); and the written bonds (cf. Col.2:14), whereby they confessed themselves guilty of sin, did not free them from obligation. Hence, they are rightly said, in contrast to us, to have been under the testament of bondage and fear, when we consider that common dispensation by which the Lord at that time dealt with the Israelites.<sup>65</sup>

As an expression of this tentativeness (hesitancy) with God, David the adulterer cries, “Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me” (Psalm 51:11). Should the repentant Christian speak this way? Waltke concurs with Calvin’s characterization of the old economy by saying,

When Moses exhorted Israel to write the covenant commandments on the heart, surely he did not mock them with a command they could not perform. The godly, like David, recognized their inability to circumcise their own hearts, and, like David, asked of God, “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me...and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me” (Ps. 51; 10-12). *In other words, the provisions of the new covenant were always available to true Israel, but it was not God’s mode of administering old Israel as a nation.*<sup>66</sup>

John Owen further clarifies the difference between the two covenants in terms of their respective effects upon their recipients.

The principal end of the old covenant was to discover sin, to condemn it, and to set bounds unto it. This it did by conviction, by condemning the sinner, by the judgments and punishments where with on all occasions it was accompanied. The end of the new is to declare the love, grace, and mercy of God, and therewith to give repentance, remission of sin, and life eternal....The old covenant being the “ministration of death and condemnation,” *it brought the minds and spirits of them that were under it into servitude and bondage; whereas spiritual liberty is the immediate effect of the new*. There is no one thing wherein the Spirit of God doth more frequently give us an account of the difference between these two covenants than in this, *of the liberty of the one and the bondage of the other*. This liberty is granted principally by the communication of the Spirit of the Son as a Spirit of adoption, giving the freedom, boldness, and liberty of children, which liberty is obtained by the opening of the way into the holiest, and the entrance we have thereby with boldness unto the throne of grace....It is certain that God did grant the Holy Spirit under the old covenant, but it is no less certain that there also was a promise of His more signal pouring out upon the establishment of the new covenant.<sup>67</sup>

Calvin interprets Rom. 6:14 to mean that “we are no longer subject to the law insofar as it requires of us perfect righteousness, and pronounces death on all who have transgressed any part of it.”<sup>68</sup> With Calvin, Murray says that the law—not the Mosaic Law in particular but the “general sense

<sup>65</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book II, Chapter XI, Section 9; words in brackets mine and emphasis mine

<sup>66</sup> Waltke, p. 440, emphasis mine

<sup>67</sup> John Owen, *Hebrews*, pp. 144-145; emphasis mine

<sup>68</sup> Calvin, *New Testament Commentaries, Romans*, p.130

of law as law”—“pronounces condemnation upon every infraction of its demands” and “pronounces approval and blessing upon conformity to its demands.”<sup>69</sup> This is precisely what we find in the promulgation (transmission) of old covenant.

“See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity;<sup>16</sup> in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it.<sup>17</sup> “But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them,<sup>18</sup> I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it.<sup>19</sup> “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants,<sup>20</sup> by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them” (Deuteronomy 30:15-20 NASB).

During the exile, both believing Jew and unbelieving Jew (elect and non-elect) walked side by side in chains to a foreign land because the nation as a whole had forfeited its right to the blessings of the covenant. None escaped the corporate curse of the nation outlined in Deut. 27—28. Externally, believer and unbeliever alike were under the curse of a broken law. Nevertheless, though bound in chains, the faithful remnant was righteous in the sight of God because the old covenant had not annulled the Abrahamic promise granted on the basis of faith alone. Apart from the legal demands of the Mosaic Law and the curses for disobedience, the exile of all Israelites is incomprehensible. By the same reasoning, without the legal demands of the old covenant, the crucifixion of Christ is also incomprehensible. The crucifixion of Christ was the fulfillment of the curse of the old covenant (Gal. 3: 13).

In contrast to this condition of being under Law, God promised a new covenant through the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 31). It would be a covenant which was “not like” the covenant He made with Israel when he brought them out of Egypt. How would it be different? For one thing, it would not be a covenant which they would break (v.32), that is, a fragile covenant in which fulfillment of the promises was conditional upon the obedience of people whose hearts were unregenerate. Secondly, it would be a covenant not limited by an externalized administration of laws written on tablets of stone. This would be an internalized covenant written on human hearts (v.33). Thirdly, the administration of the law upon the heart would produce a situation among God’s people “unlike” the rebellious spirit of the Israelites in which only a very small minority “knew” the Lord. Under the new covenant, “they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them” (v.34).

God was going to accomplish this by putting His people under a new covenant (or “under grace”) in which the resources of grace secured (obtained) by the work of Christ and applied by the Holy Spirit would transform God’s people into the “holy nation and royal priesthood” they were designed to be. The promise in Jeremiah, as it turns out, is fulfilled not in the Jewish nation isolated from the Gentiles, but in the church consisting of Jews and Gentiles (Heb.8:7-13; 11:39-40).

In Romans 6:14, being “under grace” (as a covenant administration) rather than “under law” (as a covenant administration) guarantees the certainty of the believer’s victory over the dominion of sin. As Murray indicates, the indicative (statement of fact) of verse 14, “For sin shall not be master over you...” is the basis for the imperative commands of vv.12-13, “do not let sin reign”

<sup>69</sup> Murray, *Romans*, p.229

and “do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin.” Murray distinguishes the difference between being “under law” and being “under grace by saying,

...there is an absolute antithesis [contrast] between the potency [power] and provisions of law and the potency and provisions of grace. Grace is the sovereign will and power of God coming to expression for the deliverance of men from the servitude of sin.<sup>70</sup>

The antithesis (contrast) which Murray has described is the very same antithesis which was prophesied in Jeremiah 31 and brought to fulfillment in the new covenant changing the status of the believer from being “under law” to being “under grace.” This change in covenantal position produces the behavioral difference not merely in a minority of people—as in the “remnant” of the old covenant—but in the people of God as a whole. In Rom.7:4 he tells us that we “were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another...**that** we might bear fruit for God” (emphasis mine).

Bearing fruit is the result of dying to the old administration of law—powerless to produce change—and being joined to Christ in the new administration of grace. Later he adds that “we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, **so that** we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter” (v.6; emphasis mine). Both of these verses indicate the termination of a relationship with a legal administration thus establishing the foundation for a change of behavior. Behavioral change is not possible without the antecedent (coming before) change in covenantal relationship.<sup>71</sup>

#### 4. Charles Hodge on the Law<sup>72</sup>

In Col. 2:13-14 Paul tells Jew and Gentile believers that they were forgiven of all their transgressions. Christ canceled out the “certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” Even though many commentators interpret the decrees to be ceremonial laws only, it appears doubtful from the context that “decrees” are limited to ceremonial laws. The failure to keep the laws pertaining to sacrifices would not be the reason for the “debt” of our “transgressions.” Gentile Christians in Colossae were *never* under obligation to present sacrifices or to be circumcised. The parallel text is found in Eph. 2: 14-15.

For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,<sup>15</sup> by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace (Ephesians 2:14-15 NASB)

Commenting on this text, Hodge remarks,

The law, however, is viewed in a twofold aspect in this connection. *First, it was that original covenant of works, demanding perfect obedience, whose conditions must be satisfied in order to the reconciliation of men with God.* Christ by being made under the law, Gal. 4: 4, and fulfilling all righteousness, has redeemed those who were under the law. *He delivered them from the obligation of*

<sup>70</sup> Murray, *Romans*, p.229; words in brackets mine

<sup>71</sup> Once again we must distinguish between those OT saints who lived off the gospel promised to Abraham from the general population of Israel. Their evangelical obedience and faith was not typical of most Israelites. Nevertheless, we must also recognize that even the best OT saints failed most egregiously (outstanding for negative characteristics)—Abraham who offered his wife to others on two occasions and David who took Bathsheba and murdered Uriah.

<sup>72</sup> Hodge was one of the greatest theologians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, first publishing his commentary on Romans in 1835.

*fulfilling its demands as the condition of their justification before God.* In this sense they are not under the law. Compare Rom. 6: 14; 7: 4, 6; Gal. 5:18; Col. 2: 14. But secondly, as Christ abolished the law as a covenant of works by fulfilling its conditions, so he abolished the Mosaic law by fulfilling all its types and shadows. He was the end of the law in both these aspects, and therefore, it ceased to bind the people of God in either of these forms. Of this doctrine the whole of the New Testament is full. The epistles especially are in large measure devoted to proving that believers are not under the law in either of these senses, but under grace. Thus it is that Christ is our peace. The abolition of the law as a covenant of works reconciles us to God; the abolition of the Mosaic law [the ceremonial element of the Mosaic Law] removes the wall between the Jews and Gentiles. This is what is here taught. By abolishing the law of commandments, i.e. the law in both its forms [moral and ceremonial], the apostle says, Christ has, first, of the twain [two] made one new man, v. 15; and secondly, he has reconciled both unto God in one body by the cross, v. 16.

The “abolishing,” therefore, of which the apostle speaks, does not consist in setting the law aside, or suspending it by a sovereign, executive act. *It is a causing it to cease*; or rendering it no longer binding by satisfying its demands, so that we are judicially free from it; free not by the act of a sovereign but by the sentence of a judge; not by mere pardon, but by justification....The idea probably is that the law in all its compass, and in all its forms, so far as it was a covenant prescribing the conditions of salvation, is abolished. The law of which the apostle here speaks is not exclusively the Mosaic law [i.e. the ceremonial law]...It is the law which binds the heathen and which is written on their hearts. It is the law from which the death of Christ redeems men. But redemption is not mere deliverance from Judaism [ceremonies and rituals] and therefore the law from which we are freed by the death of Christ is not merely the law of Moses [i.e. ceremonial law]. Deliverance from the Mosaic institutions could not have the effects ascribed to the freedom from the law of which Paul speaks. It could not secure reconciliation to God, justification, and holiness, all of which, according to the apostle, flow from the redemption effected by Christ. The antithetical [opposing] ideas always presented in Paul’s writings, on this subject, are the law and grace, the law and the gospel, the system which says: “Do and live,”—and the system which says: “Believe and live;”—as, however, the form in which the law was ever present to the minds of the early Christians was that contained in the Mosaic institutions; as all, who in that day were legalists, were Judaizers, and as the Mosaic economy was included in the law which Christ abolished, in many cases (as in the passage before us), special reference is had to the law in that particular form. But in teaching that men cannot be saved by obedience to the law of Moses, Paul taught that we cannot be saved by obedience to the law in any form. Or rather, by teaching that salvation is not of works of any kind, but of grace and through faith, he teaches it is not by the specific, ceremonial works enjoined in the law of Moses.<sup>73</sup>

Nothing in the Hodge’s statement should be interpreted to mean that the moral law of God is no longer binding on the believer. He says that the Christian is no longer under the law as a covenant document demanding perfect performance. This is what Paul means when he says, “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace” (Romans 6:14 NASB). The law as a covenant document demanding performance has been replaced by a new and better covenant in which the obligations have already been accomplished through the active and passive obedience of Christ (cf. Hebrews). This does not imply that we are now lawless; rather, through the atoning work of Christ the Holy Spirit is given to us as a guarantee of continuing faith which leads to an obedient life—the better promises of the new covenant.

Hodges’ interpretation of Rom. 6:14 appears much like Murray’s.

By law here, is not to be understood the Mosaic law....It is the rule of duty, that which binds the conscience as an expression of the will of God....we are not merely delivered from *Judaism*, but from the obligation of fulfilling the law of God *as the condition of salvation*....Whosoever is under the law

<sup>73</sup> Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, pp. 130-131; 134-135; words in brackets and emphasis mine. The words in brackets are admittedly interpretive of what I believe Hodge is saying.



in this sense, is under the curse; for the law says, "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."<sup>74</sup>

Notice that Hodge quotes Gal. 3:10 which is a quote from Dt. 27:26. But is it not the "Mosaic law" which demands perfect obedience to its demands? What Hodge means is that Paul is not referring to the *ceremonial aspects* of the Mosaic Law (notice the word, "Judaism"). Paul's assurance that sin will not be master over us is not based upon freedom from *ceremonial rituals* which neither the Gentile Christians in Rome, Colossae, or Ephesus ever practiced.<sup>75</sup> He clears up this ambiguity by saying,

The law of which he speaks [Rom. 7: 4], is the law which says, "The man that doeth these things shall live by them," x. 5; Gal. iii. 12; that is, which requires perfect obedience as the condition of acceptance. It is that which says, "Thou shalt not covet," ver.7; without which sin is dead, ver.8; which is holy, just and good, ver.12; which is spiritual, ver.14, etc. It is that law by whose works the Gentiles cannot be justified, chap. iii. 20; from whose curse Christ has redeemed not the Jews only, but also the Gentiles, Gal.iii. 13, 14. It is plain, therefore, that Peter [sic] here means by *the law*, the will of God, as a rule of duty, no matter how revealed. From this law, as prescribing the terms of our acceptance with God, Christ has delivered us. It is the legal system, which says, "Do this and live," that Christ has abolished, and introduced another which says, "He that believes shall be saved."<sup>76</sup>

We are not under a legal dispensation, requiring personal conformity to the law, and entire freedom from sin, past and present, *as the condition of our acceptance*; but we are under a gracious dispensation, according to which God dispenses pardon freely, and accepts the sinner as a sinner, for Christ's sake, without works or merit of his own. Whoever is under the law in the sense just explained, is not only under condemnation, but he is of necessity under a legal or slavish spirit [see Gal. 4: 24]. What he does, he does as a slave, to escape punishment. But he who is under grace, who is gratuitously [without merit] accepted of God, and restored to his favour, is under a filial [relationship of a son] spirit. *The principle of obedience in him is love, and not fear.* Here, as everywhere else in the Bible, it is assumed that *the favour of God is our life. We must be reconciled to him before we can be holy; we must feel that he loves us before we can love him....*The only hope therefore of sinners, is in freedom from the law, freedom from its condemnation, freedom from the obligation to fulfill it as the condition of acceptance, and freedom from its spirit.<sup>77</sup>

## 5. Hebrews 8 and Jeremiah 31

Most Greek texts support the following translation of Heb. 8: 8:

For finding fault with them, He says, "BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD, WHEN I WILL EFFECT A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH (Hebrews 8:8 NASB, emphasis mine)

The same essential translation of the first clause can be found in the American Standard Version (1901), The New International Version (1984, "with the people"), the King James Version (1611, 1769), New King James Version (1982), the English Standard Version (2007), et al. This rendering, however, does not logically follow from the previous verse.

For if that first *covenant* had been flawless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. (Hebrews 8:7 NASB)

<sup>74</sup>Charles Hodge, *Romans*, p.205; emphasis mine

<sup>75</sup> See Hodge, *Romans*, p.217

<sup>76</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, p.217, italics his, words in brackets mine and underlined emphasis mine

<sup>77</sup> Hodge, *Romans*, p.205; emphasis and words in brackets mine

Moreover, the entire theme and purpose of Hebrews is to demonstrate that God had a “better” way of redeeming His people than the Old Covenant. That better way was a “better covenant” with “better promises”, a “better priesthood”, a “better sacrifice”, etc. It is true that God found fault with His rebellious people, Israel; but that is not the primary focus of this particular passage or the book of Hebrews. Scholars as far back as John Brown of the 18<sup>th</sup> century have questioned the popular rendering, “For finding fault with them”. Opting for a different translation, Brown says,

The words, “finding fault,” do not appear to me to refer to God’s finding fault with the Israelites, but to His finding fault with, or declaring imperfect, the Mosaic economy; for that is the point which the Apostle is establishing. The words may, and I apprehend ought, to be rendered, “But finding fault, He says to them.”<sup>78</sup>

Among modern scholars, Hughes also suggests that the common rendering is not consistent with the immediate context.

The expression *he finds fault* forms a link with what has just been said in the preceding verse about the first covenant not being faultless. The basis on which, so to speak, God “faults” the old covenant is suggested by the definition of the new covenant in the passage from Jeremiah that follows, namely, that the former could not supply the new heart of regeneration which the latter guarantees. The rendering, “he finds fault *with them*,” which seems to be universally approved today, is ill suited to the declaration cited from Jeremiah, which is one of promise to the people rather than of finding fault with them; and it is preferable (adopting a strongly attested variant reading in the Greek text) to translate this introductory clause: “for he finds fault...when he says *to them*”: the promise of the new covenant clearly implies “fault-finding” with the old covenant. Understanding the pronoun “them” in this way as referring to those to whom the prophecy was originally addressed [namely, the audience of Jeremiah’s prophecy] rather than as referring to those with whom God finds fault, preserves the sequence of thought from the preceding verse which is plainly indicated by the logical conjunction *For*. Thus our author is saying: “If that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second; for he finds fault (with that first covenant) when he says to them: “The days will come...when I will establish a new covenant...’not like the covenant that I made with their fathers’”<sup>79</sup>

The controversy over the proper translation hinges on the question of whether the original pronoun “them” is the genitive *autous* (with them) or the dative *autois* (to them). It does not require a linguist to understand that human copiers of the text could have made a slight mistake from the original autographa (the original Greek text) since it was no longer available to them. The *iota* (the *i*) of *autois* could easily have been miscopied as the *upsilon* (the *u*) of *autous*. If so, the translation “*with them*” would naturally be preferred instead of “*to them*.” Hughes makes a strong argument for the superior reading of *autois* rather than *autous*: “The documentary evidence weighs in favor of *autois* as the authentic reading...”<sup>80</sup>

Translated “but finding fault, He says to them”, the pronoun “them” is connected to “he says” rather than “finding fault.” The significance of this alternative rendering is that it supports the theological conclusion that God intentionally gave the Old Covenant as a “methodological failure”<sup>81</sup> knowing that He would eventually replace it with a New Covenant—a covenant that would accomplish His desire of securing to Himself a holy people zealous for His word. With the coming of the New Covenant, the first (old) covenant has become obsolete.

<sup>78</sup> Brown, *Hebrews*, p. 370

<sup>79</sup> Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Hebrews*, p. 298; emphasis and words in brackets mine

<sup>80</sup> Hughes, p. 299, footnote

<sup>81</sup> A quote from a private conversation with Henry Krabbendam

When He said, "A new *covenant*," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear. (Hebrews 8:13 NASB)

## H. Baptism and the Continuity between the Abrahamic and the New Covenant

Until the last thirty years or so, most of the discussion about continuity and discontinuity has pertained to baptism rather than the Law. Presbyterians and Anglicans (paedobaptists) insist that there is continuity between the covenants which establishes the legitimacy of applying the covenant sign to the infant children of believers, just as circumcision was applied to all Israelite males and their infant sons. However, many Presbyterians and Anglicans would disagree with the discussion of discontinuity above, insisting that there is one covenant of grace with many administrations. If there is significant discontinuity between the Old Covenant (the Mosaic Covenant) and the New Covenant, then what is the basis for infant baptism in the New Covenant?

### 1. The Abrahamic covenant—a paradigm (model) for the new covenant

Just as God commanded the covenant sign to be applied to infants in the Abrahamic covenant, this practice still continues in the New Covenant. The NT speaks of the Mosaic Covenant as the Old Covenant, but it never equates the Abrahamic covenant with the Old Covenant. In fact, in Galatians 3 and 4, the Old Covenant and the Abrahamic covenant are contrasted with one another while the Abrahamic is compared with the New Covenant. The promise made to the "seed" in the Abrahamic covenant is qualified in Gal. 3: 16 as a promise made to Christ alone, and by extension, to all who belong to Christ by the same faith as Abraham's (3: 29). Further, while the Old Covenant is said to become "obsolete" with the coming of Christ (Heb. 8: 13) and "that which fades away" (2 Cor. 3: 11), such language is never used of the Abrahamic covenant. This covenant is so closely identified with the New Covenant that the apostle Paul uses the covenantal arrangement with Abraham as Scriptural proof that justification has always been by grace through faith (Rom. 4).

Furthermore, it is never assumed in the OT that the mere rite of circumcision qualified the recipient to receive all that was promised to Abraham. Circumcision represented the removal of the sinful flesh from the repentant Israelite (Col. 2: 11). If there was no genuine repentance, then the circumcision itself had no benefit (Dt. 10: 16). Indeed, if being a physical descendent of Abraham and circumcision had been the basis for the blessing of God upon the Israelites, they would never have suffered the curses of the covenant in exile. This necessity for repentance is something the Jews never seemed to understand (Matt. 3: 8-9; John 8: 33-40). Paul says that a true Jew is not one who is only a Jew outwardly but inwardly, and true circumcision is not that which is outward in the flesh but the inward circumcision of the heart (Romans 2: 28-29). Furthermore, the true Israel are not those who merely descended physically from Abraham, but the children of the promise, that is, the elect descendents who believed the promise made to Abraham (Rom. 9: 6-8).

In spite of the fact that there would be countless Jews who would never believe the promise made to Abraham, God nevertheless commanded that they should be circumcised as an outward sign that they belonged to Him by covenant. Since this was so in the Abrahamic covenant, it is also true in the New Covenant. There will no doubt be many who are given the sign of baptism in the New Covenant who will never receive the ultimate promise of eternal life. Nevertheless, they are still the recipients of the outward (non-saving) benefits of the covenant and are privileged above others who are not exposed to the wonderful promises of salvation in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3: 1-2). At the judgment, those who rejected the salvation which their baptism represents must face the

awful neglect of squandered opportunities to hear the gospel and believe. Those who never heard of Christ, or heard very little of Him, will receive less punishment (Luke 12: 47-48, and context). Parents who baptize their children must do so with fear and trembling, praying that their baptized children will embrace the faith symbolized in their baptism.

## 2. The argument from silence—no express command in the NT to exclude infant children of believers from the covenant.

Arguments from silence are usually not as convincing as other arguments, but they should still be considered, especially this one. There is no commandment in the NT to the effect that the sign of the New Covenant (baptism) should not be applied to infant children. If infant children were no longer included in the covenant family with their parents, this would have implied that the nuclear family (parents and children) was no longer fundamentally important to God's redemptive plan. The only important unit would be the individual person disassociated from his family. Such unbridled individualism would have met with fierce resistance in Jewish culture, a resistance that is never highlighted or even mentioned in the NT.

With all the upheaval (unrest) in the books of Acts (chapter 15) and Galatians over the question of circumcision, would it not seem strange that infant baptism is ignored in these controversies had Peter and the apostles denied parents the right to baptize their children? Robert L. Dabney addresses this question.

The presumption against the Immersionist [the Baptist] is greatly strengthened again, in my view, by the extreme improbability, that the sweeping revolution against infant Church membership could have been established by the Apostles, without some such clamour [outcry or commotion] as would have been mentioned in the New Testament. We must remember that all Hebrews greatly prize their ecclesiastical birth. See Matt. 3: 9; Jn. 8: 33. To be cut off from among his people, was to the Jew, a shameful and dreaded degradation. The uncircumcised was a dog to him, unclean and despised. We have evidence enough that the believing Hebrews shared these feelings....

...we are not arguing herein from the mere absence of proof; for we give high probable evidence to show that if the fact had ever occurred, the traces of it must have been preserved. First: Not only is there a dead silence in the brief narrative of Scripture concerning any objection of Jews, such as must have been made had infant membership been abrogated; but there seems to be an equal silence in the Rabbinical literature against Christianity, and in the voluminous polemical works, from the days of Justin Martyr...down. Second: The objections, restiveness, and attacks growing out of the revolutionizing of other things, less important than infant membership, required and received full notice in the New Testament. Look for instance, at the Epistle to the Hebrews, written practically with this main object; to obviate the restiveness and tendency to revolt produced among Jewish Christians, by the abrogation of cherished customs. The main line of argument is to show that these innovations are justifiable, and scriptural; *yet there is not one word to excuse this momentous innovation against infant membership!* Third: The sacred narrative in Acts 15<sup>th</sup> approaches so near the topic of this innovation, that it is simply incredible an allusion to it should have been avoided, had the revolution been attempted. The question which agitated the whole Christian community to its core was: shall Gentile converts, entering the church under the new dispensation, be required to be circumcised, and keep the ceremonial law? The very arguments by which this question was debated are given. Now, how inevitable would it have been, had the change in membership been made, which the Immersionist supposed, to say: "Whether you circumcise adult Gentile converts, or not; you cannot circumcise their children; because Jewish children and Gentile, are no longer admitted with their parents." *But there is no whisper of this point raised.* I cannot believe the innovation had been attempted. But if it had not

been made at that stage, it was never made at all by divine authority; for the Immersionist professes to find it in Christ's commission at His ascension.<sup>82</sup>

On the Day of Pentecost immediately following Jesus' ascension into heaven, Peter preaches to an audience made up almost exclusively of Jews from different nations who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover. After this sermon, which identified the crucified Jesus as the descendent of David and the Lord's promised Messiah, many Jews were smitten in their hearts, asking him what they must do. Peter's response was that they must repent and be baptized (Acts 2: 38). From the immediate context of v. 38, it is evident that the promise offered in v. 39 is the promise of the Holy Spirit prophesied through Ezekiel.

"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.<sup>27</sup> "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." (Ezekiel 36:26-27 NASB)

Referring to this OT promise, Peter said,

"Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>39</sup> For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." (Acts 2:38-39 NASB)

When Peter says, "For the promise is for you and your children," His Jewish audience, *following 2000 years of Abrahamic tradition*, would have assumed without question the obligation to apply the covenant sign of baptism to their children *unless Peter had explicitly excluded them*. No such exclusion is given by Peter (or by any NT writer), and we are warranted from this silence to include infant children. Yet, the rules have changed. Peter is not offering the promise to the children of every Jew hearing his voice, but only to those who repent and embrace Jesus Christ as the long-awaited Messiah. Why? Because the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise is found in Christ exclusively, not biological descent from Abraham.

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:29 NASB)

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. (Galatians 3:16 NASB)

But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel;<sup>7</sup> nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED."<sup>8</sup> That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. (Romans 9:6-8 NASB)

From an examination of NT epistles, we fail to find any alteration of the Abrahamic paradigm of including children in the covenant promise. For something of this significance, it would be strange to have no NT record of this radical shift in paradigm.

### 3. Children of believers "set apart" for special covenant privileges

Believing parents may not assume that their infant children are automatically regenerate—the error of Judaism and presumptive regeneration—but that the covenant promises will be available

<sup>82</sup> Robert L. Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 786-788; emphasis and words in brackets mine. (Cited in Booth, p. 136, footnote)

to their children on a daily basis through their continuous witness and teaching. This continuous witness is assumed by Paul in his comment to Christians of mixed marriages in 1 Cor. 7.

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. (1 Corinthians 7:14 NASB)

Paul is using “sanctified” in its biblical sense of being *set apart*. Even though the unbelieving husband cannot be baptized because of his profession of unbelief, the infant children of mixed marriages should be baptized because they are set apart for special privileges resulting from the witness and testimony of only one believing parent.

...the children of even one believer are, in virtue of that family affiliation, viewed in a special way by God. *They are not categorized with the world*, even though they are as yet unbelievers. They are viewed...as “clean” and as “holy.” Children of believers are not seen as part of the common world of unbelief and spiritual defilement, despite their need to come to conversion and confess faith in Christ as Savior. They are already “set apart” from the world and in a special, consecrated relationship to the Lord of the covenant because of their believing parent(s).<sup>83</sup>

In actual fact, Christians who reject infant baptism treat their children in much the same way as paedobaptists (Christians practicing infant baptism). No Christian parent treats his young children as heathens or pagans separated from the Christian community. Parents pray with and for their children. They discipline their children to obey God’s law and to obey out of love for them and love for God. When parents teach them the Lord’s prayer, they teach them to address God as a heavenly Father.

But upon what basis do parents do this? All those who are not savingly drawn to Jesus Christ through the gospel are lost and have no right to have their prayers answered. The alternative to covenant teaching is to tell your children that God is still distant from them until they repent and believe in Jesus Christ. But what effect will this distance have upon the child except to guarantee his unbelief? Moreover, the Baptist parent must tell their children that God will not hear or answer their prayers because all unbelievers are, by definition, enemies of God. The effect of this is that their children will never pray. No Christian parents do this, of course, nor should they. They have no real choice except to treat the child as if he lives under the protective umbrella of the covenant family and community.

Frankly speaking, who are we to exclude our children from the covenant blessings when we have no idea when or how the Holy Spirit effectually calls children to Himself. They may be regenerated and converted at six, or eight, or three. Who knows? Can we really know when the gospel makes sense to them? We cannot construct an arbitrary time frame around regeneration and conversion. We are not omniscient, and we cannot know when or if the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit has taken place in our children. Thus, unless we believe in the covenant solidarity of the family, we are left in a cloud of subjectivism and uncertainty as to the method of approaching our children. Objectively, they are members of the covenant and on this basis they should be taught the obligations of the covenant—reading the Bible, prayer, and obedience—such things included in the admonitions of Paul in Eph. 6. One day they will either confirm their interest in the covenant by embracing Christ as their Savior and living obediently, or they will reject Him.

<sup>83</sup> Greg L. Bahnsen, “Infant Baptism,” *The Counsel of Chalcedon* 15, no. 2 (April 1993); 15, no. 3 (May 1993); 15, no. 4 (June 1993) (Quoted from Robert R. Booth, *Children of the Promise—The Biblical Case for Infant Baptism*, p. 134, emphasis mine.)

The Baptists do not ensure objectivity by permitting the baptism of professing believers only. Just as believing parents cannot know what is going on in the hearts of their children, neither can church leaders be assured that regeneration, repentance, and faith have occurred in the hearts of professing believers. Many adults who profess Christ, later apostatize from the faith. The only objective way to deal with any adult in the church is to accept their profession of faith unless they give later evidence to the contrary (Matt. 18: 15-20; 1 Cor. 5). The answer to maintaining the purity of the church is not ex-ray vision into a person's heart—something we will never have—but church discipline. Booth comments on the difficulties of Baptist subjectivism.

The attempt to know people's hearts has led to many excesses in the search and demand for evidence of true conversion. As a Baptist minister, I was [but Booth is now a Presbyterian] always troubled when called on to judge the genuineness of someone's "conversion experience." It was all so subjective on the part of the convert, as well as on the part of those who were evaluating the experience. Although we see the dramatic conversion of Saul and read that God "opened Lydia's heart," yet the ordinary accounts of salvation in the Bible are not especially dramatic. People repented, believed, and professed faith; these are the essential elements. God works in a diversity of ways with a diversity of people to accomplish his saving work....  
...Men are still tempted, in their quest for the "regenerate church," to set up extrabiblical standards to test for genuineness; tears, turmoil, trembling, tongues, etc. are examples of the seal of approval. Others propose a waiting or testing period before allowing people into the visible church.<sup>84</sup>

#### 4. New Testament emphasis upon the family versus individualism<sup>85</sup>

Far from the emphasis of individual salvation in isolation from the corporate community, we continue to discover the importance of the biological family in the NT.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup>HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup>SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. <sup>4</sup>Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:1-4 NASB)

Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart. (Colossians 3:20-21 NASB)

Paul's admonitions to the Ephesians and Colossians do not in any way imply a departure from Yahweh's instructions to Israel. We see in them covenantal continuity rather than discontinuity. Moreover, we should not assume that the Old Covenant puts more emphasis on the spiritual development of children than does the New Covenant.

"These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup>You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." (Deuteronomy 6:6-7 NASB)

The individualism of modern western culture was unknown to ancient mid-eastern cultures. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul likens the life and conduct of the church to the nuclear family,

<sup>84</sup> Booth, p. 89

<sup>85</sup> Individualism may be defined as the priority of the individual over the corporate entity of the family, society, or nation. The individual becomes the center of the universe and the standard by which everything is judged. His personal happiness becomes the end-goal by which everyone and everything else is assessed or considered. Although more predominant in developed western cultures, individualism is rapidly creeping into African culture, thus further isolating the individual from the protection of village life. If the family and village are not replaced by the community life of the church, the individual African soon becomes afloat on a sea of moral and social relativism.

referring to the older men as fathers, older women as mothers, younger men as brothers and younger women as sisters. Widows should be cared for by their extended families, but if the biological family fails, the family of God, the church, is then responsible for their welfare (1 Tim. 4—5). In every respect, the church should function smoothly and harmoniously as the family of God. In fact, Paul's purpose in writing his first letter to Timothy is clearly stated in terms of a properly functioning family.

I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long;<sup>15</sup> but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the **household** of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:14-15 NASB; emphasis mine)

Paul was not satisfied with empty pietism consisting only of private Bible reading and prayer (1 Tim. 5: 8; cf. James 1: 27; 2: 14-26). Private devotion is the means to the end of serving God, His people, and the entire society (cf. Isa. 1: 10-20). The salvation described in the Bible incorporates the whole life of the person and even encompasses the city (Jer. 29: 7; Matt. 10: 11-15) and the nation (Matt. 28: 18-20).

The redemptive intent of the blood of Christ extends beyond the important but narrow concerns of individual salvation. Like the older administrations of the covenant of grace, God's redemptive concerns in the new covenant extend to the corporate and physical aspects of man's life, for example, his family and his society. The new covenant, like the older covenants, addresses husbands, wives, children, slaves, households, the visible and local church, the state, crime, politics, economics, social ethics, labor, education, the nations, and even our eating and drinking. These are not peripheral matters that are simply footnotes to redemption; they are important concerns throughout the Bible. Moreover, as individuals are redeemed, every area of life is brought under the influence of redemption!

...The baptistic perception that the new covenant does not have much concern for the redemption of the external and corporate aspects of man's life has led to an unbalanced and disproportionate emphasis on individualism and has fostered a situation in which the church is less and less influential in American culture. Only a covenantal view of redemptive history can do justice to the comprehensive concerns of the gospel.<sup>86</sup>

It is my concern that this individualistic emphasis has been promoted by most evangelical missionaries in Africa to the exclusion of the social, political, and economic concerns presented in the Bible. This state of affairs has been brought about partly by the negligence of OT studies, particularly the ethical teaching of the OT.<sup>87</sup> I also believe that the political chaos on the African continent<sup>88</sup> since independence from colonial powers is the result of a truncated (reduced) gospel whose full implications for life and society have been largely ignored. Not only do we see chaos in the political arena, but also in the family where husband and wife work in different cities (see earlier discussion). Chaotic societies reflect chaotic families. Lest I be accused of bias, I am seeing the same kind of social and familial disintegration (dissolution) in western society with the continuing isolation of children from working parents who have little interest in nurturing their children. It was not always this way. Before WWII, most women in the US stayed at home with their children while the husband either worked away at his job or worked at the family farm.

<sup>86</sup> Robert R. Booth, *Children of the Promise—The Biblical Case for Infant Baptism*, pp. 81-82

<sup>87</sup> Lest I be labelled as a "theonomist," I do not believe all the case laws of the OT can be implemented in modern society, as I have previously said. One need not be a theonomist to believe that the OT has much wisdom to offer us for the purpose of formulating social laws (cf. John Frame, *DCL*; and Vern Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*). Neither Frame nor Poythress are theonomists in the same camp as Bahnsen (*Theonomy in Christian Ethics*) or Rushdoony (*The Institutes of Biblical Law*), but neither do they believe we may now boot the Pentateuch out the window because we are "New Testament" Christians. In 1976 Frame calls Rushdoony "one of the most important Christian social critics alive today" (*Westminster Theological Journal* 38 [1976]: 195-217). His review of Rushdoony is reprinted in *DCL*, p. 957.

<sup>88</sup> Can this be reasonably denied by Africans?



## 5. An argument for infant salvation—Matt. 19: 13-15; Mk. 10: 13-16; Lk. 18: 15-17

These three texts are some of the most vigorously debated by scholars on both sides of the issue of infant baptism. Others argue that they prove nothing about infant baptism one way or another. Jesus is simply holding in public view the child-like qualities of children who receive the kingdom of God as those who cannot work for it or deserve it but who are helplessly dependent.<sup>89</sup> In the same way as little children, sinners must acknowledge their total dependence upon God's grace to enter the kingdom of God. It is noteworthy that Luke places this pericope (short story) in the context of the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Lk. 18: 9-14) in which the self-righteous Pharisee goes away from the temple unforgiven while the penitent publican, recognizing his sinfulness, goes away justified (v. 14). Immediately following is the story of the little children who reflect the child-like faith of the publican (cf. Matt. 18: 1-4). Therefore, we must recognize that the teaching focus of the story is not infant baptism, but the necessary qualifications of entering the kingdom of God—total dependence, Spirit-generated humility, and the recognition that we have nothing to offer God in exchange for our salvation.

Although baptism is not mentioned, we should not simply dismiss these texts as having nothing to do with the question of infant baptism. Taking the standard anti-paedobaptist (anti-infant baptism) position, D.A. Carson notes,

Jesus does not want the little children prevented from coming to him (v. 14), *not because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them*, but because the kingdom of heaven belongs to those *like them* (so also Mark and Luke, stressing childlike faith): Jesus receives them because they are an excellent object lesson in the kind of humility and faith he finds acceptable.<sup>90</sup>

But does the kingdom of heaven decidedly *not* belong to children but only to those who are *like* them? It is true that all three synoptists use the words, “to **such** as these” (*toiouton*) emphasizing not the children themselves but those with the child-like qualities necessary for entering the kingdom. However, are we to assume that Jesus is *excluding* the children altogether? R. A. Webb argues strongly against this suggestion.

But if this is all that is meant [that only people of child-like quality are eligible for the kingdom] then the Master's indignation [Mk. 10: 14] must be thought of as having been aroused by his disciples' proposition to send away, *not members*, but only *types*, of the kingdom of God. Was this all? Was the Redeemer's displeasure excited only by the prospect of there being taken away from him a happy object lesson? If so, then he but leveled his criticism at their gross stupidity and blockheadedness, in not having the perception to recognize a living text in the children, from which to preach a good sermon on Christian humility. That does seem to my mind to be a sufficient reason for his deep displeasure and stinging rebuke. Nor does this view sufficiently explain the fact that our Lord *laid his hands on the heads of these children and blessed them*. Why? According to this view, he did it not because they were *members* of the kingdom of God, but because they were apt *illustrations* of the members of his kingdom—mere *emblems* of what the members of his kingdom should be.<sup>91</sup>

Total exclusion of infants from Jesus' blessing is quite literally to throw out the baby with the bath water. Jesus blessed the children brought to him, not as “object lessons” in humility, but as

<sup>89</sup> *paidea* in Matthew and Mark, a term which may include older children as well as infants; *brephe* in Luke (v. 15), a term translated as “infant children” or “very young children”

<sup>90</sup> D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, p. 420, emphasis mine.

<sup>91</sup> R. A. Webb, *The Theology of Infant Salvation*, pp. 34-35, emphasis his, words in brackets mine

the objects of His love and compassion and true recipients of the kingdom of heaven. Otherwise, His lesson on this occasion would have been misleading to the mothers who were longing for Him to bless their children. Having given Jesus a convenient illustration, they would have gone away with nothing but a statement and prayer emptied of any genuine intent on Jesus' part, an unthinkable conclusion unworthy of our Savior.

The passage should not be taken as an argument for baptismal regeneration implying that all infants receiving baptism are presumed regenerate (saved). Nor should it be taken to prove that all infants, regardless of their relationship to believing parents, should be baptized. Clearly the passage says nothing directly about baptism. However, Jesus emphatically declares that infants (*brephē*) are *included* in the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, they are not *excluded* because they cannot make a cognitive (thoughtful) and conscious profession of faith. Furthermore, the reason they are eligible for the kingdom has really nothing to do with the rite of infant baptism, but the *prerogative of Christ alone* who wishes to include them. None of the passages mentioned prove conclusively the genuine faith of the parents who brought their children. Although their faith is a reasonable assumption, it is not a proven fact. Consequently, these texts do not imply infant salvation *for covenant children only*. While it may be argued that only those children who are either “brought” to Jesus or who “come” to Jesus for blessing are in view, this would prove too much. It would prove that the ground or reason for their inclusion into the kingdom of heaven is the faith of their parents and not the will and blessing of Christ. Those who are not “brought” by their parents are, therefore, damned. According to this view, the salvation or damnation of infants is grounded upon the activity, or inactivity, of their parents.<sup>92</sup>

It should be noticed from the Matthean account that the children were brought to Jesus so that He would lay hands upon them and pray for them.<sup>93</sup> We are warranted to believe that Jesus does both, thus begging the question: What did Jesus pray for on behalf of these children? Without presuming upon the text, we may assume that He prayed for the very thing He declared, that these very children would be received into the kingdom of His heavenly Father, a prayer most certainly answered.<sup>94</sup> While the passage does not indisputably prove the salvation of all infants dying in infancy, it certainly lends support to the theory.

Arguing, in this case, from the greater to the lesser, we may argue that just as all infant children may not be refused the blessing of the kingdom of God (the greater), the infant children of believers may not be refused baptism (the lesser) on the grounds that they cannot consciously believe the gospel. If Jesus did not refuse to bless these children with entrance into the kingdom of heaven, who are we to refuse the baptism of believer's children? In the same way the texts lend support to the doctrine of infant salvation, they likewise lend support to the doctrine of infant baptism.

## Summary and Conclusion

While it is true that the OT saints were saved by grace, this does not nullify the fact that they lived under a legal economy that gave them little psychological and spiritual release from the guilt of their sins (Heb. 10:1-4). The writer of Hebrews contrasts the less favorable status of the Israelite with that of the believer in the New Covenant.

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<sup>92</sup> Webb, pp. 39-40

<sup>93</sup> The laying on of hands was an ancient symbol of blessing. (Carson, p. 420)

<sup>94</sup> Webb, p. 38, citing Calvin

For you have not come to a *mountain* that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind,<sup>19</sup> and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which *sound was such that* those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them.<sup>20</sup> For they could not bear the command, "IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED."<sup>21</sup> And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, "I AM FULL OF FEAR and trembling."<sup>22</sup> But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,<sup>23</sup> to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect,<sup>24</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel. (Hebrews 12:18-24 NASB)

Calvin sums up the previous passage with Gal. 4: 22-31 by saying,

...the Old Testament [i.e. the old covenant] struck consciences with fear and trembling, but by the benefit of the New they are released into joy. The Old held consciences bound by the yoke of bondage; the New by its spirit of liberality emancipates them into freedom.

Charles Hodge interprets being "under the law" (Rom. 6: 14) as the condition of being under "the obligation of fulfilling the law of God as the condition of salvation." Christians are no longer under this bondage, thus enabling them to draw near to God as adopted sons crying out, "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4: 6; Rom. 8: 14). Hodge's conclusion is that

The principle of obedience in him is love, and not fear. Here, as everywhere else in the Bible, it is assumed that the favour of God is our life. We must be reconciled to him before we can be holy; we must feel that he loves us before we can love him....The only hope therefore of sinners, is in freedom from the law, freedom from its condemnation, freedom from the obligation to fulfill it as the condition of acceptance, and freedom from its spirit.

I conclude that there is a vast difference between the conditions under which even believers lived in the Old Covenant and those under which we live in the New, and that those more favorable conditions engender (produce) the affectionate love for God less common—but not absent—among OT believers. I do not deny that this filial love for God existed in the Old Covenant; it was clearly published in the Psalms. Yet, living under that administration is described by Peter as a burden which neither he nor the fathers were able to bear (Acts 15: 10).

From Heb. 8: 8, I agree with Brown and Hughes that God found fault with His own covenant since that particular arrangement did not secure Israel as a holy people for his own possession. This interpretation agrees with the theme of Hebrews that presents the New Covenant as superior in every way to the outmoded Mosaic Covenant (the Old Covenant) that is now "obsolete" (Heb. 8: 13).

We finished our study of the covenants with the comparison between the Abrahamic covenant and the New Covenant particularly focusing on the subject of baptism. While the Mosaic Covenant comes to a close with Christ, the Scriptures do not express the same obsolescence (becoming obsolete) with reference to the Abrahamic Covenant which is the foreshadowing of the New. Those who believe in Christ are described as children of Abraham and heirs to the covenant of promise (Gal. 3: 29). Given the continuity between the Abrahamic and the New Covenant, given the 2000 years of Abrahamic tradition until Pentecost, and given the fact that there is no express command in the NT to discontinue the application of the covenant sign to believer's children, we are warranted to believe that children of believers should receive baptism. Jesus explicitly said that the kingdom of heaven belonged to children, even infant children, and all such who become like children in their absolute dependence upon God. Jesus was not using children merely as a convenient object lesson for repentance, but praying for these children to enter the kingdom of

heaven. I believe the passage in Matt. 19: 13-15 is a strong argument for the salvation of all infant children dying in infancy, not just infants of believers; yet, arguing from the greater to the lesser, it is also a strong argument for infant baptism.

### Lesson Two Questions

1. How does Paul contrast the Mosaic Law with the New Covenant in 2 Cor. 3?
2. Which text seems to indicate a beginning and ending of the Mosaic Covenant? Elaborate on this text.
3. Briefly summarize John Brown's position on the Mosaic covenant. How is his theory of the Old Covenant retrogressive—i.e. that living under the Old Covenant was not as enjoyable, so to speak, as living under the Abrahamic covenant?
4. What is Robertson's answer to the "retrogressive" theory of John Brown?
5. Discuss the significance of Lev. 18: 5 and Gal. 3: 12 as these texts relate to the continuity/discontinuity debate.
6. In one sentence, explain what Paul means by being "under law".
7. How does Calvin interpret Rom. 6: 14?
8. Explain the significance of Heb. 8: 7 in the continuity/discontinuity debate.
9. Explain the purpose statement of Rom. 7: 4, "that we might bear fruit for God." Incorporate into your answer the following statement: "Behavioral change is not possible without the antecedent (coming before) change in covenantal relationship."
10. What important doctrine comes to greater realization in the conscience of the believer? Explain why.

### Lesson One Questions and Answers

1. Discuss the tree of life as a sacrament?

Had Adam obeyed, he would have been confirmed in righteousness and eternal life enjoyed in communion with God. This confirmation would have been represented sacramentally by partaking of the tree of life. However, if he had been allowed to eat of it after he sinned, mankind would have been confirmed in an "eternal life" without nearness to God which would not have been true life, but eternal death. When we partake of the Lord's Supper, we symbolically partake of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

2. Explain how Christ is the second Adam.

What Adam failed to achieve for himself and for all mankind, Christ has achieved through His active obedience (perfect submission to the law of God; John 17:4) and His passive obedience (perfect submission in death; Matt.27:46).

3. In what ways did Adam die after he sinned?

(1) First, Adam would die physically.

There was nothing in the internal makeup of man that prevented him from living eternally. He began to die only after he sinned, not before.

(2) Second, Adam died spiritually on the day he sinned.

He became alienated from God (separated from the fellowship or friendship of God), a broken fellowship manifested in his efforts to hide from God.

(3) Third, Adam died judicially.

He came under the wrath of God and suffered the curse God placed upon the ground.

4. Although the Mosaic Covenant is called a covenant of law, what evidence do we have that grace preceded (came before) law in this covenant?

The law is so prominent in the Mosaic legislation that it can be called a “covenant of law”; yet, God’s covenantal relationship was already established with Israel before the law-covenant is administered. God hears the groaning of his people in Egyptian bondage and graciously delivers them from Egypt not because they deserved it but because of His promise to the fathers. “...covenant always supersedes law”

5. Briefly trace the two elements of law and grace throughout the biblical covenants.

(1) In the Noahic covenant, God puts His bow in the sky to signify that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood and would guarantee predictable cycles for man’s existence. This is a promise to all mankind, not just to God’s elect people, and it is not grounded on man’s merits. Yet, God also commanded Noah to build ark, and had Noah not believed God, and had he refused to build the ark, he and his family would have perished with the rest of the world (Heb. 11:7).

(2) God promised Abraham that his seed (descendants) would become as the stars of the heavens and that he would be a blessing to all the nations of the earth (Gen. 12, 15). God did not promise this to Abraham because he was morally superior to everyone else for Abraham had worshipped false gods just as his father Terah did (Josh. 24: 2-3). Thus, God called Abraham out of Ur by grace. On the other hand, God said to Abraham, “Walk before me and be blameless” (17:1), and we are informed that Abraham obeyed God’s commandments, statutes, and laws, which were conveyed to him before the codification of the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone (Gen. 26: 5). Like Noah, Abraham’s faith was proven by his works when he offered Isaac on the altar of sacrifice according to God’s command (Gen.22; James 2: 21-22). Moreover, circumcision was not optional under the gracious administration of the Abrahamic covenant. Before the inauguration of the Mosaic covenant, God almost put Moses to death because he had failed to circumcise his son according to the conditions of the Abrahamic covenant (Ex. 4: 24-26; Gen. 17:10). Nevertheless, the promise to Abraham could not be invalidated by a law covenant made 430 years later so as to nullify (make void) the promise (Gal. 3: 13-18).

(3) The Covenant with Moses was a covenant of law and the explanation of the Law abounds throughout this period of salvation history. However, the minute details of animal sacrifice, the priesthood, the tabernacle, the Year of Jubilee, the Day of Atonement, etc. all pointed to the once-

and-for-all sacrifice and priesthood of Christ and the promise of the gospel (Hebrews). Hebrews 4:2 says that the Israelites in the wilderness had the “good news” (gospel) preached to them, but it did not profit them because of unbelief. There was, indeed, “gospel” or grace in the Mosaic covenant. The Lord made it clear that Israel was not chosen from among the nations on the basis of merit, but on the basis of the undeserved love of God and because of God’s oath to the fathers (Dt. 7: 6-8). What is more, we learn from Romans 11: 28 that national Israel is still loved for the sake of the fathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and that we may expect a spiritual revival among the Jewish people in the future (see John Murray, Romans). Repentance has always been, and always will be, an option for national Israel (Lev.26:40-45).

(4) God promised David that his throne would endure forever (Ps. 89; 2 Sam.7). This was God’s gracious promise to David, but King David was never above the law of God, being rebuked for his illicit relationship with Bathsheba and for murder (2 Sam.12). Later, David suffered enormous consequences from his unfaithfulness. Although God’s lovingkindness would never be taken away from David’s son Solomon, the son of Solomon, Rehoboam, would have the kingdom torn out of his hands. It is evident, then, that the Davidic covenant had conditions which must be obeyed (See 2 Sam.7:8-17; 1 Kings 11:1-13, 41-43; 12: 1-24). He failed to do this and God took the kingdom out of his hands (1Kings 11:11). Solomon was obligated to keep the terms of the Mosaic Covenant in order to keep the united kingdom of Israel together.

(5) In the New Covenant, Jesus said, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>”For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. (John 3:16-17)—the offer of grace. Nevertheless, Jesus also said, “If you love Me, you will keep my commandments” (Jn.14:15) and “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven” (Matt.7:21). Paul says, “For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8: 3-4).

#### 6. What can the law do and what can it not do?

##### What the Law Can Do

1. Law commands and demands; it propounds what the will of God is.
2. Law pronounces approval and blessing upon conformity to its demands (Rom. 7: 10; Gal. 3: 12).
3. Law pronounces the judgment of condemnation upon every infraction of its precept (Gal. 3: 10)
4. Law exposes and convicts of sin (Rom. 7: 7, 14; Heb. 4: 12).
5. Law excites and incites sin to more virulent and violent transgression (Rom. 7: 8, 9, 11, 13).

##### What the Law Cannot Do

1. Law can do nothing to justify the person who in any particular has violated its sanctity and come under its curse.
2. It can do nothing to relieve the bondage of sin; it accentuates and confirms that bondage (Rom. 6: 14).

#### 7. Where is the NT evidence for the abiding validity of OT law? Elaborate on these texts.

We often find the NT writers assuming the authority of the OT when giving ethical instruction (1 Cor. 9: 8-10; Eph. 6:2-3; 1 Tim.5: 17-18; James 2: 8-11). In each of these passages, there is no explanation needed for using old covenant instruction to support ethical teaching in the new covenant.

Paul assures Timothy that the OT Scriptures are adequate and profitable for teaching Christians the ethical principles of godly living, equipping them to make the right decisions in everything they do. When he wrote this second letter to Timothy, a small portion of the NT literature had been widely circulated, but all churches had access to copies of the OT (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NASB).

8. Do the case laws of the OT still have practical application for the new covenant Christian? Defend your answer. (And you may disagree with me as long as you provide biblical justification for your answer.)

Paul makes reference to the Mosaic Law in 1 Tim. 1: 9-10 and says that all these violations of the law are not in accordance with the sound teaching of the gospel. Such violations included kidnapping (cf. Deut. 24: 7; Ex. 21: 16);<sup>3</sup> homosexuality (Lev. 20: 13);<sup>3</sup> and murder—particularly the murder of one’s own parents—all of which are found in OT law. In the NT, the reference to kidnapping is found only in 1 Timothy. Thus, Paul uses two case laws of the OT as the authoritative word against kidnapping and homosexuality, sins which are not explicitly mentioned in the Ten Commandments (Decalogue).

Paul uses an OT case law concerning oxen to support the new covenant practice of providing ample support for elders (1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5: 18).

Paul alludes to a case law as a means of encouraging husbands and wives to fulfill their covenant commitments to one another (1 Cor. 7: 3-4; 33-34; Ex. 21: 10-11). Thus, Paul does not distinguish between the moral authority of the Ten Commandments and the moral authority of the case laws which provided practical guidelines in applying Ten Commandments. He reminds the Corinthians that he was not speaking “according to human judgment” since “the Law” (i.e. the case law) also spoke about these things (1 Cor. 9: 8).

9. How is the law of God progressively revealed in the NT?

Eph. 5:25, “Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her....” This is not a suggestion, but a commandment of God with equal force and validity as any of the Ten Commandments. The commandment carries the sanction of Christ’s own example.

Some would say that Paul’s command is included in the seventh commandment, “You shall not commit adultery,” but such reasoning is a long stretch at best. Just as the command to love one another is a “new commandment” because never demonstrated so wonderfully before the cross, so also the commandment to love our wives as Christ loved the church cannot be fully explicated (fully explained) in the commandment “do not commit adultery.”

The same reasoning can be applied to the subject of polygamy and divorce in which the NT sheds more light upon the ideal of marriage than the OT did, being a preliminary revelation and an economy which was fading away and making room for the superior revelation of Christ (2 Cor.3).

10. How does Matthew present Christ as the new lawgiver? Give details from the text.

Jesus teaches from the mountain which is reminiscent of the giving of the Law from Mt. Sinai. The blessings of the beatitudes, with their implied curses (cf. Lk. 6: 25-26), are parallel to the curses and blessings of the Law (Deut. 27—28). Notice also that “the meek shall inherit the earth” which is reminiscent of the nation of Israel inheriting the land of Canaan. As the nation of Israel was supposed to be a holy people in the midst of heathen nations, Christians are supposed to be salt and light in the world (5:13-16).

## Lesson Two Questions and Answers

### 1. How does Paul contrast the Mosaic Law with the New Covenant in 2 Cor. 3?

Paul makes a sharp contrast between (1) the covenant of the “letter” which “kills”, the covenant which is “the ministry of death in letters engraved on stones”, the “ministry of condemnation”, the ministry which “fades away” and (2) the “new covenant” or “ministry of the Spirit” which does not kill but which “gives life”, the “ministry of righteousness”, “written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts”, the covenant which does not fade away but “remains” and has a glory which “surpasses” the glory of the Old Covenant.

### 2. Which text seems to indicate a beginning and ending of the Mosaic Covenant? Elaborate on this text.

According to Gal. 3, the Law began 430 years after the covenant with Abraham was “previously ratified by God” (v.17). It ended as a covenant administration for the believer in the death and resurrection of Christ (vv.19, 25).

### 3. Briefly summarize John Brown’s position on the Mosaic covenant. How is his theory of the Old Covenant retrogressive—i.e. that living under the Old Covenant was not as enjoyable, so to speak, as living under the Abrahamic covenant?

The Mosaic economy was necessary due to the nation’s spiritual descent into idolatry. Brown says that the Mosaic Covenant was necessary to preserve the nation from being submerged into the idolatry of the surrounding nations. But had the Israelites resisted this idolatry, the less burdensome arrangement of the Abrahamic Covenant would have continued and the Mosaic economy would not have been necessary.

### 4. What is Robertson’s answer to the “retrogressive” theory of John Brown?

Robertson says,

The concept of continued progression in the unfolding of God’s redemptive truth cannot allow for such a movement of retrogression. It is far better for the people of God to be fully aware of the precise nature of their particular sin rather than continuing to sin in ignorance. God’s law serves as an essential tool in making his people understand the nature of their sin. . . . For this reason, the fuller revelation of the will of God in the Mosaic covenant should be regarded as a great boon [blessing].

### 5. Discuss the significance of Lev. 18: 5 and Gal. 3: 12 as these texts relate to the continuity/discontinuity debate.

The Law was a standard of righteousness which no one could perform but which pronounced curses upon all who did not perform it perfectly (Deut.30). This is why Paul said that the Law was “not of faith” (Gal.3:10-12). From Gal.3:17 we may conclude that the Law was never given to replace the promises of the Abrahamic covenant, promises which were still firmly in place when the Law was given and during the entire administration of the Law until the new covenant. Salvation then and now has always been by grace through faith (by believing) and not through obedience to the Law.



6. In one sentence, explain what Paul means by being “under law”.

Being under the Law of Moses as a covenant administration. Believers are no longer under this covenant which says, “Do this and live.”

7. How does Calvin interpret Rom. 6: 14?

“We are no longer subject to the law insofar as it requires of us perfect righteousness, and pronounces death on all who have transgressed any part of it.”

8. Explain the significance of Heb. 8: 7 in the continuity/discontinuity debate.

If the old covenant had served the ultimate purpose of making Israel a holy nation, God never would have instituted a new covenant (Heb.8:7).

9. Explain the purpose statement of Rom. 7: 4, “that we might bear fruit for God.” Incorporate into your answer the following statement: “Behavioral change is not possible without the antecedent (coming before) change in covenantal relationship.”

Bearing fruit is the result of dying to the old administration of law, in which we were held in bondage to a system which did not provide the means of obedience, and being joined to Christ in the new administration of grace in which we embrace a righteousness by faith in the works of Christ. Later he adds that “we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter” (v.6). Both of these verses indicate the termination of a relationship with a legal administration which lays down the foundation for a change of behavior.

10. What important doctrine comes to greater realization in the conscience of the believer? Explain why.

It is this state of being under the law which keeps us in a state of bondage and prevents us from realizing our “adoption as sons.” As we realize our new status under grace, we are encouraged to draw near to God as children who are aware of being loved by God.

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I need to interact with Murray in *Principles of Conduct* (pp. 17-19) concerning the continuity issue. This is a serious omission in this section.